



Calvary Redeeming Grace Church Membership Packet

The purpose of this packet is to make potential members aware of who we are and what we believe. To accomplish this, we discuss the role of membership, doctrine, our church covenant, and “our nuts and bolts.” We are told in Ephesians 3 that it is through the church that “the manifold wisdom of God” is made known. Therefore, Calvary Redeeming Grace Church exists to promote the glory of God as we live in Him, with each other, and in the world. Our desire is that we preserve the purity and unity of local church membership, so that our testimony to the world makes the gospel visible.

I. What is Church Membership?

Church Membership is a recognized relationship between a church and a Christian. It is based upon a shared belief in the gospel, experienced by a shared love for one another, and intended to pursue a shared joy and holiness in Christ.

II. Why Church Membership?

From their beginning, local Christian churches were congregations of specific, identifiable people. For example, Paul writes 1 Thessalonians “to the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess 1:1) and 1 Corinthians “to the church of God in Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2). It is clear that our New Testament letters were written to specific churches, each in a specific location, rather than to individual Christians within the general population of the city. This in no way discredits their usefulness to the universal church (the whole body of believers throughout the world; Matt 16:18; Eph 1:22), but these letters first landed in the hands of a local church (a body of believers who gather together on the Lord’s Day, originally in homes, in order to worship the triune God through preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:5). The local church, therefore, is the gathering of Christians to publicly worship and enjoy the living Savior Jesus Christ.

Scripture refers to the church many times as the “body of Christ” (e.g. 1 Cor 12:27). It even continues this metaphor by calling each individual Christian a “member” or in our language a “body part” of the body of Christ. In other words, the church, Christ’s body, is made up of eyes, ears, feet, hands, etc. The point is not for you to discern which “member” you are, but to realize that you are, in fact, a member! So this is partly why we use the word member to describe a Christian’s covenantal commitment to a local church. Like members of a physical body, placed exactly where God desires them to be for the purpose of physical health and unity, so it is with God’s spiritual body. You have been placed exactly where the sovereign God desires you to be, for the purpose of spiritual health and unity.

“God has so composed the body...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:24,25).

Membership is partnership. It is a commitment to one another. But it is more than that. It is a bending or bowing of the whole person around other Christians in love. It is placing your discipleship to Christ under others, and they under you, loving one another with the affection of Christ. It is acknowledging that God has arranged you to be in membership with other Christians not only in the universal church, but first and primarily in the local church. Local church membership is the physical reality of your spiritual membership in the universal church. No Christian will deny the truth that we need to care, encourage, and admonish one another, and those duties are most healthfully lived out in the context of membership.

Perhaps an illustration would be helpful. When a man and a woman decide to marry, they plan a wedding ceremony. The purpose of the ceremony is to publicly display and celebrate their covenant of love, allegiance, and submission to one another. Rings are shared, signatures are taken, and vows are promised. To what end? To physically and tangibly convey the meaning of

covenantal love in marriage. Typically it is not enough just to say “I love you”, but also to publicly say at some point, “I do.” Local church membership is very similar. It is not enough for Christians to say “I love you” to the church, but also to say publicly one day to a local church, “I do.” “I do in fact give my whole self to this group of people, loving and cherishing them, trusting them, laying down my life for them, serving them, and helping them along their journey to Heaven.” This is a church membership vow. It physically shows the meaning of covenant love in church membership, declaring to all present your love, allegiance, and submission to one another. Largely, the significance of Christians saying “I do” to one another in membership has been lost. But why have we lost it? Why are we hesitant to publicly affirm our love for each other, when in fact, in private we affirm it all the time? Do the Scriptures speak of a place where our love for one another is to be expressed? Yes! The local church (1 Cor 12)! And membership informs the Christian who to publicly love and submit to. As such, a first step in expressing spiritual care for one another is to physically sign and agree with the Member Packet, promising to the best of our ability that we will carry out the duties of a healthy church member. Again, this is how we know who to shepherd, who to pray for, who to love specifically, who we are to teach and admonish faithfully, and who we are to enjoy God with. Joining a church is saying “I do” to a group of people who seek your spiritual well-being and protect you from hazards along your Christian walk. Joining a church is walking down the aisle, celebrating the sovereign love that binds a band of believers together, and asking God’s Spirit to empower us to live in harmony with one another.

