



# **WHAT'S NEXT AT MT. VERNON "FIRST STEP"**

## WHAT'S NEXT! FIRST STEP

This class is the basic introduction to our church family. Since we have new members from many different church backgrounds, this class was designed to clearly explain who and what our church is.

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### THE BASICS FOR THIS CLASS

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*<sup>19</sup>Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, Eph. 2:19 (NIV)*

#### *Key Truths:*

1. The church is \_\_\_\_\_ **A FAMILY** \_\_\_\_\_
2. God expects you to be \_\_\_\_\_ **A MEMBER** \_\_\_\_\_ of a church family.
3. A Christian without a church family is \_\_\_\_\_ **ORPHAN** \_\_\_\_\_

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### THE GOAL OF THIS CLASS

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...That I will commit myself to \_\_\_\_\_ **CHRIST** \_\_\_\_\_ and to the \_\_\_\_\_ **CHURCH FAMILY** \_\_\_\_\_.

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# Our Salvation

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*<sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 3:26-28 (NIV)

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

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Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing “*WHY?*” They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God’s purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person can ask is, “*What is the meaning of life?*”

Everyone wants to be happy. People try many ways:

- ...Some look for happiness by **acquiring possessions.**
- ...Some look for happiness by **experiencing pleasure.**
- ...Some look for happiness by **gaining prestige & power.**

But real happiness comes from understanding my

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### I. WHY AM I HERE?

1. GOD MADE ME TO \_\_\_\_\_ **LOVE** \_\_\_\_\_ ME!

God says, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love!*” Jer. 31:3

*<sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship<sup>[c]</sup> through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—*  
Eph. 1:4-5 (NIV)

2. WE WERE CREATED TO \_\_\_\_\_ **ENJOY** \_\_\_\_\_ A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD  
AND TO **MANAGE** \_\_\_\_\_ ALL OF THE REST OF GOD’S CREATION! THIS MAKES US SPECIAL!

*<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*  
Gen. 1:27-28 (NIV)

Jesus said, “*I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness!*” John 10:10

**3. WHEN WE KNOW AND LOVE GOD, AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES, IT PRODUCES TREMENDOUS BENEFITS IN OUR LIVES:**

**Clear Conscience**  
Rom. 8:1

**Life & Peace**  
Rom. 8:6

**Help with Weakness**  
Rom. 8:26

**Purpose**  
Rom. 8:28

**Confidence**  
Rom. 8:31

**Security**  
Rom. 8:39

**Power & Strength**  
Phil. 4:13

**Fulfillment**  
Phil. 4:19

**Freedom**  
John 8:32,36

**II. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?**

Man has a natural desire to BE THE BOSS and to ignore God's principles for living.

*"Look out for #1. Do your own thing."*

*"If it feels good, do it - regardless of what God says about it."*

*"It's my life and I'll do what I please!"*

**THE BIBLE CALLS THIS ATTITUDE: SIN**

*"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to his own way." Isaiah 53:6*

*"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth." 1 John 1:8*

**Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of His will.**

*"The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God." Isaiah 59:2 (LB)*

*"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal." Romans 3:23*

**When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives — marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.**

**WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS, THEY OFTEN TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING BEFORE TURNING TO GOD.**

*"There are ways that SEEM right to man, but they only end in death." Proverbs 16:25*

**Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him:**

- "My mother was a Christian so..."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere."
- "I'll give up all my bad habits."
- "I'll work real hard and earn it."

- “I’ll be religious and go to church.”

### III. WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

Jesus Christ said, “*I AM THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except THROUGH ME!*” John 14:6

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is a Person!

#### JESUS HAS ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF YOUR SIN PROBLEM!

“*The wages of sin in death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Rom. 6:23

**God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him.**

“*God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.*” Rom. 5:8

“*God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.*” 1 Tim. 2:5

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

### IV. WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

1. **ADMIT** \_\_\_\_\_ THAT GOD HAS NOT BEEN FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS.

