Trinity Praise Center

Covenant Assembly Questionnaire

Please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire regarding your declaration of membership to Trinity Praise Center ("TPC").

PLEASE PRINT

Personal

Date		
Last Name	First Name	
Prefer to be called		
Address		
City	ZIP	
Home Phone	Work Phone_	
E-Mail_		
Fax	Cell Phone	
Birth date	Marital Status □ Married □ Single □ Separat	ted □ Divorced
Wedding Anniversary		
Spouse's Name	Work Phone	
Spouse's birth date		
Family		
	Birth date	M F
ONLY the name they are called Control (ONLY the name they are called Control the name the nam	,	M F
3 rd child	Birth date	M F
(ONLY the name they are called 4th child (ONLY the name they are called 1	Birth date	M F

Employment

Are you employed? □ Yes □ No	Phone			
Name of Company				
Company address				
City				
Position_				
Responsibilities				
Spouse employment				
Faith Walk Background When did you begin regularly attending TPO	C? Month		Year	_
Describe your church background prior to c	coming to TPC	:		
Name of your former church:				
Name of your former pastor:				
Have you been born again? Whe	en?	_Where?_		
Have you been water baptized?	When?		. Where?	

Covenant Assembly Qualifications:

To join the Covenant Assembly of Trinity Praise Center, you must:

- Be sixteen years or older.
- Have personally received Christ as your Savior and Lord.
- Have or will receive water baptism as a believer.
- Be open to the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Desire to be committed to Trinity Praise Center as a local body of believers.

Covenant Assembly Commitment

I have attended the TPC Covenant Assembly Class and I understand the materials which pertain to membership at TPC. \Box Yes \Box No
Meeting Covenant Assembly Qualifications and understanding the commitment of membership at TPC, I hereby submit my request for Covenant Assembly with Trinity Praise Center. I understand that the submission of this request must be approved by the leadership (Pastors and Elders) of TPC, and that, upon approval; I will have an opportunity to be received into the Covenant Assembly of TPC in a worship service.



Covenant Assembly Manual

Course Contents

Discovering the Covenant Assembly

Section One: Our Salvation

- I. What Does It Mean To Be A Christian
- II. Six Evidences Of Salvation
- III. The Importance Of Being Water Baptized

Section Two: Our Statements

- I. Our Purpose Statement
- II. Our Declaration Of Faith

Section Three: Our Structure

- I. How Our Church Is Structured
- II. What It Means To Be Part Of The Covenant Assembly
- III. What Now?

Discovering the Covenant Assembly

Introduction

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about Trinity Praise Center. This class is the basic introduction to our church family. Since we have individuals from many different church backgrounds, this class was designed to clearly explain who and what our church is.

The term "Covenant Assembly" is used for what most churches refer to as Membership. While we are not against the term "membership," and sometimes incorporate that term in this manual, we feel that Covenant Assembly better expresses the true nature of this relationship. The following terms are used in identifying the relationship level at Trinity Praise Center:

General Assembly All who attend and are involved in good standing and unity with the

body of believers and the ministry of Trinity Praise Center.

Covenant Assembly All from the General Assembly who have expressed and

demonstrated a committed level of unity to this body of believers, as well as accepting the shared responsibility of the ministry of Trinity

Praise Center.

Discovering the Covenant Assembly is taught by the Pastor or a member of leadership. Rick and Tina Jackson assumed the position of Pastors in September of 2004. Since then, the church has been steadily growing in numbers and in the maturity of Christ.

Benefits of Covenant Assembly (or membership)

Acts 2:42–46

Heritage It enables a person or family to identify with people, events

and doctrines.

Statement

of Belief: Says what you believe and why you believe.

Spiritual

Discipleship: Under the care of a Pastor with not only support from him,

but also from the body of believers.

Completion

of the Body: No one can do it all. We all have different abilities and

gifts. We need each other to carry on the work of the

Church.

Fellowship

& Ministry: I lend my support to this work and this body of believers.

The Basis for This Class

"...You are a **member** of God's own **family**...and you **belong** in God's household with every other Christian." – Eph. 2:19 LB

Key Truths

- 1. God expects you to be a <u>Member</u> of a church family.
- 2. The church is an extended **Family**

The Goal of This Class

- You become a **Christian** by committing your life **to Christ**.
- You become a **member** by committing yourself **to other Christians**.

What Makes Trinity Praise Center A Family?

Trinity Praise Center is a family because we share the following:

Our **Salvation** – What God has done for us.