Inherent in the conversation regarding church membership is the issue of church discipline. In other words, one cannot talk about opening the “front door” of the church without talking about the “back door.” Many texts in the New Testament point to the practice of church discipline, but the most well known comes from Matthew’s gospel. Jesus says,

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Mat 18:15-18)

What does this all mean? In short, Jesus means for churches (not just elders) to play the judicial function in fighting against the sin in our lives. When faced with people who claim to represent Jesus with their lips but who live contrary to that claim, churches must carefully weigh the evidence and render judgment. Most church discipline is what we call “formative church discipline”, that is the positive, private discipline between one member and another. It is the stake that stabilizes and directs the tree as it grows, braces on the teeth, the extra set of wheels on the bicycle. In other words, discipline is not only a negative matter, it’s the positive discipleship that occurs daily in the life of a church. Along with “formative church discipline”, is “corrective church discipline.” This is usually what we all think about when we hear the words “church discipline.” It corrects something that has gone wrong in the body so that more serious injury is avoided. In the context of Matthew 18 (following on the parable of the sheep-seeking Shepherd), it is clear that God’s goal in church discipline is restoration (Gal 6:1). Rebuke, admonition, and excommunication are all examples of corrective discipline. They correct the more serious errors that members make in doctrine and lifestyle. Hopefully, this type of discipline also remains private and between a

couple of members, but that depends upon the repentance of the guilty member. Neglecting corrective discipline can be deadly for a church. Undergoing the surgical knife is never enjoyable, but it is often life-saving. The prospect of corrective church discipline, especially when public, is never pleasant. But unrepentant sin and those who continually cherish false doctrine are cancerous to the body and must be addressed proactively if the body is to enjoy health and engage in productive work. Therefore, personal accountability and open relationships can go a long way toward preventing such public discipline.

So before we move on, please consider what it means to join a church. Fundamentally, to join a church is to publicly identify yourself with a group that is committed to loving God and loving one another. It is acknowledging that you cannot live the Christian life alone and therefore need other Christians to partner with you. Finally, it is about the church being God's heavenly embassy on earth, living as citizens of heaven and emitting the light of the gospel to a dark world. It is not only saying "I love you," but also saying "I do."

III. What We Believe

A. Mission, Vision, and Core Commitments

Mission: Why do we exist?

To glorify God by making joyful, passionate disciples of Jesus Christ.

Vision: What is our hope?

To see Jesus made non-ignorable in Lakewood, Denver, and to the ends of the earth.

Core Commitments: How will we accomplish our mission?

By pursuing faithfulness in our four CORE COMMITMENTS.

WORSHIP GOD PASSIONATELY



Worship is an act of humbly exalting the God of the universe. We were created to worship and the Christian life begins and ends here.

CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER AUTHENTICALLY



When Jesus saves his people, he saves us into a new family, his family, the Church. Connecting in community is vital to the Christian life and a mark of a biblical church.

GROW TO KNOW GOD DEEPLY



Calvary is committed to seeing the Gospel transform all of life. As we grow to know God deeply, we increasingly see Him as better than anything our sin offers us.

GO SHOW AND TELL THE GOSPEL BOLDLY



If you are a Christian, you are a disciple who is called to make disciples. We want to show and tell the good news of the Gospel both in word and deed.

B. Statement of Faith

(1) The Triune God

(Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Isaiah 40:26; Matthew 10:29-30; Colossians 1:16-17; Job 37:6-13; Psalm 147:15-18; Mark 4:39-41; Psalm 33:10-11; Amos 3:6; Lamentations 3:37-38; Proverbs 21:1; Proverbs 16:33)

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

(2) Revelation

(Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 119; Matthew 24:35; Matthew 22:29; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do

the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

(3) Creation of Humanity

(Genesis 1-3; Ephesians 5:15-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

(4) The Fall

(Romans 5:1-19; Romans 1:18-3:20; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7-8; Romans 8:20)

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result,

all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention. This alienation has not been limited to the realm of humanity, but has infected the creation itself, as it too has been subjected to futility. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

(5) The Plan of God

(Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-14; Isaiah 46:9-10; Romans 9:11-18; John 10:25-29; John 3:16)

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. It is, therefore, all of God’s gracious and sovereign action to foreknow, predestine, call, justify, and glorify His people by His Spirit, even giving saving faith to those whom he has chosen. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer. And it may truly be said, that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

