



southlands



who
we are



what we
believe

WELCOME TO SOUTHLANDS CHURCH!

Just as no two people have the same fingerprint, so no two churches are identical. As believers in Christ, we are called to unity in the Body of Christ, but we are also called to celebrate our diversity as unique yet connected members. After all, unity in diversity is at the very heart of the Trinity.

With this in mind, we thought it would be helpful to describe some of what makes Southlands Church distinct. This is beyond our statement of faith, which is on our website. It includes our **history, essence, ethos, mission** and **vision**. Or, if you like, it describes who we are, what we are like, what we are doing and where we are going.

SECTION 1: HISTORY

Southlands Church began as First Christian Church of Montebello in 1967, then moved east to Walnut and met in several schools in the East San Gabriel Valley. The church was known as Christian Chapel of Walnut Valley. In the '70s the Jesus People Movement saw thousands of young people saved, and the church grew in the midst of that movement. In the '80s the church experienced a new presence of the Spirit and expression of gifts not seen as prominently before. The church grew quickly during this time under the leadership of Bill Crites and Jesse Mason. Fifteen acres were purchased on Brea Canyon Cutoff Road in Walnut and the dream of a church with a campus large enough to facilitate a church and school was born. In the area, the church was known for its community life, worship and youth program. Reaching beyond itself became a theme increasingly, both in sphere and distance. Having been active in missions for years, church planting became a focus and a relationship with New Covenant Ministries facilitated this translocal focus, to see the gospel taken to the ends of the earth through church planting.

Jesse Mason handed over church leadership to Chris Wienand in 1996 and the church name was changed to Southlands Church International to reflect these larger spheres. This partnership facilitated the planting of 12 churches over a span of about 15 years in Southern California, the U.S. and internationally. Growth from Orange County caused church leadership to begin looking south as the school had grown and was made its own entity in 2007.

The current property on Imperial Highway was purchased and the first services held on Easter in 2009. With the move complete and the demand from churches of a larger sphere growing, Chris Wienand handed over leadership of the church to Alan Frow in 2010. Chris and his wife, Meryl, now divide their time between leading a church called Mercy Town in Los Angeles and helping other church planters and leaders. Southlands remains invested in their ministry.

Aspects of the church that characterized us in the early days still do. We are still committed to the centrality of the gospel and honor the ministry of the Spirit, with a desire to see this gospel spread throughout the earth. We see the health of Southlands and other churches as a priority. Our partnerships have broadened and we enjoy relationships across the world with numerous churches in numerous places. It is our desire to live out the Great Commission until Jesus returns for His church.

SECTION 2: ESSENCE

We are gospel-centered, Spirit-led communities on mission.

Gospel-Centered

If Southlands were a town, the gospel would be Main Street, the central hub and heartthrob of our gathering, living and moving. The life of our community is found at the foot of a blood-stained cross and the mouth of an empty grave.

The gospel is the means by which this community relates. Having been redeemed by God's grace, we seek to live graciously with one another. Our love for Jesus is tested in our love for one another. We value authenticity, doing our best to discard the masks of pretense. We have exchanged the fig leaf for the cross. Shame and denial have been replaced by grace and truth.

The gospel is also the central theme of our gatherings. We celebrate the sacraments of communion and baptism regularly. Our worship and preaching seek to explore the gospel's magnificent depth and breadth. We believe that the gospel is a message that has intrinsic power from God to save. We desire to live with the reality that the gospel has not only pardoned us, but has brought us near to the living God. He is transcendent, but He is also immanent. We are intent upon gatherings that reflect both of these characteristics.

We celebrate the five "Solas" of the Reformation.

- *Sola Scriptura*. Scripture alone is the standard.
- *Sola Christo*. We are saved by Christ's work alone.
- *Sola Gratia*. We are saved by grace alone.
- *Sola Fide*. We are justified by faith alone.
- *Sola Deo Gloria*. To God alone be the glory.

We have a high view of Scripture and God's sovereignty. We tremble at His Word. We believe that even more than read God's word, we should allow God's Word to read us. It does not merely inform us. It transforms us.

Therefore we seek to divide the Word rightly, preach and teach it soundly and powerfully, but also respond to it faithfully. We generally preach through whole books of the Bible, rather than teach through it topically, because we are aware of the tendency to preach favorite proof texts rather than the whole counsel of God. Our life groups are sermon-based, because we recognize the weight of stewarding the Word preached to us, and the reward of stewarding it well.