“*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.*” 1 John 1:9

2. **BELIEVE** \_\_\_\_\_ THAT JESUS DIED TO PAY FOR YOUR SINS AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN ON EASTER, AND IS ALIVE TODAY.

“*If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*” Romans 10:9

“*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) by which we must be saved.*” Acts 4:12

3. **ACCEPT** \_\_\_\_\_ GOD’S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. DON’T TRY TO EARN IT.

“*For it is by grace you are saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*” Ephesians 2:8,9

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

4. **INVITE** \_\_\_\_\_ JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND BE THE DIRECTOR (“LORD”) OF YOUR LIFE.

“*To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who believe this are reborn! — not a physical rebirth...but from the will of God!*” John 1:12-13

*“Jesus says, ‘Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...’” Rev. 3:30*

**YOU CAN TAKE THESE STEPS BY PRAYING A SIMPLE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT TO GOD:**

“Dear Jesus, thank you for making me and loving me, even when I’ve ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow you from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. Please help me to grow now as a Christian.”

- **“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”** Romans 10:13

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

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### I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY **JESUS** \_\_\_\_\_.

- *“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.”* Mark 1:9

2. BECAUSE CHRIST **COMMANDS** \_\_\_\_\_ IT.

- *“Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all people everywhere and **make them my disciples**, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and **then teach them** to obey everything I have commanded you.’”* Matt. 28:19-20

3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A **BELIEVER** \_\_\_\_\_

- *“...many of the people who heard Him **believed** and were **baptized**.”* Acts 18:8
- *“We know that we have come to know Him, if we **obey** His commands.”* 1 John 2:3

### II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST’S **DEATH** \_\_\_\_\_ AND RESURRECTION

- *“Christ died for our sins... He was buried...and He rose again.”* 1 Cor. 15:3-4
- *“For when you are **baptized**, you were **buried** with Christ, and in baptism you were also **raised** with Christ.* Col. 2:12

2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY **NEW LIFE** \_\_\_\_\_ AS A CHRISTIAN.

- *“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!”* 2 Cor. 5:17
- *“**By our baptism then**, we were **buried** with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was **raised** from the dead...so also **we may live a new life!**”* Rom. 6:4

Baptism doesn't make you a believer — it shows that **you already believe**. Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring — it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**...it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.”* Ephesians 2:8-9

### III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

BECAUSE   **JESUS**   WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

*“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.”* Matthew 3:16

EVERY BAPTISM IN THE   **BIBLE**   WAS BY IMMERSION.

(Example) *“...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...”* Acts 8:38-39

THE WORD “BAPTIZE” MEANS TO   **DIP UNDER**   WATER”.

The Greek word *baptizo* means, “to immerse or dip under water”.

IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!

The founders of denominations agree:

**Martin Luther**...“I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”

**John Calvin**...“The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

**John Wesley**...“Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”

### IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS   **BELIEVED**   IN CHRIST.

- *“Those who believed and accepted His message were **baptized**...”* Acts 2:41
- *“Simon himself **believed** and was **baptized**...”* Acts 8:13
- *“But **when they believed** Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women.”* Acts 8:12

At Mt. Vernon, we wait until our children are old enough to **believe** and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a “*baptism of confirmation*” for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. **This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible**, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

**At Mt. Vernon, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were “confirmed” as children.**

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## THE MEANING OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

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Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. But He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called “*ordinances*”) as reminders of His death. These two ordinances are: Baptism and The Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for believers.

### I. WHAT IS THE LORD’S SUPPER? (1 COR. 11:23-26)

1. IT IS A **SIMPLE ACT** \_\_\_\_\_.

“*The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread...*” (vs. 23)

2. IT IS A **REMINDER** \_\_\_\_\_

“*...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; eat it in remembrance of me.’*” (vs. 24)

3. IT IS A **SYMBOL** \_\_\_\_\_

“*In the same way, He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; drink it to remember me.’*” (vs. 25)

4. IT IS A **STATEMENT OF FAITH** \_\_\_\_\_

“*For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes back.*” (vs. 26)

### II. WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD’S SUPPER?

Only those who are already **BELIEVERS** \_\_\_\_\_ (Mark 14:22-26)

“*For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself.*” 2 Cor. 11:29



### III. HOW DO I PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER?

*“Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.” 1 Cor. 11:27-28*

By...

