

RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Introduction

The following Commitments are designed to help the people who attend our church relate to one another in a way that honors God and promotes authentic relationships. These Commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, marriage and divorce, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

These Commitments are intended to help us build a strong community of faith. By *community*, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of his love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that true community isn't easy to achieve. But as our mission statement states: South Park Church exists to walk with God, connect as family and love others in Jesus' name, we desire to put in place elements that will help us be a well-functioning community.

At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. That's where these Commitments come in. They pull together key principles from God's Word and serve as our relational guidelines. These Commitments accomplish several important purposes:

- They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.
- They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear track for us to run on when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward reconciliation.
- They define and limit the spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.¹
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.²

As you read our Relational Commitments, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. We want you to be confident that these Commitments are based solidly on the Word of God. If your study does not answer all of your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to approach our leaders, who will be happy to talk with you about these principles.

We encourage you to expressly embrace these Commitments and formally join our church by going through our membership class, acknowledging your faith in Christ, and signing the Church Covenant provided at the end of this document.

If you are not yet ready to become a member, you and your family are certainly welcome to attend our worship services, find fellowship in one of South Park Church's small groups, and seek assistance from

¹ When we use the term "leader" in these Commitments, we are referring to the pastors and elders of our church.

² See www.PeacemakerChurch.net for information on how these Commitments can help to prevent conflict and reduce exposure to legal liability in our church.

our leaders. Please realize that if you continue relating to us in any of these ways, we will assume that you have consented to these Commitments, even if you have not yet formally joined the church. (See the story on the next page to learn why these Commitments apply to both members and attenders.)

As followers of Christ, we will do all we can to encourage you to grow in faith and godliness and to live a disciplined life that honors our Lord Jesus Christ and enhances the witness of His church.

The Leaders of South Park Church

Adopted 2011 _____

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A Tale of Two Families

Two boys, John and Luke, lost their mother at a young age. When they were in their teens, their father was reported to have died when his plane crashed into the ocean. The boys had no other relatives, so two neighboring families took them in.

The Friendly family did all they could to make John feel welcome in their home. They gave him his own bedroom, provided his meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. Not wanting him to feel any pressure, they did not explain to him any of the family rules. Instead they hoped that he would notice how their other children behaved and decide on his own to act the same way.

Not knowing exactly what was expected of him, John frequently disappointed the family by violating unspoken rules. Feeling judged and unconnected to the family, he became increasingly independent. He came and went at any hour, played loud music, and spent long hours in his room with a variety of girls. When Mr. Friendly finally tried to talk with him about his behavior, John said, "I'm not your son, so you have no right to tell me how to live my life. I like having a bedroom and meals whenever I decide to be here, but I'll still do whatever seems right to me."

Tensions continued to build, and finally Mr. Friendly asked John to leave. Fortunately for John, there was another Friendly family in town, and they were happy to take him in. But there the cycle started all over again.

John's brother had an entirely different experience. Luke was taken in by the Loving family. They wanted him to feel welcome, so they gave him a room, provided meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. But they also wanted to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. So shortly after Luke arrived, Mr. Loving explained the family rules to Luke, so he would know how to get along with the rest of the family. He said, "Even though you are not my son, I will be glad to look out for you the best I can. But as long as you are in my home, I also will expect you to behave as my other children do."

Like any normal teenager, Luke sometimes broke the rules. When he did, Mr. Loving sat down with him, pointed out what he'd done wrong, and held him accountable to the same standards he had established for his other children. Luke sometimes resented this discipline, but he eventually realized it was always done in love, and it kept him out of a lot of trouble.

After a few months, Mr. Loving approached Luke and said, “Since you are living here like part of the family, we would like to make it official. If you feel this is where you’d like to stay, we’d like to adopt you and make you our son.”

Luke gladly accepted and formally committed himself to the family. In doing so, he changed from being an orphan who merely resided in the home to being a son who willingly accepted and enjoyed all of the same responsibilities and privileges of his new brothers and sisters.

Suppose that John and Luke’s father is rescued from an island two years later. When he is reunited with his sons and hears what has happened to them, which family will he thank the most? The Friendly family, who were kind enough to give John a place to hang out, but could not bring themselves to give him any boundaries? Or the Loving family, who welcomed Luke in, held him accountable to the same rules as the rest of the family, and invited him to be a son?

The answer is obvious. And there is a real Father who one day will evaluate the way we care for the people who come into our church family. Therefore, we are glad to welcome people and give them a place to worship, grow and serve. But being “friendly” is not good enough. We want to be loving, as God defines loving (Heb. 12:5-6; 10:24). Therefore, we will encourage and expect everyone who attends our church to live out the biblical principles that are summarized in these Relational Commitments.

And when people have lived like part of our family for a while, we will encourage them to “make it official.” Living like an orphan, with its illusion of independence and self-determination, may seem appealing to some. But it cannot compare to the security, privileges, and sense of belonging that come from joining a biblical church and living as truly committed brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of his only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us his wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).

- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others sin against us, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline*.
- If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God’s command not to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know his infinite love and peace.³

³ Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matt. 19:6).

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with his bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, he established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

Jesus said that when humans were made and brought together as male and female, that they became one—no longer two—and that they were not to be separated again, at least not by humans. He further indicated that this is an arrangement that holds until the resurrection, when we will be significantly changed.

Those of us who live after the departure of Jesus from earth have a wonderful added help. The Holy Spirit has taken up permanent residence in believers. This gives us a new power to follow God's plan, and it is obviously going to be lot more helpful if both partners in a marriage have that power.