Spirit-Led

As much as we have reverence toward God's Word, we are also a people with a hunger for more of the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in many quarters of the

church, He has been tragically neglected and scripted out. We honor Him as God, the good gift given by our Father, and the One whom Jesus left to empower His people to be on mission. We are persuaded that we are not able to follow Christ without the Holy Spirit's power. We believe that every facet of the Christian life is reliant upon His infilling, anointing and leading. We believe He does his best work through God's Word, but that His activity is not limited to the proclamation of God's Word. He is also at work demonstrating the power of God through God's people for the common good. We intend for our life and our meetings to reflect a willingness to follow His leading and walk with confidence in His empowering. This includes a less scripted approach to our gatherings, the intentional involvement of the congregation in worship, the operation of the gift of prophecy and prayer for healing.

This Word and Spirit journey is more holy pursuit than exact science. It is a rather mysterious pursuit, but we are persuaded that God calls every believer to know both the Scriptures and the power of God. John Wimber called it "the quest for the radical middle," and we believe that in our day there is a "re-Quest for the radical middle" for the sake of the gospel. It is not so much perfect balance that we are after. It is simply that we want to live in all that God intends for His church, for His glory, for our good and for the joy of all people.

Communities on Mission

The gospel means that we are all a people on God's mission. This mission requires our presence in the world. As Jesus was sent, so are we. We see God's image in every individual. We seek to live relationally, with patience and compassion toward the world. The gospel humanizes people. Being on God's mission also includes the proclamation of a message. We believe that every believer is called to the happy discipline of proclaiming Christ, imploring all people to be reconciled to God. We understand that the happiest hour in heaven is the hour when one sinner repents, and this too is our aim and delight.

While we believe that every Christ-follower is called to be on mission in their own ZIP code, the gospel has made us a people of the Great Commission. In answer to Christ's call to make disciples of all nations, we seek to train, raise up and release leaders into every sector of society, but with particular focus on those who are called to plant churches. We have planted 12 churches in the last 15 years. This is one of the distinctives of our community. It is a costly call, but one which echoes the Father's apostolic heart to send workers into a plentiful harvest.

See www.southlands.net for our statement of faith.

SECTION 3: ETHOS

In a world where the end often justifies the means, we understand that Jesus is not only the truth and the life. He is the Way. In fact, the early believers were called “followers of the Way.” Our ethos is the way we want to go about accomplishing what God has called us to. There is not only one way to go about things, but we are persuaded that this is the way God has called us to live.

1. Cultivating authentic relationships

“Love one another ...” (Jn 13:34)

The New Testament shows believers in genuine relationship with each other, with the prevailing metaphor for the church being that of family. We desire churches that are loving communities, meeting publicly and in smaller groups, sharing and caring for each other’s spiritual and material needs.

2. God’s grace applied

“Grace ... which can build you up” (Acts 20:32)

We desire churches and believers that believe and effectively apply the grace of God to their daily lives and to church life. We desire believers who are free from legalism in its various guises, drawn by grace into a vortex of joy, peace, energy and power. Grace produces churches and individuals that are holy, happy and hard-working. Grace challenges us, gives us joy and empowers us to serve God’s people.

3. Mission-focused

“Go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19)

Although there are many pictures of the church in the Bible, we believe the primary one is as a community on mission. Because Jesus himself made disciples and directly commissioned all believers to go and make disciples, the goal is for every believer to become a disciple-making disciple. We desire churches that actively make disciple-making disciples who know, love and obey Jesus. Programs and tools might help, but discipleship happens via intentional relationships. Mission is not just something we do on Sunday. It is a lifelong quest to seek and save what is lost with boldness and compassion.

4. Passionate worship

“While they were worshipping the Lord ...” (Acts 13:2)

Both the Old and New Testaments portray worship as a vital and joyful privilege of God’s people. We desire churches where God’s presence is prized and where God is enthusiastically worshipped in a God-centered manner, with genuine freedom.

5. Devoted to prayer

“They devoted themselves to ... prayer” (Acts 2:42)

Prayer is one of our highest privileges and a vital spiritual discipline. Prayer keeps us peaceful and effective, and acknowledges our total dependence on God. We desire churches that teach their members how to pray, and provide regular contexts for prayer.

6. Building healthy families

“Husbands love your wives...” (Eph 5:25)

We desire churches where biblical family life is valued, where husband and wife embrace male servant-leadership and joyful female submission, where godly parenting is taught and practiced, and where the value of singleness and its unique opportunities are affirmed.

“You shall teach them diligently to your children...” (Deut 6:6–7)

Parents take primary responsibility for leading their children, engaging them in all aspects of the church and spiritual life. A vital part of this leadership entails devotion to prayer and Scripture in the home and active participation in the discipleship of our youth.

