

JOINING THE LEADER COMMUNITY

"... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"
+ 1 Peter 2:9

By this statement we express our covenant with one another under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We remember that we are a chosen people. That is, we did not choose God, but God chose us in Christ. Nor did we choose each other; rather he chose us and gathered us together to serve him.

The covenant God made with all his people thousands of years ago encompasses and surpasses the covenant we now make with each other. And we remember that God covenanted with us, not because of any merits of ours, or because we are great in number or gifts, but rather God chose us to be his own people because he loves us. So we know that we are in the hands of our loving father and that therefore all will be well. Therefore we affirm our status as aliens in this land. Yet we are not people without citizenship; rather our citizenship is in another country, one whose monarch is Christ, the servant king. We pledge our primary allegiance only to that king. We do not have a bill of rights that claims life for ourselves but rather a calling to live as our king lived. Though he was God, he made himself nothing and became a slave. We forgive when we are sinned against and accept the pain it causes, knowing that we too are sinners.

We pledge faithfulness to God's economy: that economy where authority is revealed in servanthood and loves its way rather than forces its way. An economy where strength is shown in weakness. Where the poor are blessed and the rich are made low. Where God chooses the weak and powerless to be his royalty in order to demonstrate his glory. An economy that is foolishness to the world around us. We do not struggle to satisfy our own needs but to give ourselves away because we are fully supplied by God. Not needing to find ourselves through self realization, we are confident of our worth and importance as irreplaceable parts of Christ's body.

Not claiming control of our individual lives and decisions, we offer them to you. Determined to seek first Christ's kingdom, we seek to order our lives by its values and submit to his lordship through this local expression of his body, believing that in that way we will together arrive at the full stature of Christ. It is our desire to live out life in listening response to Christ's call. Where he calls us to love one another, we shall do so, learning from him and from each other the art of loving. Where he calls us to servanthood, we shall humbly offer ourselves. Where he urges us to become holy as he is holy, we will abandon false pursuits of the world and will receive thankfully the correction of our sister or brother.

We affirm that our confession of Christ means that we will live out our discipleship in union with others, that together we are one expression of his body, that the church is God's tool for accomplishing his objective in the world. Together, we wish to be a light to the world showing his love and calling others to join his people.

Because of this and my desire to grow into true servanthood, recognizing that life is discovered only when I choose not to claim life for myself, I give my life away, no longer living for me but living for you, loving you, shepherding you, living with you. I have abandoned my destiny to the Lord. I affirm that his Spirit works through his people. Short of a violation of my conscience, I will defer to the voice of this church and its gifts as it speaks to my life. I trust that you will honor me as part of your family and will not take my offering lightly.

Now, then, we are one body. We are born of one Spirit and seek our strength from one source. We shall be together for as long as God allows. We rejoice in our unity, a gift of our Father. And we go forth, together, in God's service.

LEADER:

Let us pray

You were wounded for our transgressions,
bruised for our iniquities;

Yours was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with your stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, paraphrased)

ALL PRESENT:

Jesus, as we see your broken body, we are moved by the sacrifice you have made,
to bring reconciliation into our world, through your forgiving love and resurrection power.

We praise and thank you for calling us into your Kingdom,
and opening the way for us to live this calling in community.

As you touch us in our pain, we are enabled to be open to each other and to find healing,
So that, wounded as we are, your mercy may flow through us
to the oppressed and broken of this world.

You have called us to follow and be your disciples.

Convert us from self-centeredness to a life centered in you;

From individualism to be yoked in covenant with fellow believers;

From suspicion and strife to welcome the stranger as neighbor
and to love enemies as sisters and brothers;

From claiming ownership and grasping for more,
release us so we might live simply and share freely to meet others' needs;

From pursuing worldly power and success,
turn us to seek community with the weak and marginalized.

For you have "chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith
and heirs of the Kingdom." (James 2:5)

ALL LEADERS AND THOSE JOINING:

To help us follow in your way of love and to bear one another's burdens,

We embrace life in Christian community as God's calling for us;

We commit ourselves to the members and children of _____ (the community),
to live out this calling together unless God would call us elsewhere;

We accept the disciplines of daily worship, shared finances,
common decision-making, and mutual accountability;

According to the grace God gives us under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

ALL PRESENT:

May this love and witness call others to your Kingdom, Jesus, for you have said, "By this all
shall know that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

ALL LEADERS AND THOSE JOINING:

To you, Jesus, and in your power, we offer these commitments. Amen.