Our **Statements** – Why we exist as a church.

Our **Strategy** – How we fulfill our purpose.

The Mandate of Church Membership

God expects believers to join a local church through which they develop Christian relationships and use their gifts. A summary of the biblical basis:

- Acts 2:41 Those who followed Jesus were baptized and identified themselves with local believers.
- 1 Corinthians 12:27 The church is a body, and there cannot be a body without members.
- Ephesians 5:25 Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it; believers must be equally committed to the church.
- Hebrews 10:25 The church must regularly gather together.
- Scriptures that address pastoral leadership and oversight imply a recognized congregation (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:17)
- Scriptures that speak of church discipline suggest some type of formal list or association (e.g., Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13)

One could argue that these texts imply rather than command local church membership, and that would be correct. Membership is a public pledge to find our role in the body, work alongside other members, and hold each other accountable to faithful Christian living.

Section One: Personal Salvation

I. What does it mean to be a Christian?

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord." Ro. 6:23

Prayer to be Born Again

"Lord Jesus...I want to stop trusting in myself...and what I can do...and start trusting in your...and what you have already done...when you died for me on the cross. I know that I am a sinner...and I am sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me...and I invite you to come and live inside of me. I want you to be my Savior...and my Lord..., which means being #1 in my life. I want to repent and turn away...from everything you and the Bible call sin...and I totally commit myself...to obeying you...every day, for the rest of my life. Thank you, Jesus."

"Whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." Ro. 10:13

II. Six Evidences of Salvation

Many Christians have doubts about salvation because they do not understand what actually takes place at the time of salvation. Salvation results in a **growing relationship** in which we become more and more conscious of God's words and ways by obedience to the promptings of His Holy Spirit. The following evidences are God's ways of reassuring us that a new relationship exists between God and us.

A new Love for Scriptures (Word) "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Pe. 2:2 A new Awareness of Right and Wrong

"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." He. 5:13-14

3. A new____ Desire to be like Jesus (Christ-like)

'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Ro. 8:29

4. A new Social pressure from those convicted by your changed life

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles; when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelvies, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him is ready to judge the living and the dead." 1 Pe. 4:3-5

5. A new Desire to proclaim Christ to others

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Col. 1:28-29

6. A new__Love for fellowship with other Believers

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because **we love the brethren**. He who does **not love** his brother abides in death." 1 [n. 3:14

III. The Importance Of Being Water Baptized

A.	Why	Should I Be Baptized?
	1.	To follow the example set by Christ
		"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river." Mk. 1:9
	2.	Because Christ Commands it.
		"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Mt. 28:19-20
	3.	It demonstrates that I really am a Believers
		"many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8
		"We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands ." 1 Jn. 2:3
B.	Wha	at Is The Meaning Of Baptism?
	1.	It illustrates Christ's Burial and
		resurrection. "Christ died for our sinsHe was buriedand He rose again." 1 Co. 15:3,4
		'For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ , and in baptism you were also raised with Christ. Col. 2:12
	2.	It illustrates my New Lifeas a
		Christian. "When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and new life has begun!" 2 Co. 5:17
		"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the deadso also we may live a new life !" Ro. 6:14
		Baptism doesn't make you a believer – it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you, only your faith in Christ does that . Baptism is like a wedding ring – it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.
		"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faithit is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast." Eph. 2:8,9

1.	Becausewas	baptized that way
	"As soon as Jesus was baptized , he went up out of the	water." Mt. 3:16
2.	Every baptism in the Scripture immersion.	was by
	(Example) "then Philip and the manwent down in baptized him. When they came up out of the water.	_
3.	The word "baptize" means "to Dip U water."	Jnder
	The Greek word "baptize" means to "immerse or o	lip under water."
4.	It best symbolizes a burial and resurrect	ion!
Wh	o Should Be Baptized?	
Wh.	o Should Be Baptized? Every person who has Confessed Faith	
		in Christ.
	Every person who has Confessed Faith	in Christ. paptized" Acts 2:41

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Section Two: Our Statements

"Let there be real harmony among you so there won't be any split in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." 1 Co. 1:10 (LB)

I. Our Purpose and Mission Statement

"Trinity Praise Center is a place of refuge and reconciliation for people of all ages, races, and economic levels. The mission of Trinity Praise Center is to establish, nurture and develop Relationships with: God, the Word, One Another & the World."

A. Why We Exist As A Church

The purpose of our church is summarized in a single sentence based on two key scriptures:

We believe a great commitment to the great <u>commandment</u> and the great <u>commission</u> will grow a great church!