7. Excelling in financial generosity

“Excel ... in the grace of giving” (2 Cor 8:7)

The Bible speaks of the benefits of financial generosity, the perils of stinginess, and the appropriateness of financial generosity for believers. We desire churches and believers who, motivated by grace, excel in giving in a liberal, joyful and disciplined way.

8. Pursuing diversity

“You are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28)

We desire churches that wholeheartedly embrace the New Testament teaching of the “one new man” (Eph 2:15), displaying the reconciling power of the gospel through demonstrating love and respect between the races, cultures, ages and sexes (Gal 3:28). We believe that our united diversity not only glorifies God, but also enriches every person who can embrace it, and causes a watching world to ask what on earth we have in common.

9. Compelled by mercy and justice

“He has shown you oh man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, to love mercy, act justly and walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

The gospel produces individual renewal and the eventual renewal of all creation. Therefore Christians glorify God not only through the church, but through practicing their vocations for God’s glory and the common good. We desire churches that seek to serve and renew their communities by loving mercy and doing justice.

10. Elder-led

“... the elders who rule...” (1 Tim 5:17)

We desire churches to be led by a called and capable team of elders (with a leader) who lovingly guard, guide and govern the church. Elders should be honored by the church and helped in fulfilling their calling through ongoing partnership with trans-local ministries. While the biblical pattern is that elders are male, we have a high value of team between husbands and wives on the eldership.

11. Partnership with apostolic gifts

“And he gave apostles, prophets ... for the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11–16)

We desire churches that meaningfully partner with Ephesians 4 gifts through a movement (i.e. Advance) through opening their churches to be shaped and strengthened and to participate in the New Testament mission to plant and strengthen churches.

SECTION 4: LEADERSHIP

Jesus Christ is the Head of His church, which includes this local church. Pastor-Elders in a local church are the highest form of human government. Pastor-Elders lead this church in submission to Him and each other.

Elders

Southlands Church is not a democracy but led by men appointed and recognized with the gift of and grace for leadership (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:7, 17). Scripture uses three words interchangeably to refer to the function of one and the same person (see Acts 20:17, 28, Titus 1:5,7, 1 Pet. 2:25, 5:1-2):

1. “Presbuteros” — Elder (executes God’s justice and government and administrates the affairs of the church).
2. “Episcopos” — Overseer or bishop (oversees, a guardian, gatekeeper or watchman).
3. “Poimain” — Shepherd or pastor (shepherd the flock, nurture and care for the flock, feed the flock).

Elders oversee every aspect of church life, are mutually accountable and are led by a visionary or lead elder. We place a high value on the team dynamics of our leadership.

Deacons

This is the only other office mentioned in the Scriptures in the local church. The Greek word for deacon is “diakonis” and means “servant, one who ministers alongside, or helper.” This does not mean that our deacons are servants and do menial jobs. Everyone in the church should have a servant heart. What it does mean, though, is that the deacons come alongside the elders, assisting them in the pastoring of the church, releasing them “to prayer and ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:1–8). Our deacons, together with and under the oversight of elders, exercise oversight in home groups and other care groups.

Accountability

As an eldership team we hold a value of plurality and consensus on decisions of doctrine, direction and discipline. We also believe that every team has a leader, with Alan Frow taking the role of lead pastor, but this is done as a “first among equals” rather than as a senior pastor with associate pastors.

We believe in the autonomy of the local church, in which the elders are the highest governing authority in that church, but we do not believe it is healthy or wise for a church to be independent. As a team we actively seek accountability and counsel from men with whom we have relationship and in whom we recognize an Ephesians 4 gifting of either apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher or evangelist. These men include lead pastors Chris Wienand, Todd Proctor and Rick Martinez.

Southlands is a partner church with ADVANCE, led by PJ Smythe, which is a movement of churches who meaningfully partner to advance the gospel. Learn more at advance.org.za.

As an eldership team we also welcome the perspectives of a Financial Counsel Team, made up of business people within Southlands Church. We meet quarterly with this team to discuss major financial decisions.

SECTION 5: MISSION AND VISION

Mission

Our mission is to glorify the Father in the power of the Spirit by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of Jesus.

Vision: 3 in 3 – A New Vision for Gospel Advance

Every church should be seen as both an orchard and a nursery.

An orchard is a pastoral vision of church, and speaks of being rooted in health and strength in one location, for local fruit. Every church needs to be asking how to be healthy, sturdy and fruitful in the place where it is planted. Wherever we are, we need to be fully there, loving the people and serving the place, deeply rooted to bear much fruit. A healthy orchard requires strong trees (people) with substance and permanence.

