

Gospel Fellowship of Sussex

Explanation of Formal Membership (2014)

Revised September 16, 2014

INTRO / BACKGROUND

Several months ago, the elders committed to a process of putting in order some important but dangling matters in our church organization. We committed to this for the sake of moving forward into our future. This process included revisiting our Constitution. We had wanted to celebrate and affirm the good legacy God has developed in us over the years. We sought to do this by minimizing changes to our document and simply cleaning it up with better wording and tidier rearrangement. In this way, we kept ideas largely untouched though better clarified. Yet, there was one matter we felt needed a significant change, which we made known to our congregation as best we could; that was the issue of membership.

About this, all the elders were very unanimously desirous for GFS to effect a change from its “informal membership” – which we thought left relationships and mutual commitments very unstated, unintentional, unclear, or even entirely unknown – to a more “formal membership” structure which prompts us to clarify our mutual comradeship in the Gospel and spells out reasonable expectations for community. This we felt was in keeping with the kind of deliberate, open-hearted covenantal community the New Testament calls for in Christ’s Church.

Now, following our thirteen week summer message series on the Core Values of Gospel Fellowship, we believe we have provided a good and easy opportunity for all to be exposed to the basic principles which define us as a church organization. It now seems fitting to declare a season during which we elders plan to tend to the matter of helping our congregants make the transition to formal membership. That season is now being declared, beginning today (October 5) through to the end of the year on December 31, in which we are especially availing ourselves for this over the whole breadth of Gospel Fellowship congregants.

PRIORITIES

We are aware Gospel Fellowship is in a time of transition. Perhaps some may believe that such a transitory season may not be the best time to declare membership. We understand some of you may feel now is not the perfect time to become formal members. Maybe you want to wait and see how things shake out with the new pastor.

We want you to know we understand such thoughts. But we believe this is the right move for us as a church both for now and for our future, and what is the right thing to do now should not be put off by what might be or might not be in the future. What is the right thing to do is always the right thing to do, period.

So we are boldly moving forward on this matter, and with faith and sincere love for you, we are asking you to join us.

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We believe God is glorified when believers enter readily into active, conscious and intentional, biblically informed community with one another, where leaders are leading with deliberate love, followers are submitting to leaders with benevolent eagerness, and members are more thoroughly and consciously committing to the welfare of one another. This seems to us more prompted by the elements of formal membership than those of informal membership.

PROCEDURE

Here is the process toward membership through this next three month window – that is, from now, October 5, through the end of the year.

- **RECEIVE YOUR MEMBERSHIP PACKET.** Take a New Member packet, which will include:
 - Explanation of Formal Membership (2014)
 - Confession of Faith
 - Constitution
 - Member Questionnaire
 - Covenant of Membership
 - Personal Information

- **FILL OUT YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOCUMENTS.** Complete the last pages of the packet which includes the Personal Information, Member Questionnaire and the Covenant of Membership sheets. Remember to put your name on your sheets.

- **SUBMIT YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOCUMENTS.** Turn in the completed pages. You may submit them in one of two ways:
 - Deposit them in the Membership Dropbox located in the foyer.
 - Hand them personally to Dave Mikul, the membership expeditor.

- **WAIT FOR COMMUNICATION.** Dave will contact you very soon by email or by phone. He will acknowledge having received your documents, will check them for legibility on our end, and will work with you in suggesting tentative dates for your Elder interview. (He may need to double-check with the appropriate elder, in which case Dave will call back to confirm your interview date or work out an alternative date.)

- **ATTEND ELDER INTERVIEW.** Have your scheduled Elder interview which could last up to an hour. There will be two interviewers, one of which may be a Constitution Committee member. This interview is designed to be a time of fellowship and personal appreciation of the Lord's work in your life. It will be a congenial time for mutual dialog. It will be an opportunity for you to tender any questions you may have for them. And it is an opportunity for at least one elder to personally express our collective elder commitment to you for "keeping watch over your souls with joy," (Heb 13:17) as we move forward.

- **RECEIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MEMBERSHIP.** Soon thereafter, we will acknowledge your membership personally, also publicly via spoken announcement or church bulletin, or both. And you may be offered an opportunity to share your testimony at a future service for all the saints to know you better and savor the Lord's work.

Bibliology – The Doctrine of the Word of God

- We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as verbally-plenary inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writing, and that they *alone* are of supreme and final authority in matters of faith and practice, the true center of Christian union. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-20.

Theology Proper – The Doctrine of God

- We believe that God is a sovereign, living, intelligent, rational Being. All of the actions of God in the universe are aimed at the declaration of His glory *alone*. He has the will, power and authority to carry that plan to completion. Gen. 18:25; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29.
- We believe in one God, eternally existing in three co-equal persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. Gen. 1:1, 26; Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 28:19; 29:19; John 1:1, 3; 4:24; Rom. 1:19, 20; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5, 6; 1 John 5:7.