The Great commandment: "Jesus said, Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments." Mt. 22:36-40

The Great commission: "Jesus said, 'Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Mt. 28:19-20

1.	To "Love God with all your heart" is	"	worsnip	"
2.	To "Teach themall things" is		Discipleship	."
3.	To "Gomake disciples" is	٠٠	Evangelism	.,,
4.	To "Love your neighbor as yourself" is	"	Ministry	."·
5.	To "Love your neighbor" is	"	Fellowship	,,,

B. What Trinity Praise Center Exists For

We at Trinity Praise Center exist for the following:

- 1. To Celebrate God's Presence (worship).
- 2. To Communicate God's Word (evangelism).
- 3. To <u>Educate</u> God's People (discipleship).
- 4. To **Demonstrate** God's Love (ministry).
- 5. To Support God's People (fellowship).

1. We Exist To Celebrate God's Presence

a. Worship: "Expressing Love To The Lord."

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." Mt. 4:10

b. Expressions of Worship

- 1. **Singing** Eph. 5:19
- 2. **Serving** Ro. 12:1-2
- 3. **Praying** Ps. 95:6
- 4. **Hearing** Jn. 17:17
- 5. **Giving** 1 Co. 16:1-2
- 6. **Baptism** Ro. 6:3-4
- 7. **Meditation** Hab. 2:20; Josh. 1:8
- 8. **Communion** 1 Co. 11:23-26
- 9. **Dancing** Ps. 149

[&]quot;...the Father seeks worshippers...and His worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Jn. 4:23-24

c. TPC Worship	Style
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1.	Celebration	Ps. 122:1
2.	Inspirational	- Is. 40:31
3.	Preparational	Eph. 4:11-12

2. We Exist To Communicate God's Word

a. Evangelism: "Sharing the Good News With Others."

"His intent was that **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be **made known**." Eph. 3:10

"Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But who can ask them to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?" Ro. 10:13-14

b. Why Our Church Must Never Stop Growing:

1. Bec	cause God	loves people	
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"The Lord...is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but wants **everyone** to come to repentance." 2 Pe. 3:9

2. Because God commands it

"Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that my house will be full." Lu. 14:23 (LB)

"...you will be my witnesses..." Acts 1:8

3. Because <u>Growth is God's will</u>

"Under Christ's control, the whole Body is nourished...and **grows** as **God** wants it to grow." Col. 2:19 (GN)

"(Jesus) I will build my church. Mt. 16:18

3. We Exist To Educate God's People

a. Discipleship: "Helping People to Grow Spiritually."

"Let us leave the **elementary teachings** about Christ and **go on to** maturity..." He. 6:1

"Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Pe. 3:18

"(God has given)...some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the Body of Christ may be **built up** until we all...**become** mature...like Christ." Eph. 4:11-13

4. We Exist To Demonstrate God's Love

a. Ministry: "Meeting Peoples Needs With Love."

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples – that you have **love for one** another." In. 13:35

1 [n. 3:16-17; Mt. 25:34-40; He. 13:16; Ro. 12:13

"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities...and there are different kinds of service to God (ministry)...All of you together form the one Body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it." 1 Co. 12:4-5, 27 (LB)

II. Our Declaration Of Faith (What We Believe)

• In Essential Beliefs – We Have Unity.

"There is one body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all... Eph. 4:4-6

• In Non-Essential Beliefs – We Have Liberty.

"Accept him whose **faith is weak**, without passing judgment on **disputable matters**...Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these keep between yourself and God."

Ro. 14:1, 4, 12, 22

• In All Our Beliefs – We Show Charity.

"...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have no love, I amount to nothing at all." 1 Co. 13:2 (Ph)

Declaration of Faith

- In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
- In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
- That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
- That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
- In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
- Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.
- In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
- In the active working of the Gifts of the Spirit.
- In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
- Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.
- In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.
- In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
- In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

Practical Commitments of Members

SPIRITUAL EXAMPLE

We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to the work of Christ through our being good stewards.

MORAL PURITY

We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfillment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well-being.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY

We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behavior.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, preserving the sanctity of marriage and maintaining divine order in the home.

BEHAVIORAL TEMPERANCE

We will practice temperance in behavior and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive to our fellowman or which lead to addiction or enslavement.

MODEST APPEARANCE

We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.

SOCIAL OBLIGATION

It should be our objective to fulfill our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.

