



## Water's Edge Community Church

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## What is a Covenant Relationship?

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant . . ." Jeremiah 31:31

"Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'" Luke 22:20

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

Great question – what is a covenant anyway? The simplest and most straightforward answer is that it's a promise. However, it's not a casual, "if it's convenient, it'll happen"-type promise, but an "I'm going to do whatever it takes to make this happen"-type of promise. A covenant is also a "one-way" promise. It's a promise that you make for the benefit of someone else. It is not a mutual agreement for mutual benefit promise. It's a choice that you make to benefit someone else or a group of "someone-elses" without concern about whether it may benefit you. To understand better what a covenant is we'll need to look to the original promise maker and promise keeper, God the Father.

God is a God of covenant relationships. A covenant is God's promise of His grace to unite Himself with His chosen people. Examples of God initiating covenant relationship can be found with Noah (Gen. 9:9-17), Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 17:2), Moses, and the nation of Israel (Ex. 19). God's very nature ensures and testifies of His faithfulness to always fulfill His covenant with man despite man's weakness and failure to adhere to his faithfulness with God (Ex. 32).

A highpoint of God's covenant relationship with man came through His commitment with King David through which He promised to rule His people forever (2 Sam. 23:5). God, through the seed of David, ushered in a new and final covenant by which all men can receive the gift of reconciliation (Matt. 1:1). The Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of this new covenant, which would no longer be written on tablets of stone, but rather placed upon and indwelling within the hearts of man, by the very Spirit of God (Jer. 32:40-44; Ezek. 34:22-31; 36:26-27).

This new covenant relationship with God would come through the forgiveness and cleansing of sin offered by the God-man— Jesus—the sent Messiah who would be the light to all nations and all peoples (Matt. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rev.7:9). Jesus' sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection confirmed the faithfulness of God's covenant relationship to man, and thus fulfilled Jeremiah's new covenant promise (Heb. 8:8,10; 10:16). All men who have saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are partakers of God's everlasting covenant having been cleansed by Christ's blood, (Heb. 10:4,10; 13:20) and sealed by His Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

Those who are partakers of God's covenant relationship (the church) are now likewise called, in Christ Jesus, to unite themselves in covenant relationship with others as a local expression of Him, and His present redeeming work in the world (1 Cor. 12:12-18). Although the church has the propensity to fall short of God's design for covenant relationships between each other (1 Jn. 1:8-10), we are nonetheless instructed to wholeheartedly commit ourselves together in unity and love for the advancement and glory of the Gospel of Christ (Heb. 10:24-25).

For a covenant relationship to have meaning, each believer must first strive to maintain and grow in his or her vertical relationship with God, and then second, his or her horizontal relationship with each other (Matt. 22:37-40). The local church's stability and strength as a unified body will be dependent upon or proportionate to this first priority—our vertical relationship with God. It is by God's empowering presence, through His Spirit, that the church is able to be an expression of Christ-centered covenant togetherness, which reflects the love of Jesus Christ (Jn. 13:34, 15:12, 15:17; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:11).

The importance of understanding what a covenant is stands in equal importance to understanding what it is not. A covenant relationship is not like a modern day contract, which is easily voided when one party does not fulfill their end of the deal, or makes a mistake (Col. 3:13). Rather, a covenant is more like a marriage where the commitment to each other is inseparable—"for better or worse, for richer or poorer till death do us part" (Eph. 5:25). It is our conviction at Water's Edge that God calls His people to unite together, working out our salvation in fear, trembling, and



submission to one another (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5; Phil. 2:12), as a local expression of faith, inseparable (Eph. 4:16a), until God calls one of us, or our family to another local expression of His church.

### **Further Biblical Evidence in Support of Church Covenant Relationships.**

By design and purpose God instructs and commands His people to unite together. Evidence of believers uniting in their local settings for the cause of Christ along with reasons for choosing to covenant together abound in His Word:

Individual letters were written to local churches (Phil. 1:1).

Believers united for instruction, mutual edification and fellowship (Acts 2:41-42).

Believers covenanted to pray and support one another (Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:26) .

Establishment of church government (leadership) underscored a covenanted body of which to oversee (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7).

Purity of the church required the implementation of church discipline, which presupposed elders overseeing those who had submitted to a covenant relationship (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 5:20).

God supplied each local church with spiritual protection through godly leadership (Heb. 13:17).

Believers were commanded to covenant together in using their gifts and acts of service for encouraging the body, ministering to others, and advancing the kingdom of God (Heb. 10:24-25; Rom. 12:6-8).

Believers in a covenant relationship were instructed to work together in order to receive the blessing of coming to a full understanding of the glory of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

Choosing to covenant with a local expression of Jesus Christ—the church—helps identify one as an authentic believer (Eph. 2:19; Rom. 12:5).

Therefore, understanding the blessings and command of God to covenant with each other as a local expression of His church, with Jesus as the head, we at Water's Edge Community Church voluntarily choose to unite together for the cause of building up the body of Christ and joyfully proclaiming Him here in Lake Country and beyond.