



The Newest Covenant by Brian Watson

We envision a congregation whose love for Jesus and one another leaves a clear and compelling witness for Christ.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:24-25

In the church's April business meeting, Pastor Ryan proposed a new church covenant to replace the current one we have. The reasons for this are many: 1) The current covenant is an old one that circulated across the country many decades ago and was printed in the 1956 *Baptist Hymnal* (the year Pinehurst was incorporated). In other words, the covenant was never written specifically for our church by our church. 2) The language of the previous covenant is a bit antiquated and it is hard to understand. 3) There are some elements of the Christian life not addressed by the previous covenant, and there are things in the previous covenant that are not biblical (such as tattling, which I personally find amusing). 4) We recently preached a sermon series on church membership and we have a number of people who want to join our church. This makes it a good time to rewrite the church covenant and use it as a clear expression of what we ask of church members.

The proposed new covenant appears below in italics. I will try to explain each section briefly.

Having, as we trust, been brought by God's grace to turn from sin and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as a public profession of our new life in Him, we do now, in the presence of God and this church family, most solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

A member of the church, one who covenants with PBC, must

be a Christian who has been baptized. In short, Baptists believe in believer's baptism, subsequent to salvation, by immersion.

A covenant has been defined as "a solemn agreement between the members of a church to act together in harmony with the precepts of the gospel." When you agree to this covenant, you are making a commitment to God, the church, and its members.

By the power of the Spirit working powerfully within us, as members of this church we commit to live together as Christ's disciples in the following ways:

Doctrinal Unity. *We have read and understood the doctrinal statement of Pinehurst Baptist Church and are in agreement. We will not be divisive to its teaching and content, but rather work toward unity and peace as we continually devote ourselves to studying the Bible.*

Doctrine simply means "a system of teachings." We teach the Bible, which we recognize as the Word of God. As we agree on the truths of the Bible, we will have greater unity. There are many passages in the Bible that address both doctrine and unity. See Romans 16:17-20; Ephesians 4:1-16; and Titus 2:1-10.

Our official doctrinal statement is the Baptist Faith and Message (2000). This document is on our website (look at "What We Believe" under the "Who We Are" section). If you need a hard copy of this document, please let us know.

Personal Holiness. *We will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with Jesus through personal Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and other spiritual disciplines. We will live according to the truths we believe, submitting to Christ as Lord in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. If there are others in our household, we will seek their spiritual growth and well-being. We will watch over one another in love, humbly holding one another accountable, even submitting to church discipline should the need arise.*

Christians are to be holy, for God is holy. First Peter 1:13-25 addresses this issue quite well. There are several ways that we can be holy, or set apart for God's purposes. We need to know what God has spoken, so we must continually read and study the Bible. We must communicate with God in prayer. And we must worship God individually (through obedience) and as a body (as we sing, pray, give, hear God's Word, etc.).

The Christian life is lived in fellowship with other believers. Though we are saved individually, we are saved to a community. There are many "one another" passages in the New Testament: We are to love one another (Romans 12:10); live at peace with one another (Romans 12:16); serve one another (Galatians 5:13); bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2); bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2); be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32); sing to one another (Ephesians 5:19);

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submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21); forgive one another (Colossians 3:13); teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16); encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11); do good to one another (1 Thessalonians 5:15); exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13); confess our sins to one another (James 5:16); and show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9).

Families are called to function according to God's Word, which means that wives should submit to husbands, husbands should love their wives, parents should discipline and instruct their children, and children should obey their parents. (See Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; and 1 Peter 3:1-7).

The people of the church are instructed to submit to their pastors (Hebrews 13:17) as well as the discipline of the church (Matthew 18:15-20; see 1 Corinthians 5 for an example). This is for the good of us all.

Finally, consider Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." We must stir each other up to love and good works, but we can't do that if we don't meet together regularly, which brings me to...

Loving Service. *We will worship regularly with Pinehurst Baptist Church, holding corporate worship and the Lord's Supper in highest regard. We will use our spiritual gifts, talents, time, and effort to help other members grow in Christian maturity. We will strive to consider the needs of others as more important than our own, and, like our Lord Jesus, seek to serve rather than be served. We will regularly pray for one another. We will both mourn and rejoice together, as fits the occasion.*

The body of Christ is meant to function well, with each part contributing. What does it mean to "worship regularly?" It certainly *does not* mean that we will

come to church only if we feel like it or have nothing better to do. Sure, sometimes members are sick or out of town. But regularly missing worship for sporting events or family brunch would not indicate that one holds corporate worship "in highest regard."

Serving the body with our spiritual gifts is addressed in Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16; and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

We must pray for one another (James 5:16) and mourn and rejoice with one another (Romans 12:15).

Sacrificial Giving. *We commit to good stewardship of the money and possessions God has given us by regularly and cheerfully giving to the ministry of the church. In light of God's grace given at the cross of Christ, it is our pleasure to give sacrificially to the needs of the church body, the advancement of the gospel throughout the world, and the physical relief of those who suffer.*

Giving financially to the needs of the church is an important aspect of worship. It is a necessary act, but it is also a way of acknowledging that all our money—and even the ability to make money—comes from God.

Christians are commanded to financially support the gospel ministry (1 Corinthians 9:13-14; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). This type of giving is worship (Philippians 4:18). We are also instructed to contribute regularly, cheerfully, and abundantly to ministry and the needs of other Christians (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9). We give generously because Jesus gave (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Gospel Mission. *We will work together to fulfill the Great Commission, striving to bring glory to God by making disciples of Jesus Christ in our city, nation, and world. We will seek to joyfully proclaim the gospel to family, friends and acquaintances. We will pray for the Spirit of God to give growth as we plant the seeds of the gospel. And we will prove the truth of our message by our love for one another.*

The church exists to glorify God. The church is the instrument God uses to reach others with the gospel. (See Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; 1 Peter 2:9-12; and Revelation 12:11). Each one of us has a role to play in sharing the gospel with everyone we know, particularly those close to us. We should continue to live lives worthy of the gospel, contribute to the gospel ministry, share the gospel, and pray that the gospel message would be heard and received. Finally, the gospel message is substantiated by our love for each other (John 13:34-35).

Moreover, when we move 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. If at any time we can no longer commit to this covenant, or have questions or concerns regarding Pinehurst Baptist Church, we will notify the church leadership as soon as possible.

No, we have no control over what you do *after* you leave our church. And we can't keep you from leaving our church if that is your desire. The local church is a voluntary group, to be sure. But we do hope that if you leave us for whatever reason, you would do so in a mature and Christian way. You should find a new church quickly. You should tell us why you are leaving. Maybe your beliefs have changed. Maybe you don't like the way we do things. Maybe you have an issue with someone in the church that needs to be resolved. Whatever the reason, we ask that you show us love and respect through clear communication.

We will be voting to adopt this new covenant at the next business meeting on June 10. Please read this document carefully and feel free to bring any questions or concerns to your pastors. We believe that this new church covenant will serve as a clear guide for life together at Pinehurst Baptist Church.