Doctrinal Commitments

- **Repentance.** Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19.
- **Justification.** Romans 5:1; Titus 3:7.
- **Regeneration.** Titus 3:5.
- New birth. John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9.
- Sanctification subsequent to justification. Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:12.
- Holiness. Luke 1:75; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14.
- Water baptism. Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9, 10; John 3:22, 23; Acts 8:36, 38.
- Baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to cleansing; the enduement of power for service. Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49, 53; Acts 1:4-8.
- The speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance as an evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost. John 15:26; Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-7.
- The Church. Exodus 19:5, 6; Psalm 22:22; Matthew 16:13-19; 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; 7:38; 20:28; Romans 8:14-17: 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 12:12-31; 2 Corinthians 6:6-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:9, 21; Philipians 3:10; Hebrews 2:12; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:6, 7; Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17.
- **Spiritual gifts.** 1 Corinthians 12:1, 7, 10, 28, 31; 1 Corinthians 14:1.
- Signs following believers. Mark 16:17-20; Romans 15:18, 19; Hebrews 2:4.
- Fruit of the Spirit. Romans 6:22; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11.
- Divine healing provided for all in the Atonement. Psalm 103:3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24.

Section Three: Our Structure

"For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace... Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." 1 Cor. 14:33, 40

I. How Our Church Is Structured

The structure of the church should not be determined by culture, business practices, or even denominational traditions.

denominational traditions.
THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH DETERMINES ITS STRUCTURE
A. The Church Is A Fellowship (Relationship)
"They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles, and joined in the fellowship" Acts 2:42 (Ph)
A top priority in a fellowship is Harmony
and Unity .
"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Eph. 4:3
"So let us concentrate on the things that make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together." Ro. 14:19 (Ph)
B. The Church Is A Family .
"You should be like one hig happy family , full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another wintender hearts and humble minds." 1 Pe. 3:8 (LB)
(Gal. 6:10; He. 2:10-12; 1 Pe. 4:17)
SO WE OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF Relationship (New Testament) NOT Rules (Old Testament Law)
"Don't reprimand a senior member of the church, appeal to him as a father . Treat the young men a

"Don't reprimand a senior member of the church, appeal to him as a **father**. Treat the young men as **brothers**, and the older women as **mothers**. Treat the younger women as **sisters**." 1 Ti. 5:1-2 (Ph)

"(An elder) must manage his **own family well** and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to **manage his family**, how can he take care of God's church?" 1 Ti. 3:4-5

C. The Church Is A Body (1 Co. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:16; 5:23; 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 2:19)

1. We are a Body – not a business! We are an organism – not an organization!

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We each have different gifts according to the grace given us." Ro. 12:4-6

2. In an organization, "maintenance" becomes the focus; however, in an organism, "ministry" is the focus.

"God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." Eph. 4:11-12

Our church is a congregational government, under the leadership of the Pastor and Eldership.

Current Leadership Staff:

Pastor Rick & Tina Jackson (Senior Pastor)
Pastor Tim & Lee Ann Taylor (Assoc. Pastor Youth & Young Adults)
Kyndal Taylor (Worship Leader)

Current Eldership: Jim & Sue Worley (Elder)

Andy & Kyndal Taylor (Elder) Bobby Greer (Elder in Counsel)

Richard & Lucille Murray (Elder in Counsel)

II. What It Means To Be Part Of The Covenant Assembly

A. I Will <u>Protect</u> The Unity Of My Church

By acting in love toward other members; by honoring and obeying the Scriptures; by refusing to participate in activities that bring negative results to this local body (such as gossip); and by following the leadership.

(Ro. 15:5; Ro. 15;19; 1 Pe. 1:22; Eph. 4:29; He. 13:17)

B. I Will Share The Responsibility Of My Church

By praying for its well-being; by inviting the un-churched to attend; and by receiving others with a Christ-like attitude.

(1 Th. 1:2; Lu. 14:23; Ro. 15:7)

C. I Will Serve The Ministry Of My Church

By discovering my gifts, talents and calling; **by being equipped** to serve the leadership; **by developing** a servant's heart.

(1 Pe. 4:10; Ep. 4:11-12; Ph. 2:3-4, 7)

D. I Will Support My Church

By attending faithfully; by reflecting Christ; and by giving regularly of my time, talents and resources.

(He. 10:25; Ph. 1:27; 1 Co. 16:2; Lev. 27:30)

III. What Now?

After you have participated in the Membership Class and reviewed the Membership Manual, please fill-out the Membership Questionnaire as an expression of your desire to join Trinity Praise Center by becoming a Member, and submit to the Pastor.