(6) The Gospel

(1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Romans 1:15-17; Ephesians 2:3-6; Mark 1:14-15)

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our

faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

(7) The Redemption of Christ

(Isaiah 53; Romans 3:21-26; John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; John 1:29; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 2:13-14; Revelation 5)

We believe that, moved by love for and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

(8) The Justification of Sinners

(Romans 4:3-8; Romans 3:26; Galatians 2:16-17; Titus 3:5-7; Philippians 3:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:1; Psalm 51)

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

(9) The Power of the Holy Spirit

(Galatians 3:5; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:18-21; Ephesians 1:11-14 1 Corinthians 12-14; John 16:4-15; Romans 12; Joel 2:28-32; Numbers 11:29)

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the "other" Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

(10) The Kingdom of God

(Isaiah 58:6-14; Mark 1:15; Matthew 18; Luke 17:20-22; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:19-21; Revelation 12:10)

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

(11) God's New People

(Isaiah 56:1-8; Isaiah 54:1-3; Galatians 3-4; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:1-16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:4-12; 1 John 3:11-24)

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus

making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

(12) Baptism and the Lord's Supper

(Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:21-22; Colossians 2:11-15; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14- 23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-27)

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

(13) The Restoration of All Things

(Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:18-24; Revelation 21; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 10:28; 2 Peter 2:4-22; Hebrews 10:26-31)

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

Our statement of faith has been adapted from the founding documents of The Gospel Coalition. In addition to our statement of faith, we also generally affirm historic statements such as the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Second London Confession (1689), and Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

Signature _____

Date _____

IV. Our Church Covenant

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord, Savior, and Supreme Treasure of our lives, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another.

GOSPEL – Worship God Passionately

Because the gospel is the good news that God is redeeming people for himself and restoring his good creation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

- We will desire the Word of God to dwell in us richly, treasuring His promises and obeying His commands as we submit to the teaching of Scripture expressed in the Statement of Faith.
- We will pursue God alone as our highest joy, counting everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.
- We will seek to live according to our identity as adopted sons and daughters of God.
- We will seek, by God's grace, to glorify God in all things, setting our minds on things above, where Christ is, putting to death the deeds of the body, and bringing to life the fruit of the Spirit.
- We will prioritize the regular gathering of the church to worship God for all He has done and has promised to do for us in Christ Jesus.

COMMUNITY – Connect with One Another Authentically

Because the gospel creates a new community of people who live life together as the church:

- We will walk together in brotherly love, exercising an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and will fulfill the one-another commands of Scripture by counting others more significant than ourselves.
- We will seek the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by avoiding gossip, always being ready to seek reconciliation, and submitting to the leadership of our pastors.
- We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.
- We will endeavor to raise the children under our care in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- We will pray for the ministries, members, and leadership of Calvary Redeeming Grace.

CHANGE – Grow To Know God Deeply

Because the gospel changes us progressively to reflect the character of Jesus Christ (Christlikeness)—the fruit of the Spirit:

- We will live out the implications of the gospel by pursuing holiness in all areas of life; by Divine aid, we will live carefully in the world, deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, repent quickly of sin, and submit to the accountability and discipline of the church.
- We will seek to deepen our love for God by practicing a regular devotional pursuit of God individually and with other believers.
- We will seek to love each other, becoming perfectly one, so that by our love for one another the world may know that the Father loves us even as He loves the Son.
- We will commit to growing in gospel fluency by telling the gospel regularly to ourselves and to other believers.

MISSION – Go Show and Tell the Gospel Boldly

Because the gospel also calls us to be a part of God’s mission of redemption:

- We will live like missionaries by making disciples who make disciples through consistently displaying and declaring the gospel.
- We will steward God’s gifts to us by contributing cheerfully and regularly of our time, talents, finances, and spiritual gifts to further the mission of God through the church.
- We will pray for the city of Lakewood, Greater Denver, and the world, and seek their good by engaging in deeds of mercy and kindness.
- We will, when we leave this fellowship, as soon as possible, unite with another church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word.