Angelology – The Doctrine of Angels

- We believe angels are created spiritual beings without physical bodies with moral judgment and high intelligence. Although they are a higher order of creation than man they were created to serve God and to worship Him; and are therefore not to be worshiped. Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:2,5, Luke 2:9-14; Heb. 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Rev. 5:11-14.
- We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness. He is destined to the judgment of eternal justice in the Lake of Fire. Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:1-3; Matt. 4:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:10.

Anthropology – The Doctrine of Man

- We believe that Adam is the first man who existed in historical space and time and serves as the representative head for all mankind.
- We believe that Adam and thus all mankind was created in the image of God, and that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all human beings since the fall are born with a sinful nature and are guilty of sin in thought, word, and deed. Gen.1:26-27; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:23.

Christology – The Doctrine of Christ

- We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary, a virgin, and is true God and true man. Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:2-38; John 1:1-2,14,18; 14:7-11; 20:28; Gal. 4:4-5.

- We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood and His resurrection *alone*. I Cor. 15: 1-4; Heb.10:9-12; Rom. 3:23-26; 4:25.
- We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into heaven, and in His present life there as High Priest and Advocate. I Cor. 14:1-20; John 20:24-29; Heb. 1:3; Acts 1:10-11; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; I Tim. 2:5.

Soteriology – The Doctrine of Salvation

- We believe that all those who receive by *grace alone* through *faith alone* the Lord Jesus Christ have been born from above by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and have thereby become the children of God. Jn. 1:12; 3:5; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:26; Titus 3:5.
- We believe that all true conversion involves a change of mastery as believers cease serving themselves and come under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Rom. 6:17-18; 1 John 2:4.

Pneumatology – The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

- We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. John 16:7-11; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 1:19-20.
- We believe that God has fixed his presence on earth within his spiritual body and spiritual temple, which are the church. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer in Christ, as He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide and He indwells the church more powerfully as they gather together corporately. John 14:16, 17, 26; John 16:9-14; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 2:20-22; 5:18-21.

Ecclesiology – The Doctrine of the Church

- We believe that God has placed in the heart of each of his children a love for the community of faith, which is the church, and that He has obligated them to mutual ministry within it. Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:18-22; 1 John 4:19-5:1.

Eschatology – The Doctrine of End Times

- We believe in "That blessed hope" - the personal, visible, and bodily return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Tit. 2:13; Acts 1:10-11; I Thess. 4:13-19; I Cor. 15:51-58.
- We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost. Jn. 5:21-30; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15; 21:8; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Jn. 14:1-6.

Gospel Fellowship of Sussex

Constitution

Revised April 25, 2014

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Gospel Fellowship of Sussex, Wisconsin, in order to establish rules and procedures with which to administer this local assembly, do hereby recognize ourselves as a sovereign local church and do ordain and establish the following Constitution to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

NAME

The name of this church shall be Gospel Fellowship of Sussex (referred to as “GFS” or “this fellowship” within this Constitution and the Bylaws).

FOUNDATION

The foundation of this fellowship is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Its code of guidance in all its affairs is the Word of God, and this fellowship does here affirm its faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inerrant Word of Almighty God (Mark 13:31).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this fellowship shall be to worship God according to the teaching of His Word, to practice the precepts and examples of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the New Testament, to sustain her ordinances and doctrines (as defined in the *Statement of Faith*) and to preach and propagate among all peoples the Gospel of Salvation which is by personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

PRIORITIES OF MINISTRY

The priorities of ministry of this body flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen the vision in nurture and education (1 Corinthians 14:26 ; 2 Peter 3:18), and spread the vision in evangelism, missions, and good works (1 Peter 2:9; 3:15 ; Matthew 28:18-20; 5:16).

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

A plurality of Elders shall guide this fellowship in the ministry of the church. The term Elder is synonymous with pastor and overseer within this Constitution and the Bylaws. The Elders are willfully (1 Peter 5:1-3) and humbly accountable to Christ, each other and this fellowship as they lead under the motif of a godly family where communication exists.

The Elders bear the ultimate responsibility in all matters pertaining to the fellowship although they will seek the wisdom of the body on decisions pertaining to the life of the church. Elders shall be appointed and/or removed by the then existing Elders following the process as stated in the Bylaws.

Revised April 25, 2014

Deacons shall be servants to this fellowship and assist the Elders in the ministry of the church by performing the services of advice, administration, and implementation. Deacons shall be appointed and/or removed by the Elders following the process in the Bylaws.

MEMBERSHIP

GFS shall have a formal membership for those who show evidence of faith in Christ, have been baptized upon believing, and affirm the *Confession of Faith* following the process as prescribed by the Elders and the Bylaws.

AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution may be amended by the decision of the Elders (with support from this fellowship) following the process as stated in the Bylaws.