After receiving your Membership Questionnaire, you will be brought before the church body during a worship service for membership acceptance.

THE CHURCH FAMILY COVENANTS TO LOVE YOU BY:

- Teaching you the Word of God
- Providing opportunities for growth, nurture and service
- Providing a framework for building fellowship and godly relationships
- Carrying out our responsibility to reprove, exhort, care for and discipline
- Broadening the believer's concern and perspective toward those unreached by the gospel

I COVENANT TO LOVE THE CHURCH FAMILY BY:

- Growing spiritually
- Being faithful in attendance and participation
- Supporting the ministries of the church through giving and service
- Seeking to preserve the unity of the church

GO FORTH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!

Covenant Assembly:

Greetings and Blessings in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. I write to you in a desire to strengthen and build our commitment on the Covenant Assembly level at our local level in the Body of Christ. As you likely know, the term "Covenant Assembly" is used to describe our church membership of those who have expressed and demonstrated a committed level of unity to the body of believers at Trinity Praise Center and have been accepted into church membership.

While for the most part church membership is something that runs in the background for most people, and for most churches, that mindset falls way short of the biblical purpose of church membership. By falling short, most people and churches don't reap the benefits of what a committed relationship to a local body of believers will bring. In the coming months, I will be sharing some insights and principles on the structure and requirements of the Covenant Assembly in order to give a clearer picture of what the responsibilities are for both the church and the individual. As those in the Covenant Assembly put into practice a more biblical foundation to church membership, they find a stronger and healthier relationship both with their Heavenly Father and the Body of Christ.

Before we go into any new ground, I would like to address a very common issue about casual involvement - showing up every now and then - and how it relates to current church membership. Some feel once they have joined a church that they will always be a member, despite the fact that they do not have any involvement with the church and their attendance is few and far between, if at all. Under this situation, church membership is no longer applicable. As a general rule, those in the Covenant Assembly who are not involved for a period of 60 days, with no communication as to the situation, are considered inactive and are placed in the process of removal. At the 90-day mark, the membership is now considered dismissed. In these situations, due to a lack of communication on the part of the individual, no notice of the dismissal is given by the church. Those who have fallen into the above situation and desire to be reinstated into Covenant Assembly must meet with the Pastor to be considered for reinstatement. Once again, this only applies to those in the Covenant Assembly, and not to those who attend at Trinity Praise Center without having joined the Covenant Assembly.

Having stated that, I would like to begin introducing some new elements into the church membership relationship – elements which I believe will give new value, purpose, and a more biblical foundation to it. First, we must understand that the commitment to church membership is the practical reflection of our commitment to the body of Christ. We are called to be an active part of the body of Christ, and thus being active and committed to a local body of believers is one of the best ways to reflect and practice that commitment. Just as our commitment to Christ is a spiritual discipline in our lives, so should our commitment to church membership be a *spiritual discipline*. Just like when one comes to faith in Jesus Christ they are new and expect to grow and mature in their new relationship, so should the very nature of membership be. If becoming a part of the Covenant Assembly at Trinity Praise Center means anything, it must mean that we have made the decision to commit ourselves to becoming disciplined in spiritual growth and development.

As you can see, church membership is a definite vehicle of spiritual growth, but what is the destination? To answer this question, we must return to the very purpose or destination of the believer in Jesus Christ because once again, the very nature and purpose are the same.

First of all our purpose is to grow stronger in one's faith in Jesus as Savior. The message of the New Testament is not simply that Jesus lived, but that He <u>lives!</u> Relationship with a living Savior requires an ever growing and developing faith. Second, we find our purpose in Christ as: to love Jesus. Jesus asked Peter, "do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15). A relationship with Jesus Christ is truly more than just belief with the mind, it is love from the heart as well. It is in this avenue of the commitment in a local body of believers that we grow in the love for Jesus Christ as well as practice that commitment of love. Third and finally, we find purpose in both Jesus Christ and church membership in witnessing through love, which is the new commandment that Jesus gave to those who would follow Him. Jesus said "that you love one another as I have loved you" and that by this people would know that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35). Making a commitment to church membership is a sign of both our desire to witness through love and our need for this desire to be nurtured.

I truly hope that this sharing will provide some encouragement and strength in our relationship with God and with one another. I look forward to sharing more on this subject with you in the future as we strive for the fullness of faith in Jesus Christ. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me, and remember: we are in Covenant Relationship.

Serving Him Together, Pastor Rick