Signature _____

Date _____

V. Our Nuts and Bolts

This section is designed to explain the “Nuts and Bolts” of our church life. Please remember, what follows are some of the practical details for our local assembly. We certainly do not think all churches should adopt our ways of fleshing out ministry. Instead, our “Nuts and Bolts” are tailored for Calvary Redeeming Grace Church specifically. That is not to say that our methods come out of thin air either; rather we hope to show in fact that our methods rest on timeless biblical principles. For this reason, this section may be the most helpful section to you as a potential member of this church. We know what it is like to be in your shoes. You want to know how all this works! You likely want to know: “If I give myself to this church, how will this church shepherd my soul, my family, and my life?” We cannot cover everything here, but what follows is a quick glance at CRG church life. We begin with our leadership and close with the role of the congregation.

First, our leadership consists of both elders and deacons. These leaders should be explicitly qualified, possess a keen sense of accountability, be reputable with outsiders, exercise authority, and edify the church. While all these characteristics should be present in both elders and deacons, they will be expressed differently given the nature of the offices. We begin with the ministry of a deacon.

Based on the account in Acts 6, where the first deacons were set aside, three aspects of a deacon’s ministry should be noted. First, deacons care for the physical needs of the saints. Some of the Christians “were being neglected in the daily distribution” (v.1). Thus, the deacons were identified and called out to serve the body. In this example, deacons picked up the ministry where the apostles needed assistance and cared for the physical well-being of other Christians. But note especially their second function. The physical neglect was causing spiritual disunity in the body (v.1). Deacons therefore must strive for the unity of the body. One group of Christians was complaining against another group and this arrested the apostles’ attention. In response, the apostles wanted to prevent a fracture in the church and so they appointed deacons to head off disunity and factionalism. In other words, the deacons act as the shock absorbers for the body. At a third level, deacons support the ministry of other leaders. In Acts 6, not only did those deacons help the widows and the body as a whole, but they also helped support other leaders (in this case the apostles) whose main obligations were elsewhere. Deacons therefore are fundamentally encouragers and supporters to the ministry of the elders.

Here at CRG, deacons are encouraged to fulfill these three areas of ministry. Like most titles in the Bible, theirs says it all. The word deacon literally means servant – not only a servant to God, but also a servant to the saints. Our deacons concern themselves with administration, maintenance, and the care of church members with physical needs, all to promote the unity of the church. As a church member, we want you to know that you are not alone in this journey and our deacons are one way we try to communicate that truth. This office, therefore, brings refreshment to Christians who live in a world of inexhaustible demands. Here at CRG, we want our deacons to promote

serving and blessing the body in ways that reflect the “one another” directives of the New Testament (e.g. “love one another”, “bear with one another”, etc.)

Regarding elders, the essence of the elder’s office is found in teaching, ensuring the Word of God is well understood. Both elders and deacons must be qualified (I Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), a distinction that essentially entails walking in godliness and manifesting a life style that is above reproach (I Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6). He should lead with carefulness, remembering that the church is not his, but purchased by the blood of Christ. In addition to his character, anyone serving as an elder should have a better-than-average grasp of the basics of the gospel as well as the great truths of Scripture. An elder must also be able to soundly refute false teachings and be able to distinguish his own congregation from others (e.g., baptism for Baptists). Elders should be recognized by the church as gifts from God for the good of the church (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17).

Functionally, the first significant aspect of our elders is that they are on a team. As a church, we believe that the Bible prescribes maintaining a plurality of elders. James, Peter, Paul, and Luke all referred to the office of elder in the church, and each of them presumed a plurality of elders for each congregation (Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-5; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28). Therefore, the direct evidence in the New Testament indicates that the common and even expected practice was to have multiple elders in each local congregation.

A second aspect of the office of elder are his duties. For our purposes we will use the categories of knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting. These four functions address the Christian’s most basic needs and capture the biblical data as to how elders should lead. We also ask our elders to fulfill these responsibilities under the categories of macro-shepherding and micro-shepherding. Paul’s moving farewell to the Ephesian elders captures these two categories in succinct fashion. He reminded them that he “did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Paul’s ministry was not merely in the public sphere but in the privacy of people’s homes. It was both corporate and personal. This balance must be maintained for effective shepherding, and it can be represented by the distinction between macro-shepherding and micro-shepherding. In light of this evidence, each church member will have a “shepherding elder”, a man who has promised to God and to his church that he will faithfully carry out the duties of an elder. The reason we have adopted this practice is to ensure, to the best of our ability, that each member is being personally cared for. Shepherds are to know and take of the sheep while the sheep are to know and appreciate those who watch over them. Thus, the shepherds lovingly care for the sheep and the sheep lovingly submit to their leadership (Heb 13:17).

