

## **The Worship and Work of Membership**

### The Duties of Fellowship in the Local Church

#### **Schedule**

Feb 26	Series Introduction
Mar 5	<i>Great Commission Prayer</i>
Mar 12	The Duties of Assembly and Identification
Mar 19	The Duties of Members to Elders
Mar 26	The Duties of Members to Members
Apr 2	<i>Great Commission Prayer</i>
Apr 9	<i>No Sunday School (Resurrection Sunday)</i>
Apr 16	The Duty of Guarding Church Doctrine
Apr 23	The Duties of Guarding the Unity and Holiness of the Church
Apr 30	The Duty of Partnership in the Gospel

#### **Recommended Reading**

*The Duties of Christian Fellowship* by John Owen

*Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Devoted to God's Church: Core Values for Fellowship* by Sinclair Ferguson

*Caring for One Another* by Ed Welch

*31 Ways to Be a "One-Another" Christian: Loving Others with the Love of Jesus* by Stuart Scott

## **Examples of Church Covenants**

### **Covenant of Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol, England, 1640**

So that in the year of our forever blessed Redeemer, the Lord Jesus, one thousand six hundred and forty (1640), those five persons, namely Goodman Atkins of Stapleton, Goodman Cole, a butcher of Lawford's Gate, Richard Moone, a farrier in Wine Street, and Mr. Bacon, a young minister, with Mrs. Hazzard at Mrs. Hazard's house at the upper end of Broad Street in Bristol, they met together and came to a holy resolution to separate from the worship of the world and times they lived in, and that they would go no more to it, and with godly purpose of heart joined themselves together in the Lord, and only thus covenanting, that they would, in the strength and assistance of the Lord, come forth of the world and worship the Lord more purely, persevering therein to their end.

### **Covenant of Church of Christ in White-Street, London, 1696 by Benjamin Keach**

We who desire to walk together in the fear of the Lord do, through the assistance of His Holy Spirit, profess our deep and serious humiliation for all our transgressions. And we do also solemnly, in the presence of God, of each other, in the sense of our own unworthiness, give up ourselves to the Lord, in a church state according to the apostolical constitution that He may be our God and we may be His people through the everlasting covenant of His free grace in which alone we hope to be accepted by Him through His blessed Son, Jesus Christ, whom we take to be our high Priest, to justify and sanctify us, and our prophet to teach us and to subject to Him as our Law-giver, and he King of saints; and to conform to all His holy laws and ordinances for our growth, establishment, and consolation that we may be as a holy spouse unto Him and serve Him in our generation and wait for His second appearance as our glorious Bridegroom. Being fully satisfied in the way of church communion, and the truth of grace in some good measure upon one another's spirits, we do solemnly join ourselves together in a holy union and fellowship, humbly submitting to the discipline of the gospel and all holy duties required of a people in such a spiritual relation.

1. We do promise and engage to walk in all holiness, godliness, humility, and brotherly love, as much as in us lieth to render our communion delightful to God, comfortable to ourselves, and lovely to the rest of the Lord's people.
2. We do promise to watch over each other's conversations, and not to suffer sin upon one another, so far as God shall discover it to us, or any of us; and to stir up another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with meekness, according to the rules left to us of Christ in that behalf.

3. We do promise in an especial manner to pray for one another and for the glory and increase of this church and for the presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of His Spirit on it, and His protection over it to His glory.
4. We do promise to bear one another's burdens, to cleave to one another, and to have a fellow-feeling with one another, in all conditions both outward and inward as God in His providence shall cast any of us into.
5. We do promise to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities with much tenderness, not discovering to any without the church, nor any within, unless according to Christ's rule and the order of the gospel provided in that case.
6. We do promise to strive together for the truths of the gospel and purity of God's ways and ordinances, to avoid causes and causers of division, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).
7. We do promise to meet together on the Lord's Days, and at other times, as the Lord shall give us opportunities to serve and glorify God in the way of His worship, to edify one another, and to contrive the good of His church.
8. We do promise according to our ability (or as God shall bless us with the good things of this world) to communicate to our pastor or minister, God having ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel. (And now can anything lay a greater obligation upon the conscience than this covenant, what then is the sin of such who violate it?)

These and all other gospel duties we humbly submit unto, promising and purposing to perform, not in our own strength, being conscious of our own weaknesses, but in the power and strength of the blessed God, whose we are and whom we desire to serve. To whom be glory now and forevermore. Amen.

### **Covenant of Swansea Baptist Church, Rehoboth, Massachusetts, 1663**

Swansea in New England. A true copy of the Holy Covenant the first founders of Swansea entered into at the first beginning, and all the members thereof for divers years.