**1. Self-Examination**

1 Cor. 11:27

**2. Confessing My Sins**

1 John 1:9

**3. Recommitment**

Rom. 12:1

**4. Restoring Relationships**

Matt. 5:23-24

### IV. WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Jesus never said when or how often believers should observe The Lord's Supper. He instituted it on a Thursday night. Mt. Vernon normally practice the Lord's Supper four times a year on Sunday morning.



# THE MT. VERNON STATEMENTS

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.” 1 Corinthians 1:10

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## OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

### *Why We Exist As A Church*

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The purpose of our church is summarized in a single sentence based on two key scriptures:

**“WE BELIEVE A GREAT COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE GREAT COMMANDMENT WILL GROW A GREAT CHURCH!”**

**The Great Commandment:** *“Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.’” Matt. 22:36-40*

**The Great Commission:** *“Jesus said, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’” Matt. 28:19-20*

- To “Love God with all your heart” is **“WORSHIP”**.
- To “Love your neighbor as yourself” is **“MINISTRY”**.
- To “Go...make disciples” is **“EVANGELISM”**.
- To “Baptize...” is to **“INCORPORATE INTO FELLOWSHIP”**.
- To “Teach them...all things” is **“DISCIPLESHIP”**.

### MT. VERNON EXISTS:

1. To **CELEBRATE** \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Presence (Worship)
2. To **DEMONSTRATE** \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Love (Ministry)
3. To **COMMUNICATE** \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word (Evangelism)
4. To **ASSIMILATE** \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Family (Fellowship)
5. To **EDUCATE** \_\_\_\_\_ God’s People (Discipleship)

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## OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

### *What We Believe*

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- **In essential beliefs — we have unity.**

*“There is one Body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all...” Eph. 4:4-6*

- **In non-essential beliefs — we have liberty.**

*“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.” Romans 14:1,4,12,22*

- **In all our beliefs — we show charity.**

*“...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have **no love**, I amount to nothing at all.” 1 Cor. 13:2 (Ph)*

### THE ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE:

#### 1. ABOUT GOD

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

Genesis 1:1,26,27, 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19;  
1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14

#### 2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven’s glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30;  
Hebrews 4:14,15; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 1:3,4;  
Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14,15; Titus 2:13

#### 3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He give every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily.

2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16,17; Acts 1:8;  
1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18

#### **4. ABOUT THE BIBLE**

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 2 Timothy 1:13;  
Psalm 119:105,160, 12:6; Proverbs 30:5

#### **5. ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS**

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin". This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2

#### **6. ABOUT SALVATION**

Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5;

#### **7. ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY**

Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10,14; 1 Peter 1:3-5

#### **8. ABOUT ETERNITY**

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

John 3:16; John 14:17; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18;  
Revelation 20:15; 1 Cor. 2:7-9



# THE MT. VERNON STRATEGY

“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

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## 5 CIRCLES OF COMMITMENT

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Mt. Vernon's objective is to keep moving people toward the center by encouraging personal spiritual commitments. Specifically, we call people to four basic commitments:

### THE FOUR MT. VERNON COVENANTS:

#### 1. THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT...

is a commitment to CHRIST and A CHURCH FAMILY

*<sup>19</sup>Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, Eph. 2:19 (NIV)*

*<sup>4</sup>For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Rom. 12:4-5 (NIV)*

#### 2. THE MATURITY COVENANT...

is a commitment to the HABITS necessary for spiritual growth?