In this last section, we turn our attention to the role of the congregation. To put it simply, the responsibilities and duties of members of a Christian church are simply the responsibilities and duties of Christians. These duties, however, can be divided into duties toward their leaders and duties toward other members.

The particular duties members have toward the leaders involve clear recognition, heart-felt trust, obedience, submission, and sincere carefulness (Heb 13:17; I Tim 5:17). It also should be recognized, however, that the local congregation is responsible for ensuring a qualified elder teaches them the Word of God (Gal 1:8; 2 Tim 4:3; Jude 3,4). Thus, the congregation delegates to

the elders the responsibilities of teaching and leading the church. Those duties are only revoked when it is clear the elders are acting in a manner contrary to Scripture. Here at CRG, when the time comes to put forward a man for eldership, the current elders will nominate a qualified man to carry out his duties. After a period of several weeks (for the purpose of prayer and consideration), the elders will ask the congregation to affirm the nomination. The reason for this is that we believe the congregation has a responsibility to ensure that biblical truth is taught from God's Word (Gal 1:6-9).

When it comes to the responsibilities church members have toward one another they can be summarized as "walking in the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). Christians are obliged to love one another (John 13:34,35; Rom 12:9,10). Love then obligates the members of the church to avoid sin: malice, gossip, bitterness, and pride must be resisted (Col 3:8). Church members are also called to seek peace and unity within their congregation (Rom 12:16), clothing themselves in the armor of God (Eph 6) so that they may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Thus, Christians stand firm together, contending for the gospel (Phil 1:27) and maintaining the unity of the body (Prov 17:14). We are also called to actively sympathize with one another (Rom 12:15), edify one another (Eph 2:21-22), pray for one another (Jam 5:16), and watch over one another, holding each other accountable (Rom 15:14).

Inherent in the above description is our commitment to "every member ministry", or what has been traditionally called "priesthood of every believer." The basic idea behind these terms comes from the Old Testament, which describes how the Israelite priests ministered to the nation at large. But when we come to the New Testament, we are told that every member is a priest, ministering to one another in order to proclaim the excellencies of Christ (1 Pet 2:9). The goal of the elders is to equip the members of the church in such a way that the above characteristics flourish in the heart of each individual member. This creates not only individual growth but also corporate growth, as believers share their lives together and see God's Spirit transform them. This type of growth cannot happen from a distance. It requires a Christian to reach out and ask others for help in their Christian walk. Scripture uses metaphors such as "stones" in a house (1 Pet 2:5) and "joints" in a body (Eph 4:16) to demonstrate just how close and necessary each member is to one another. Therefore, at CRG we stress the importance of discipleship, training, relationships, and faithfulness rather than programs and infrastructure. A certain degree of programs is necessary and helpful, but we want each member to strive for fellowship even if a program is not in place. We want the church to be full of life, active with one another and creating relationships that are mutually encouraging and helping people grow spiritually. What we are talking about is the "spirit" or the "culture" of the church. At CRG, we want to be full of spiritually dynamic friendship in which older Christians are helping to teach and guide younger Christians in the Word; where peers get together regularly for prayer and discipleship; where Christians are reading nourishing Christian books together, constantly growing and being conformed into the image of Christ. Ministries will be put in place in order to meet these desired goals, but we want the focus to be on people rather than programs.

We realize some of the matters covered in this packet may seem new, confusing, and perhaps even a bit intimidating or demanding. Hopefully, however, they breed encouragement and excitement as well! Scripture portrays church life as both uplifting and challenging. The reason for

this is because we are not yet what we want to be, either with ourselves or with others, and so we call upon one another for help, encouragement, love, and perseverance.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:21-21)

Soli Deo Gloria!

VI. Recommended Reading

1. The Trellis and the Vine, by Tony Payne and Colin Marshall
2. Knowing God, by J.I. Packer
3. The Church: The Gospel Made Visible, by Mark Dever
4. Desiring God, by John Piper
5. The Life of God and the Soul of the Church, by Thabiti Anyabwile
6. Putting Amazing Back into Grace, by Michael Horton
7. What is a Healthy Church Member?, by Thabiti Anyabwile
8. Counterfeit Gods, by Tim Keller
9. The Deliberate Church, by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander
10. Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, by Paul David Tripp
11. What is the Mission of the Church?, by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert