

# What it means to be a member at Riverwood Covenant Church

## By the Riverwood Leadership Board

*Thank you for considering membership at Riverwood Covenant Church.*

As church members of a unified, local body of Christ's believers, we value these ideals below and believe we should:

- See our membership as a gift to the body we are a part of, and will protect and honor it.
- Pray for other members.
- Serve other members.
- Give grace to others in their shortcomings.
- Strive not criticize, but come over and lift the other member up by helping them.
- Strive for unity for the sake of the gospel.
- Worship together, which binds us in Him.
- Ask God to show us what part we can operate in, and seek to function in it for the sake of the body of Christ.
- Tell others of His love and saving Grace.

Becoming a member here is a choice to identify and participate with Christ's Body as it is manifested at Riverwood Covenant. Please take time to read this pamphlet as a step in the membership process.

The Body of Christ is a singular organism, a functioning body, and not an organization. Membership in a church is not likened to a membership to a Country Club, in which we pay our dues and come to be served all the benefits and then leave.

Membership in Christ's body of believers is likened to a functioning human body in which there are many members woven together, each one having a special and unique function. The apostle Paul often used visuals to portray the church as a body and Christians as its body parts:

- To the Romans he wrote, "*We many are one body in Christ, and individually, members of one another.*" (Romans 12:5).
- To the Corinthians he wrote, "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- To Ephesus he wrote, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22-23).

When someone's appendix ruptures, he will feel a sharp pain in his side. He will have to have his appendix removed. Afterward, though, he will not really miss that appendix. He assumes it had a purpose, yet not enough to be missed. However, it certainly made its presence felt when something went wrong with it! How many church members might be described as an appendix? They are there and we suppose they are functioning somewhere. Yet, truth be told, if they disappeared from the church body, it is sad that most wouldn't even notice.

Though some church members may be like the appendix, others are a lot like the heart. You cannot live without a heart. It pumps blood and gives life to your whole body; it is a vital organ. If it were gone, well, then you would be too. We need it, we value it. We can see the good it does throughout the body. Yet the heart is only valuable working in conjunction with all the other body parts. As you consider yourself in the local body of Christ, what 'part' of the body do you think God wants you to function in?

Ask yourself this question; "What gifts has God given me in which I could add as a vital *part* to this church?" When any body part is not working, it affects the whole body. A leg is somewhat useless for walking if a person is paralyzed from the waist down and it does not work. A person whose arteries are clogged will soon need to be fixed or his body will die. So it is with the body of Christ; when all of His body parts are working at full capacity, we find ourselves better for it. As a body is not just the heart, **the church is not one body part**. We are a whole body. No one is so gifted and talented that they can do everything the church needs by themselves. On the other hand, we are not so insignificant that we are unimportant. Every person is significant in the church. We need each other for overall effectiveness. *So, you are just as important as all other members!!!*

In Romans 12:3 Paul wrote, "To everyone who is among you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to *think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*"

Paul wrote in Romans 12:4 "we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function." And he says in the letter to the Corinthians in (1 Corinthians 12:21), "*the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'*" Paul writes this to this church because some felt their gift or their office was greater than that of others. His words were to convey that not all people have the same role, yet that does not mean they are unimportant. So, not every member has the same function but "every part" needs to be working in a body that is to mature!

Riverwood admires God's handiwork of the body of Christ! You are His handiwork created for a part in a church body!! Not everybody is fit for every role. Yet, like our own bodies, this is what makes the church beautiful. All of the body parts put into their appropriate spots create a unified whole. We would not ask a finger to do what the nose does. We would not ask the lungs to do what the brain does. Each body part can do what it does best! We all can fit into a role where we are gifted, and most passionate. God wants us to find out where we are best-suited to serve and fill that role so he can maximize our abilities in His kingdom!

As Solomon wrote, *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might...”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians in Chapter 2 verse 8-9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one can boast.”*

When we see ourselves as imperfect people, we will also give each member grace in their imperfection. Only Christ is perfect and He chose to use each one of us as members of His body. So as members of our body in Christ, we strive for unity. Being we are a 'whole' made up of members, we are one. We are united!!

Jesus said in John 17:11 *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your Name, the name You gave me, so that they may be one as We are one.”*

So Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:3, *“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.”* God meant for us as a church to strive for peace among us. So much that Jesus prayed to the Father for it.

At Riverwood, we strive to keep the faith in doctrine and deed according to the scriptures. We will share our doctrine outright for the sake of unity and Pastor Keith will be including it in the next membership class you will be attending. By becoming a member, you will be agreeing to this doctrine. Of course, you can let us know if you have any questions.

### **Let's talk about the pastor's role in a church:**

Now that we have looked at what it is to be a church member, we know that our pastor cannot be looked to for all things and the only source of life in the body. Though we don't see him in his day-to-day life, his days are filled with endless demands for his time. He cannot be the head of the body and operate all other functions of the church.

Also, he cannot serve the church in his own power, he needs Christ's power in just the same measure as we do. Of this church in which he leads, a praying member is of great value! As we pray for him, God will bestow blessings, not only on him and his family, but on the whole body. As members, we seek to serve Christ only, who is our Head. Our pastor is the head of this church body, but he is not super-human and neither does he have any special ability that another member has. He functions in a unique role that is his alone, and we do not expect him to be all for everybody. Please pray for strength for him and his family every day.

## **\*KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES**

1 Corinthians 12:27...

*“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it,”*

Romans 12:4-5...

*“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

1 Corinthians 12:12...

*“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.”*

Ephesians 1:22...

*“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,”*

1 Corinthians 12:25-26...

*“-so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”*

Ephesians 4:25...

*“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”*

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