Gospel Fellowship of Sussex

Membership Questionnaire

Revised September 5, 2014

One of the primary purposes of the New Member Class/Interview is to discern if each person who wants to become a member of this local church is a “member” of the Body of Christ. That is, is he/she truly a disciple of Christ? Is he/she a born-again believer in Jesus Christ? We know that only God really knows who His children are, but we do our best to accept into membership those whom we can discern have believed in Christ for forgiveness of sins, are (or desire to be) followers of Jesus, desire to be in community using their spiritual gifts and want to join us in our mission.

1. Have you repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ for salvation? Please explain.

2. Have you been baptized by immersion since you became a believer and follower of Jesus Christ? YES _____ or NO _____. What is the purpose of baptism?

3. Why do you want to become a member of *Gospel Fellowship of Sussex*?

4. We encourage members to join a small group which we call Growth Groups - it's where “community” happens. We have many small groups or Bible studies that meet different evenings /times of the week. What kind of Small Group do you think you would like to belong to?

5. What church(es) have you previously been part of and how were you involved?

6. We encourage our members to get involved in a ministry. What type of ministry do you think you would like to be involved in at GFOS?

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Membership Questionnaire

Revised September 5, 2014

7. Have you attended a “Let’s Get Acquainted” class? _____
8. Have you read and agree with the Confession of Faith of *Gospel Fellowship*? _____
9. Have you read, agree with, and signed the Covenant of Membership of *Gospel Fellowship*?

10. What is the best time for you to talk to an elder where you share your journey of faith of how Christ encountered you?
- Sunday afternoon? Time? _____ Wednesday 6:00 p.m. _____
- Other _____

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Return This Page)



GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP
OF SUSSEX

Gospel Fellowship of Sussex

Covenant of Membership

Revised June 23, 2014

Having sincerely trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior through personal faith in Him, and having followed Him in baptism subsequently, and being in agreement with Gospel Fellowship's Confession of Faith, I now wholeheartedly desire to unite in membership with the Gospel Fellowship family. I do this joyfully, thoughtfully and voluntarily. As God enables, I seek to contribute actively toward the church's purposes of mutual edification, fellowship, and accountability. I understand my church leadership commends this congregation to:

- Faithfully participate in worship, outreach, relationships, discipleship and stewardship (WORDS), and a regular celebration of the Lord's Table.
- Work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace relationally. This church seeks to pursue peace with all people, especially believers, being slow to take offense and eager to reconcile when love is offended. It seeks to show no favoritism and aims to demonstrate genuine fellowship with all Christian people who seek to worship with us.
- Work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace doctrinally. This church seeks to demonstrate a teachable spirit and aims to teach faithfully according to the more extensive Statement of Faith, which it acknowledges to be an accurate summary of biblical truth. It stands to reject all heretical beliefs and practices, claiming Scripture as the final authority.
- See spiritual gifts within the body used for the common good. It aims to work for the furthering of a faithful evangelical ministry in sustaining worship, spiritual disciplines and scriptural doctrines. The church promotes parents to seek salvation among the entire family unit and all its people to seek salvation among circles of friends, co-workers, acquaintances and all people groups.
- Seek to demonstrate to its individuals, and to the world around them, the significance of holy life in the body of Christ. It aims for a personal life that is above reproach, a life that is just, honest, and faithful in its responsibilities and commitments. It aims for a personal life that abides by the standards of sexual purity and ethical integrity as Scripture teaches. It emphasizes that we have been buried by baptism and raised again through the work of Christ, and there is upon us a special obligation to lead a new and holy life by the grace of God.
- See to develop a submissive spirit to the Word of God and a receptive heart to the counsel of the elders in matters of correction. Lovingly assume responsibility to participate in the correction of sinning fellow believers for the purpose of resolution, restoration and reconciliation.

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- Watch over all other members in love, remembering one another in prayer, helping them in sickness and distress, promoting their spiritual growth, humbly admonishing them when in sin, and stirring them to love and good deeds. This congregation aims to rejoice with one another in their happiness and bear their burdens with tenderness and patience.
- Contribute cheerfully, regularly and generously to the support of its ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all nations. This church promotes the individual commitment of time, money, and possessions to the cause of Christ in being a faithful steward of Him.
- Seek to remain faithful to this church in membership. When called by God's providence to move elsewhere, the church encourages its members in transition to unite with some other church where they may continue carrying out the spirit of this covenant and following the principles of God's Word.

In summary, this church seeks to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as Christ loves us. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Annual reaffirmation dates and signature:

(Return This Page)



GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP
OF SUSSEX

Gospel Fellowship of Sussex

Personal Information

Revised September 5, 2014

Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

If you are already in our church directory and the information there is correct, please check here and skip the rest of this page.

Address:

(Street) _____

(City) _____ (Zip) _____

Email

(home): _____

(work): _____

Phone Numbers:

Cell: _____ Home _____

Business: _____

Marital Status: _____ **Date of Marriage** _____

Spouses Name: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s):	Date of Birth	Grade	School
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Occupation & Employer (You):

Occupation & Employer (Spouse):

(Return This Page)



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(Return This Page)



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(Return This Page)



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