Whereas, we poor creatures are, through the exceeding riches of God's infinite grace, mercifully snatched out of the kingdom of darkness, and by His infinite power translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, there to be partakers with all the saints of all those privileges which Christ by the shedding of His precious blood hath purchased for us, and that we do find our souls in some good measure wrought on by divine grace to desire to be conformable to Christ in all things, being also constrained by the matchless love and wonderful distinguishing mercies that we abundantly enjoy from His most free grace to serve Him according to our utmost capacities, and that we also know that it is our most bounden duty to walk in visible communion. With Christ and each other according to the prescript rule of His most Holy Word, and also that it is our undoubted right through Christ to enjoy all the privileges of God's house which our souls for a long time panted after, and finding no other way at present by the all-working providence of our only wise God and gracious Father to us opened for the enjoying of the same, we do therefore, after often and solemn seeking to the Lord for help and direction in the fear of His holy name, and with hands lifted up to Him, the most High God, humble and freely offer up ourselves this day a living sacrifice unto Him, who is our God in covenant through Christ our Lord and only Savior, to walk together according to His revealed Word in the visible gospel relation both to Christ, our only Head, and to each other as fellow-members and brethren of the same household of faith.

And we do humble pray that through His strength we will henceforth endeavor to perform all our respective duties towards God and each other, and to practice all the ordinances of Christ according to what is or shall be revealed to us in our respective place, to exercise, practice and submit to the government of Christ in this His church, viz: further protesting against all rending or dividing principles or practices from any of the people of God as being most abominable and loathsome to our souls and utterly inconsistent with that Christian charity which declares men to be Christ's disciples. Indeed, further declaring in that as union in Christ is the sole ground of our communion, each with other, so we are ready to accept of, receive to and hold communion with all such by judgment of charity we conceive to be fellow-members with us in our Head, Christ Jesus, though differing from us in such controversial points as are not absolutely and essentially necessary to salvation.

We also hope that though of ourselves we are altogether unworthy and unfit thus to offer up ourselves to God or to do Him a favor, to expect any favor with, or mercy from Him, He will graciously accept of this our freewill offering in and through the merit and mediation of our dear Redeemer, and that He will employ and improve us in this service to His praise, to whom be all glory, honor, now and forever. Amen.

### **Covenant of Meherrin Baptist Church, Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1779**

Whereas in the providence of God we, a part of the Baptist Church of Christ residing and being in Meherrin, Virginia, known by the name of Meherrin Church are now settled upon the waters of the Yadkin, very remote from the seat of constitution and it being inexpedient in the present circumstance of affairs for us to join any neighboring church and that we did not fully intend or expect when we removed having our former pastor or minister of Meherrin with us, and being privileged if we thought expedient to embody as a church; we therefore taking the matter into our serious and deliberate consideration, with fasting and prayer to God, believe it will be for the glory of God so to do. We therefore solemnly in the presence of God, covenant to and with each other under an humble sense of our on unworthiness and give up ourselves to the Lord and to other in a church state, according to the primitive mode and custom of constitutions, praying that God may be with us and enable us to conform all His desired laws and ordinances, that we may be a spiritual house built up together by His divine grace, that so be enabled so serve and glorify Him and at last be received into the mansions of eternal glory.

1. We agree solemnly in the presence of God to give up ourselves to God and to each other in a spiritual union and fellowship, humbly submitting to the gospel discipline and to engage in all religious duties required of the people to each other in such a spiritual connection, and to stir up each other to love and good works, to warn, reprove, rebuke, exhort and admonish each other in meekness, according as the various circumstances occur or require, and as the Word of God shall direct in particular cases.
2. We agree and do promise, God assisting, to strive together for the faith of the gospel and purity of godliness and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and that we shall bear one another's burdens, weaknesses and infirmities, with much tenderness and conduct ourselves in such cases as to divulging or secreting agreeable to the plain rule given us in Matthew 18:15,16,17.
3. We agree and do promise, God assisting, to meet together on the Lord's Day and at other times, as the Lord shall give opportunity (agreeable to the divine injunction, Hebrews 24 and 25) to receive instruction from the Word preached, to comfort and edify each other, to promote godliness and do service to the church of Christ.
4. We agree and do promise, God assisting, to do all the good we possibly can to all men both in a spiritual and temporal sense, but especially to the household of faith, agreeable to Galatians 6 and 10, and that we will do all the duties required of us in God's Word, to our own minister or succeeding minister, but God in His providence has or may later set over us to watch for our souls . . .

### **1833 Church Covenant by J. Newton Brown**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit,  
to walk together in Christian love;  
to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort;  
to promote its prosperity and spirituality;  
to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;  
to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion;  
to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;  
to walk circumspectly in the world;  
to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;  
to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;  
to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage,  
and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love;  
to remember each other in prayer;  
to aid each other in sickness and distress;  
to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech;  
to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant, and the principles of God's Word.

#### **PRAYER**

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.