



COVENANT

Since we have been brought by God to repent of our sins¹ and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation through his death and resurrection², signified by our identification with Christ through water baptism³, we now offer ourselves completely to Him⁴, and we joyfully and whole-heartedly make this covenant with each other as one body in Christ⁵.

Our Commitment to God's Glory

We will glorify God above all else by keeping his commandments⁶, by allowing God to work through us⁷, by living in harmony with one another⁸, by keeping ourselves pure⁹, and by displaying our good deeds¹⁰. Should we fail to glorify God in those ways, we agree to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other so we can be healed¹¹.

Our Commitment to Scripture

We will look to God's written word first to guide our congregational and individual lives, viewing the Bible as the final doctrinal authority on all matters¹². Holding the Evangelical Free Church of America's statement of faith¹³, we will unite on the theological essentials contained there and avoid division over non-essential issues¹⁴.

Our Commitment to Worship

We will join together regularly to worship¹⁵, to partake in communion¹⁶, and to encourage and build each other up¹⁷. We will worship God continually through our thoughts and emotions, our spoken words, our righteous acts, and our sacrificial lifestyle¹⁸.

Our Commitment to Each Other

We will strive to be the aroma of Christ through our fellowship¹⁹, allowing the Holy Spirit to make us one in heart and mind²⁰. We will be intentionally involved in discipling relationships, such as community groups²¹. We will pray for each other, encourage each other, provide material assistance to each other, and hold each other accountable to godly living²². We will overcome judgment by grace, conflict by forgiveness, interpersonal and intercultural differences by respect, and selfish control by generosity²³. We will not allow gossip or backbiting any place in our midst²⁴.

Our Commitment to Evangelism

We will work to meet spiritual, emotional, and physical needs, both in our community and around the world. We will let our love for Christ and others shine, so that people will give glory to God when they see our servant-hearted actions²⁵. As we go through our daily lives, we will strive to influence others to glorify God by becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and following his teaching²⁶.

Our Commitment to Ministry

We will be workers in God's harvest²⁷, using our spiritual gifts and talents, material resources, and time to accomplish God's purpose as one body²⁸. We will commit to regular service, financial giving, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary²⁹.

Our Commitment to the Local & Universal Church

We will submit to the oversight of the leaders God has placed in authority in our church³⁰, and willingly accept their spiritual discipline as outlined in Scripture when required³¹. We will notify the leadership of the church if at any time we are no longer willing to commit to this covenant. If we decide to move on from this congregation, we will seek to unite with a church family where we can live out the spirit of this covenant³².

¹ 1 John 1:9

² Romans 3:23-26

³ Colossians 2:12

⁴ Romans 12:1-2

⁵ Romans 12:3-8

⁶ John 15:8-10

⁷ 1 Peter 4:10-11

⁸ Romans 15:5-7

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁰ 1 Peter 2:11-13

¹¹ James 5:16

¹² 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12

¹³ www.efca.org/about-efca/statement-faith

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:1-3

¹⁵ Colossians 3:16

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:24-28

¹⁷ Hebrews 10:24-25

¹⁸ Romans 12:1-2

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 2:14-15

²⁰ Acts 4:32-35

²¹ Titus 2:1-6

²² Galatians 6:1-2

²³ 1 Peter 4:7-11

²⁴ 1 Timothy 5:12-13

²⁵ Matthew 5:13-16

²⁶ Matthew 28:18-20

²⁷ Matthew 9:37-38

²⁸ Romans 12:4-8

²⁹ 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

³⁰ Hebrews 13:17

³¹ Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

³² Hebrews 10:24-25

COVENANT FAQ'S

What's a covenant?

In biblical terms, it's a promise by which two parties obligate themselves to one another in such a way that the obligation of one party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other (Ezekiel 20:44; 36:22; Psalm 76:11; Hosea 2:19-20; 3:1; 2 Timothy 2:13).

The Harbor covenant is not an agreement made between an individual and an institution, it is made between brothers and sisters in a church family and their Lord.

Why is this kind of covenant necessary in a church?

Three reasons. First, God instituted this covenant. Hebrews 8:8-12 details the new covenant between God and the church that was prophesied by Jeremiah: ***For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*** Notice how the only singular pronouns in the covenant refer to God. God didn't make this covenant between himself and individuals... he made it with a people, which demands that we covenant with each other in a church.

Second, the Greek word most often used for "church" in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, which literally means "the called-out ones." If we've been called *out* of something (the world), that means we've also been called *in* to something else (the church). In the book of Acts, there is a consistent pattern of new believers joining a local church and covenanting together with that group of believers. Acts 2:42-47 describes the church in Jerusalem committing to fellowship together, study God's word together, care for each others' needs, praise God together, and reach their community together.

Third, our church wouldn't be a church without it. As an Evangelical Free Church, our government is congregational in nature. Harbor wasn't formed by a bishop's decree or a presbytery's vote. It exists because a group of people have joined together for the common cause of worship, fellowship, and ministry. A written covenant is the way we express our commitment to that common cause.

Does it have to be so formal? It feels like I'm getting married or something.

You're exactly right. In the gospels, Jesus refers to himself many times as the bridegroom. And who is his bride? The church. When you join with other Christians in the church, you're essentially getting married. And what is it that makes a marriage different from any other kind of relationship? *The vows.* That's what a church covenant is like: the necessary commitments of a serious relationship.

Does that mean I'm committing to this church 'til death do us part?

Of course not. There are sometimes very good reasons why a Christian might be led to commit to another church. But if you do choose to leave Harbor, we would expect to hear your reasons and help you unite with another church where you can live out the same kind of covenant relationship.

What if I don't like commitments?

You're not alone. In our individualistic age, we all have commitment-phobia to some degree or another. Committing ourselves to a group of people feels like it might hinder our transient lifestyles. While it might be counter-cultural, it's what God expects: *Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

So what's in it for me?

Ahhhh, there's that consumeristic individualism again! It's true, what you're committing to is greater sacrifice and service on your part. But since you asked, there are a few specific benefits that come with the commitment. The leaders of Harbor commit to pray for you regularly (James 5:14), equip you for service (Ephesians 4:11-13), teach you the whole counsel of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28), guard you against false teaching (Acts 20:28-31), and exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20). You will also qualify for certain leadership roles that are not open to those who have not committed themselves to the church family through this covenant.

And what if I decide not to commit?

You're welcome to be an active attender at Harbor, be involved in small-groups and ministries, and volunteer in certain roles. Still, to a certain extent you will remain separated from the maturity, protection, accountability, and care that comes with being an active part of the church. We humbly ask you to examine your motives, recognizing that Christians who consume rather than commit to a church family are doing a disservice to Jesus' body (the church) and themselves.

All right, you convinced me. How do I take the plunge?

Sign up for a Harbor Bootcamp session. You'll get intensive training on the values and priorities of our church and the implications of the commitment you're making.