

The Rooted Church | Partnership Covenant

Introduction

“...through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...”
Ephesians 3:10

The church exists to display the glory of God to the world. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God’s redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been calling forth His people to display His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church Universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the very means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (II Corinthians 5:17-20), the very means by which God is writing His beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation.

In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a call to live out the unity of the redeemed through our love for God and love for others, both those within the family of God and those who are outside of Christ. The church is the gathering of the redeemed (Hebrews 10:24-25), the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Jesus (Revelation 21:2,9), and the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-31).

Partnership at The Rooted is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. Because of this, we call our covenanted people “partners” to emphasize the fact that we expect them to be far more than spectators. The Rooted Church holds its partners in high regard. We expect them to joyfully be in the process of understanding and appropriating the truth of the gospel, that they might be centered on God in every part of life; recognizing and living out the identity-transforming power of the gospel, that they might live lives that are constantly defined by the grace of God; intentionally living out the mission of the gospel, that as missionaries to the world around them they might draw attention and bring glory to our risen Rescuer and Redeemer.

This partnership covenant is birthed out of our love for Jesus, His bride the Church, and the people of The Rooted. It’s primary purpose is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

1. To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both individual partners of The Rooted Church body and the leadership of The Rooted Church.
2. To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for The Rooted Church.
3. To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is a promise; an agreement by which two or more parties obligate themselves to each other to perform certain duties or to live a certain way. Within the Scriptures we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), others solely between people (I Samuel 18; II Samuel 5). Some covenants are unconditional, meaning there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other.

Though the partnership covenant of The Rooted Church does define the relationship between partners and the local church, it is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and His bride, the Church. Therefore, the heart of this partnership covenant simply reiterates the biblical obligations of all Christians, whether partnered with a local church or not. For example, all Christians are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. It is assumed that Christians will follow these universal obligations even if the local church fails in its covenant obligations. In other words, these Christian duties are unconditional.

Certain aspects of this covenant, however, are conditioned upon the faithfulness of both parties. For example, if an individual partner feels as though the leadership of The Rooted Church is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual partner to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders have clearly broken covenant faithfulness and are unwilling to change, then the partner is freed from his or her obligations to this particular church and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer partnership elsewhere.

Statement of Biblical Doctrine (Closed-Handed Issues)

The following beliefs represent the core of central orthodox belief from a biblical and historical perspective and should be universal to all followers of Christ. The explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies one from partnership with The Rooted Church.

I believe:

- that the Scriptures are completely true, authoritative and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21).
- that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; 46:9-10; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4-6; I Timothy 2:5).
- that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; that the members of the Trinity are equal in nature yet distinct in their roles (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7; 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:17-20; I Corinthians 12:4-6).
- that I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), by birth and action, a sinner (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8,12-21; 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- that the deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, is both fully God and fully human, and is without sin (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4,14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- that Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; I Peter 3:18).

- that Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:21; I Corinthians 15:12-34).
- that Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; I John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- that only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (John 3:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; I Timothy 2:5-6).
- in a future, physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal reward. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

In addition to the above affirmations, Rooted partners understand it is a responsibility of covenant partnership to have read and agreed with the Rooted Doctrinal Statement (available at www.therootedchurch.com), that The Rooted Church will preach, teach, and counsel in accordance with these theological convictions, and that the partner should address any questions, comments, or concerns regarding these doctrines to a pastor/elder.

Finally, statements of belief throughout history have often addressed concerns specific to the culture in which they were written. In our day we face a number of issues on which Scripture is clear and on which the Church must be unified. Therefore, partners must agree with the following:

- Marriage is between one man and one woman. Sexual contact is only appropriate within the bounds of heterosexual, monogamous marriage. Homosexual acts and unions are sin.
- Co-habitation is not an acceptable lifestyle for unmarried couples, even if engaged.
- Men are called to be the Christ-like head of the home, leading in love, truth, righteousness, selflessness, and intimacy.

Open-Handed Issues

The partner also understands that the leadership of The Rooted Church holds particular positions in the following areas (there are additional doctrinal requirements for leadership within The Rooted Church), but allows for differing positions to be held by partners. We ask those in disagreement to study these issues thoughtfully, to agree to not be divisive, and to actively pursue unity and peace.

- Predestination and election
- The timeline of creation (literal days vs. periods of time)
- God's active work in creation (i.e., theistic Darwinian evolution)
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Women and the role of pastor/elder
- Divorce and remarriage
- The relationship of God's glory to man's joy
- Views on eschatology (end times)

Biblical Obligations of The Rooted Church Elders to The Rooted Church Body

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with humbly protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the church body and her individual members. The following is a rather comprehensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant:

- to appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4).
- to care for the church, in part by praying for you regularly, and to seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1-4).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; I Timothy 4:16; II Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- to equip the partners of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; I Timothy 1:3-7; I John 4:1).
- to lovingly exercise biblical discipline when necessary for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example for and join partners in fulfilling the obligations of church partnership stated below (Philippians 3:17; I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; I Peter 5:3).

Biblical Obligations of Rooted Partners to The Rooted Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Jesus through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (Romans 8). The requirements of this partnership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant:

- to understand and adhere to the beliefs contained in the Rooted Doctrinal Statement as well as in this document and will not be divisive to the church's teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will diligently pursue and preserve unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:7,17).
- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; II Timothy 3:14-17; II Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue and maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; I Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; I Thessalonians 5:12-22).

- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Corinthians 12:13) and
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion (Mark 14:22-25; I Corinthians 11:17-34).
- to regularly participate in the life of The Rooted Church by attending weekly gatherings, engaging in biblical community, serving those inside and outside of this church, living intentionally as a missionary to the people God has placed in my life, and living a life that glorifies Jesus (Acts 2:42-47; I Corinthians 10:31; II Corinthians 5:11-21; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14 I Peter 2:9-12).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 8-9; I Peter 4:10-11).
- to not function in leadership or as a member of another church family (Hebrews 13:17).
- by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pursue holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who has saved me from my sin that I might live a new life (II Corinthians 5:17; I Peter 1:13-16; 4:1-3). Believers must strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity mean, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; I Corinthians 6:15-20; 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at The Rooted Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; I Corinthians 6; 7:10-11).
 - I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32; 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, not condemning fellow believers in areas where the Bible allows differing views and practices, and being careful not to create stumbling blocks for others in my own use of such freedom (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - humbly following the biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration,
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers, and
 - to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- to do the following when I sin:
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers,
 - repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; I John 1:6-10), and
 - to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church, being diligent to strive for unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:5).

My Commitment to The Rooted Church

I have read and agree with the Rooted Doctrinal Statement, have completed the Partnership class in its entirety, plan to be or have been baptized as a Christian, and commit to live as a diligent, faithful disciple of Jesus; that my identity would be in him, my worship would be for him, my fellowship would be through him, and my interaction with people and culture would be for his glory.

I understand that this covenant obligates me to the partners of The Rooted Church and is an acknowledgement of my submission to the elders of the church. I accept the responsibility to notify the leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, if I need to find another church home, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The Rooted Church.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

DOB: _____ Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Family (Spouse/children names and birthdays): _____

Any questions, comments, or concerns may be directed to nick@therootedchurch.com.