There has also been a new challenge added. God now also expects marriages to be demonstrations of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

So marriage has always been: 1. Beautiful, helpful, and exhilarating and 2. Challenging. It is our desire to promote the first set and help with the second.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. We want all of you to know that you are welcome in our church.

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and preventing divorce. Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to strengthening marriages and families. We require and provide thorough premarital counseling to ensure that couples enter into marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by regularly participating in small groups in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25). As relationships deepen within these groups, we expect husbands to spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and wives to encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

We believe that God has required us to take marriage seriously, to exert every effort to do well with and by each other, and to be very careful about the dissolution of marriages. The Bible indicates that God wants to limit divorce to marriages which have already been broken up by the sinful actions of one or both spouses—and that we need to avoid becoming callous to failure at something that is so integral to who we are as created beings.

Therefore, we will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

In attempting to mirror the Bible's strong statements against divorce, South Park Church is committed to preserving marriages and treating divorce only as a last resort born out of desperation in the following situations:

- A. Adultery by one of the marriage partners. (Our commitment to reconciliation would generally expect to find a lifestyle of adultery before divorce would be considered.)
- B. Abuse threatening the health or welfare of spouse or children.
- C. Physical desertion by the unbelieving spouse resulting from the conversion and faith of the believing spouse.

Divorce with the intention of getting rid of one spouse to marry another is wrong. Commission of wrongful divorce may initiate disciplinary and/or disfellowshipping procedures.

Our goal is to nurture each threatened marriage. We desire to encourage forgiveness and the rebuilding of trust, and we will attempt to help those who are willful in their disregard for their spouse by carefully calling them to account for their actions.

When someone is considering divorce, he or she is expected to bring the situation to our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who have filed for divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate. We will support a decision to pursue a second marriage to a different person only when we have determined that it is biblically valid and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God graciously extends this same love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.

COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

*A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13).*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members and attenders are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when our leaders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- when a leader is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other leaders in our church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church (Prov. 11:14);
- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);
- when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20); or,
- when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on
toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).*

***Like all of our Relational Commitments, the principles
and practices described below apply to all the people
who attend our church (both members and attenders).***

A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect his character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves his church so much that he sent his Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). His ultimate purpose for his church is to present her as a gift to his Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the "bride" of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

It is our desire that SPC be a church home where there is genuine love, fellowship and community – a place where people are serious about helping one another to be conformed to the image of Christ.

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God’s mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as “discipline.” The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. True discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. “The Lord disciplines those he loves” (Heb. 12:6). “Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law” (Ps. 94:12). “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline” (Rev. 3:19).

God’s discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as “formative discipline,” involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions God’s discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, he corrects us. One way he does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called “corrective” or “restorative” discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God’s name (1 Pet. 2:12).

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in his Word. Therefore, we

as a church are committed to help one another obey God's command to be "self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (Titus 1:8).

The leaders of our church recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of our body.

B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks him in prayer, and draws on his grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher or church leader. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called "formal discipline." It may be appropriate to request withdrawal from volunteering until the matter is resolved.

C. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to "tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church leaders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our leaders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).

As the disciplinary process progresses, our leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from our leaders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or

her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior.⁴ This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our leaders deem it to be appropriate (Matt. 18:17, 1 Tim. 5:20).⁵

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our leaders may formally remove him or her from membership and normal fellowship. They also may inform the church body of their decision and instruct the congregation to treat the individual as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat him as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to him, remind him of God's holiness and mercy, and call him to repent and put his faith in Christ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20)

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability if discipline is pending against us. Although we are free to stop attending the church at any time, we agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not be given effect until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 13:17).

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our leaders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from his sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members⁶ (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

⁴ For example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give him money to invest, and then fail to return the money as promised. Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to these schemes, and many people have lost much of what they had saved for retirement. When such sinful persons are discovered, they usually leave a church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes. If our leaders found such a person in our church, they may call him/her to repent and confess his wrongs. If he/she refused, they may bring him/her under formal discipline, and also warn the congregation not to trust him/her with their money.

⁵ If our leaders inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the individual's name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as: how widely known the situation already is; whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the individual to repent; or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm he might cause (see previous footnote). Even if our leaders decide it is not necessary to identify an individual specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help to enlist wide prayer support, let the congregation know that our leaders are obeying the Lord's command to seek after those who stray, and warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

⁶ For example, if we confronted a man in our church for seducing young women, or for acting inappropriately around little children, or for sowing and division, and he left and started attending another church, we would consider it our duty to urge the leaders of that church to counsel with him and to protect their people from his harmful behavior.

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual repents, and our leaders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14).

People who have been excluded from another church will not be allowed to become members, or to participate in the regular fellowship of our church until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:10-11).

The leadership of South Park Church is committed to acting in a loving, patient and redemptive manner.

WE INVITE YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH

Becoming a member of a church can be a life-changing decision. The preaching, teaching, fellowship, opportunities to use your gifts, and mutual accountability that you experience in a church can dramatically change your relationship with the Lord and with the people he places in your life. Therefore, we want you to take time to get to know our church, learn how we are fulfilling God's command to build his kingdom, and see how we love and relate to one another in daily life.

If you like what you see in our church, we invite you to attend our membership class. During that class you can learn more about our church's doctrines and vision for ministry, and about the privileges and responsibilities of formal membership. Attending the class will not obligate you to become a member.

If attending the membership class convinces you that joining our church will help you to grow in your ability to love and serve God, we would be delighted to have you become a member of our body. By joining our church, you will demonstrate in a concrete way your desire to unite with us to advance Christ's kingdom.