*"Continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18*

*"Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit." 1 Tim. 4:7*

#### 3. THE MINISTRY COVENANT...

is a commitment to discovering and using my God-given gifts and abilities in SERVING God and others.

*<sup>5</sup>There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ... <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Cor. 12:5,27 (NIV)*

#### 4. THE MISSIONS COVENANT...

is a commitment to SHARE the Good News with others.

*"...you will be my witnesses for me...to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8*

*"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect..." 1 Peter 3:15*

### WHY DO WE HAVE THESE COVENANTS?

WE BECOME WHAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO



# THE MT. VERNON STRUCTURE

“For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace... Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

1 Corinthians 14:33,40



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## OUR AFFILIATION

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See also Titus 1:5-7, 1 Tim. 5:17

- ***The Dyer Baptist Association***  
41 churches that fellowship together and work together to reach Dyer and Lauderdale County
- ***The Tennessee Baptist Convention***  
3,000 churches that fellowship together with the goal of evangelizing our state
- ***The Southern Baptist Convention***  
40,000 churches that cooperate together in a world-wide effort of missions

### WHAT IS THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION?

- ***It is the largest association of Christian churches in America.***  
One out of every 10 churches in America is affiliated with the SBC (40,000 churches and 15 million members — more than most other denominations combined).
- ***It is the most diverse association of churches***  
SBC churches include every race, nationality, and ethnic group. Each Sunday, services are held in over 80 languages in the U.S. One out of every three blacks in the U.S. is a Southern Baptist. In Orange County our association includes Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Laotian, Black, Arabic, and Romanian Southern Baptist churches.
- ***It is one of the fastest growing groups***  
The SBC baptized over **1,000 new Christians a day** in the U.S. and begins nearly **5 new churches a day!**

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## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER

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The difference between “*attenders*” and “*members*” can be summed up in one word: \_\_\_\_\_

**At Mt. Vernon, we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership for four reasons:**

**I. A BIBLICAL REASON:  
CHRIST IS COMMITTED TO THE CHURCH**

“...*Christ loved the church, and he gave his life for it.*” Eph. 5:25

**II. A CULTURAL REASON:  
IT IS AN ANTIDOTE TO OUR SOCIETY**

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...our country. This attitude has even produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers”. Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.” It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

**III. A PRACTICAL REASON:  
IT DEFINES WHO CAN BE COUNTED ON**

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.

**IV. A PERSONAL REASON:  
IT PRODUCES SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you're not committed to any specific church family.

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A MEMBER?**

At Mt. Vernon, we never ask our members to do more than the Bible clearly teaches. We only expect our members to do what the Bible expects every Christian to do. These responsibilities are spelled out in the Membership Covenant.

**THE MT. VERNON MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

**“Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, and being in agreement with Mt. Vernon statements, strategy and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Mt. Vernon church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:**

**I. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By acting in love toward other members**
- ...By refusing to gossip**
- ...By following the leaders**

*“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together.”*  
Rom. 15:19

*“Live in complete harmony with each other — each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.”* Rom 15:5

*“Have a sincere love for your fellow believers, love one another earnestly with all your hearts.”* 1 Peter 1:22

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...”* Eph. 4:29

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.”*  
Heb. 13:17

## **II. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By praying for its growth**
- ...By inviting the unchurched to attend**
- ...By warmly welcoming those who visit**

*“To the church...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.” 1 Thess. 1:2*

*“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.” Luke 14:23*

## **III. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By discovering my gifts and talents**
- ...By being equipped to serve by my pastors**
- ...By developing a servant’s heart**

*“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you...” 1 Peter 4:10*

*“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Eph. 4:11-12*

*“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant...” Phil 2:3-4, 7*

## **IV. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By attending faithfully**
- ...By living a godly life**
- ...By giving regularly**

*“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another.” Heb. 10:25*

*“But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Phil. 1:27*

*“Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering.” 1 Cor. 16:2*

*“A tenth of all you produce is the Lord’s, and it is holy.” Lev. 27:30*