

## Kleefeld Christian Community Covenant of Membership: Explanation

On the first page of your sheet is the Apostles' Creed. It is a very old statement of what Christians believe, and many different churches still use it to declare what they believe. The Apostles' Creed is an ancient and trusted summary of our faith. It joins us to the church of the past, and it joins us to every other Christian church now. Both good things.

The second page is a pledge to Jesus the Lord. We make our covenant of church membership because we are followers of the Lord, which is the basis, the foundation, of the rest of the covenant and really everything we do.

Our pledge to the Lord tells the Lord what we have already said to him by our faith and baptism. In that sense it is renewal.

We will read it together directly to the Lord Jesus. We will do this on our knees. Scripture says every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Starts here. If you knees don't like to kneel, then stand or sit.

Then comes our covenant of membership with each other. This covenant is how we define church membership. It happens this way: One side of the church will stand up and recite the covenant to the other half, who remain seated; and then the first half sits down and the second half will stand and covenant with the first half.

There are reasons to make the covenant this way. (1) This way everyone gets to say the words; (2) This way, no one says it alone – we hear others making the same covenant with us; and (3) this way we all get to hear others say this to us. All three of these are important.

We invite everyone to join in, but saying the words alone does *not* make one a member. Those who intend by this to join our congregation for the next year will get up afterward and sign their name on a list at the back. That list of signatures is our membership list.

In one year we'll do this again, and then *that* will be our membership list. If you want to sign up in a week or a month from now, that's fine. I'll bring the list to church for the next few weeks so you can sign.

We covenanted this way a year ago. In the last year, as every year, we have lived this out in some important ways, and we have failed to live this out. I assume the coming year will be more or less the same. This covenant is not a promise to be blameless.

When we covenant this way, we are making this way of living together our target, our goal, our aim. We are agreeing with each other, before God, that this is his way, and we will devote ourselves to this.

We are entirely dependent on God's help for living this way. Php 2:13, *God works among you to **will** and to **act** for his good purpose.* Heb 13:21, *God works in us what pleases him.* These Scriptures and others like them are our only hope.

After we've made the covenant, and signed our names, we'll go to the fourth page, the elder/congregation covenant. The other elders will join me at the front, and we will repeat our commitment to you, and then the congregation will stand and repeat your commitment to us.

THEN: we will have a time of prayer, and we will ask God to do what he promised in those Scriptures to do. We'll ask God for HELP!

*How would a family of brothers and sisters live together, if Jesus was the head of the family?*  
Our goal is to live out the answer to that question, one week at a time. It is a high goal, the highest possible goal we could set for ourselves.

We want you children to stand up and read with us, because the Lord honours your faith, and because you are a part of this church family. But signing up as members is only for those who have been baptized. If you have been baptized, we hope you will sign.

The words of the covenants are Scripture paraphrased. That's important: it means every person who has trusted in Jesus, and follows Jesus, has already said "yes" to all this. If you want Jesus, it is too late to back out of this. These are his words. We've already agreed to this by coming to the Lord, and every child of God should be living this way in some church.

But if for any reason, you do not wish to be a member of this church, then don't go sign. We will not pressure anyone. You can stand and read the words with us but not sign your name. Or, you can stand up and just listen, just watch what we do, but you don't need to say anything, and don't go sign.

Membership in this church is only about this covenant. Membership is not a door to something else, it is this. The only thing we get to do, if our name is on the list, is do what the covenant says. Don't make it lightly. Remember that we do this before God. This covenant will cost you in the year to come, and it will also bring good things to you.

Our covenant with each other has a strong emphasis on how we live with each other. Understand clearly why we have this kind of covenant: we emphasize our life together because this is the overwhelming call of God in Scripture to churches. This is what the Lord urges us to do, more than anything else, so we do this in simple obedience to our Lord.

We do not make this covenant because it is what will make our church different. It does not matter if our church is different. We want our church to be obedient. We think every church should emphasize these words.

We don't make this covenant because we think this is the best way to be a church. We do think it is the best way to be a church, but that's not the reason for this covenant. We make this covenant because we want to obey the Lord, and this is what he tells us to do.

We don't make this covenant because we think this will make us a light to the world, and it will show the world that we're his disciples. It *will* make us a light to the world, and show that we're his disciples. But that's not why we do it.

We covenant in this way because he said, "This is my command," because this is the consistent call to churches in the Scriptures. This covenant is our submission to God and what he wants above all in churches.

One last thing: this covenant is not what binds us together. God has already bound us together by his Spirit, when we were baptized and believed. God joined us to Christ, made us members of Christ, and at the same time made us members of each other.

We are tied to each other (and every believer) and are a part of each other, as deeply as the different parts of our physical bodies are joined to each other. God has done that by his Spirit. Christ is the head.

This covenant declares our devotion to living out the unity between us that God has already made real. *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.* Eph 4:3. This covenant is part of our effort. These are the ways God wants us to live out the oneness between us that God already accomplished with his Spirit.

Here's how it will happen:

- 1, We will stand and read the Apostles' Creed together.
- 2, We will kneel before the Lord and renew our covenant with him, that he will be our Lord and we will be his people. This will be a responsive reading prayer.
- 3, Half of us at a time will stand and read the covenant of membership to each other.
- 4, Then those who are baptized, and want to covenant with this church for the coming year, will go sign one of the sheets at the back. If your signature is not clear, please also print your name.
- 5, Then the elders will come to the front and we the elders will make a pledge to the rest of the congregation. Then the congregation will respond with your pledge to the elders.
- 6, Then we will pray.

When we pray: I would like one person to pray for each four things. More than four can pray, but I would like at least one person for each of these. I will ask for volunteers at that time.

One, *confession of failures*: lead us to confess to God that we have failed to live by our covenant this last year. And if we have failed God, we have also failed to love each other.

Two, *thanks for God's help*: God has helped us in important ways in this last year to do these very things. It's important to thank God for the ways his Holy Spirit has helped us.

Three, *help us keep this*: that God would fill us with his Spirit, to help us live out this covenant, that his Spirit will work in us so we'll *want* to live this way, and so we'll actually *do* it.

Four, *thanks for the family* of Christ: God has bound us together and made us one, our covenant does not do that, God has already done it, and *he has made us rich through each other*.

Peter said to Jesus, "We left everything to follow you. What will we get?" The answer of Jesus, in the present life, was mostly family: lots of fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters. Thank God for the family of Christ.

Questions before we covenant?

ANNUAL COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP of the KLEEFELD CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

APOSTLES' CREED (All stand)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Holy Church worldwide,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

ANNUAL COVENANT RENEWAL WITH JESUS THE LORD (All kneel)

Lord Jesus, you died for our sins, and you ransomed us for God. You marked us as your own by sending us the Spirit. You promised resurrection and promised an inheritance. (1Cor 15:3; Eph 1:13)

So like the first disciples, we want to leave what holds us back and follow you. We present our bodies to God our Father as living sacrifices. This is our worship, the only right response to his mercy. (Matt 4:18-22; Rom 12:1)

We want to bring you glory by our bodies, whether by living or by dying. (Php 1:20)

We will keep the great commands you gave us, to love our God with all we have, and to love each other as ourselves. (Mk 12:28-34)

Lord Jesus, we can only say this because you promise help. You say, the God who calls us is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Thess 5:24)

You say, God works among us, so that we will want to do what pleases him, and so that we will do it. You say, the God who began a good work in us, will complete it for the day of Jesus Christ. (Php 2:13; 1:6)

You say, you can keep us from falling, and bring us into God's glorious presence, blameless and full of joy. And you offer us forgiveness for our daily failures. (Jude 24-25; Lk 11:4)

So we present ourselves to you as living sacrifices, trusting in these promises from you.

## ANNUAL COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP

(Half the members stand and face the others to covenant, then reversed)

As a believer in Christ, whether a baptized adult or a believing child, I want to covenant with the rest of you at Kleefeld Christian Community. This is what I covenant before God:

I will meet regularly with you. (Heb 10:25)

I will encourage you to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, by urging you to live a life full of love and good deeds, more and more as Christ's return gets closer. (Mt 6:33; Heb 10:24-25)

I will offer myself to God, so He can use me to help you - spiritually, physically, and emotionally. (Jn 13:14-17; James 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17-18)

I will guard the unity of the Body, so I do not grieve the Holy Spirit. This means that I will speak to you and about you only in ways that will build you up. (Eph 4:3, 29-30)

Because God has forgiven me and keeps forgiving me, I will forgive you when you hurt or offend me. (Col 3:12-13)

I will pray for you, share your happiness and your tears. I will accept your help and your gifts with thankfulness, as wholeheartedly as I offer you my help and my gifts. (Eph 6:18; Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 14:26)

I will encourage you, help you, be patient with you, and work to do and say what is good for you. (1 Thess 5:14-15)

Together with you I offer myself, my prayers, my tithes and offerings, and my service to God's work at the Kleefeld Christian Community. (Eph 6:18; Php 2:3-4; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 9:6-11)

Lord, make our love increase and overflow, for each other and for everyone else. (1 Thess 3:12)

## ELDERS' ANNUAL PLEDGE TO THE CONGREGATION

(Elders stand and speak together to the congregation)

You are the church that God bought for himself  
with the blood of his own Son.

Therefore we the elders will guard ourselves  
and all of you. (Acts 20:28)

We will watch over you, not because we must,  
but because we are willing, as God wants us to be.

We will not oversee you for personal gain,  
but will be eager to serve.

We will not lord it over you who God placed in our care,  
but will be examples to you.

We will pray for you, lead and encourage you,  
nurture and guide you,  
as shepherds under the Chief Shepherd. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

May the God who calls us be faithful to help us.

CONGREGATION'S ANNUAL PLEDGE TO THE ELDERS  
(Congregation rises to pledge)

Since the Holy Spirit has chosen you to lead and guard this church,  
we will pray for you. (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:17)

We will pray that God protects you and your families  
from the evil one.

We will respect you as leaders, honouring the direction you give.  
(1 Thess. 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17)

We will make your task easier by keeping the unity of the faith  
and by using our gifts to serve the Lord.

We recognize your commitment to us, to your family,  
and to other duties to which the Lord has called you.

So we pledge to support you, encourage and uphold you,  
as elders of this church.

May the God who calls us be faithful to help us.