A nursery is a more apostolic vision of a church — a vision for multiplication. It sees the role of the church as a seedbed for saplings that are going to be sent out and planted elsewhere. It's about preparing and training for future fruitfulness. It's a picture of flexibility and transience. A church cannot only be a nursery. But without a nursery, a church becomes myopic and enamored with itself. It eventually withers and dies.

Leaders should be able to hold an orchard and nursery vision of the church in tension.

Southlands has a rich history of being a nursery, having sent out many people and leaders, and planted 12 churches in the last 15 years. After a few years hiatus tending to our orchard, our Fullerton multi-site has been a welcome return to a nursery vision. It has been costly, but so healthy to lean into mission like this. And satisfying. God has given us help and blessed us powerfully! God has impressed on us, by His Word, His Spirit and His people, that we are not to return to business as usual in the orchard.

An orchard-nursery vision is our new normal.

Jesus' words from Acts 1:8 echo in our ears and in our souls: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth." How do we send out saplings to bear witness to Jesus beyond our Jerusalem?

Our vision, then, is to plant three saplings out of our nursery in three years.

- One multi-site community in another city in Orange County (Judea)
- One autonomous church plant outside Orange County, and even out of state, but within the U.S. (Samaria)
- One community among an unreached/World A people group (Uttermost)

We may well partner with other churches for the second and third aspects of this 3-in-3

vision, but we're beginning to intentionally plan, pray and prepare for this vision. We can only achieve this vision in the power of the Spirit and with the help of your partnership.

We would ask you to consider four practical responses toward this vision.

1. **Pray.** Be praying with us for wisdom and clarity in terms of when and where we plant. Prioritize our monthly 133 prayer gatherings.
2. **Train.** Be trained for future planting through our Porterbrook Network training school.
3. **Give.** Be generous by giving to our First Fruits fund, which will go solely to 3-in-3.
4. **Go.** Join us on one of our regular ministry trips to other churches or orphanages. Going enlarges our heart for what God is doing in the world, and catalyzes us toward mission where we are planted.

Why We Believe in “One Church, Multiple Communities”

Moses understood that Israel was a people on pilgrimage. The God who dwelt in a tabernacle rather than a temple led them, and this meant they lived perpetually on mission, following the cloud by day and the fire by night. Their mission was not simply to go to a place. It was to place God's glory and grace on display to the surrounding nations. Dwelling with the Tabernacle God meant they kept moving on. How does this picture apply to our vision of “one church, multiple communities”?

1. Dwelling in diversity

Someone said that L.A./O.C. is not a melting pot. It's a TV dinner. There are over 50 cities that exist in separate pockets of demography, culture, mood and aesthetic. Multiple communities allow us to go and flesh out the timeless message of Jesus in timely ways that suit a distinct context. When John 1 talks about Jesus becoming flesh and dwelling among us, the word there is literally “tabernacle”: “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” Jesus pitched His tent in a particular body, family, trade, culture and town — what we call the Incarnation. He calls us to do the same, as His body, the church, for the sake of the gospel. Instead of calling people to church, we want to go and be the church in cities.

2. Together we can do more

There are ways of administrating the grace of God that are more economical than others. “One church, multiple communities” allows us to share the resources of a common name, track record, staff, ministry team, administrative system, sermon series and website. We believe that we can do more together than apart.

3. Common DNA

We are invested in building unity between different churches in our region, honoring the diverse expressions of the Body of Christ, while at the same time carrying a conviction that there is a great need for more gospel-centered communities on mission.

4. Engaging the priesthood

We recognize the richness of ministry gifting that God has entrusted us with, and new communities present opportunities for new people to serve in new ways. In short, it is probably the most effective way of engaging the priesthood of all believers — galvanizing all of God’s people to live on mission together, whether they go or stay.

SECTION 6: MEMBERSHIP

What do we expect from our members and what they can expect from us?

A Member of Southlands is Someone Who:

Agrees with the doctrinal statement of the church. *That means:*

- We believe the **Scripture**, Old and New Testaments, are inspired by God and inerrant as they were originally given. (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13)
- We believe God has revealed Himself as **one God** existing eternally in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; distinguishable yet indivisible. (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)
- We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, **fully God and fully man**, was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the **virgin Mary** and is the Savior of humanity. (Luke 1:26-35; John 1:18; Is. 7:14, 9:6)
- We believe God created humanity in his image free from sin, but humans rebelled through **Adam's sin** and are born spiritually dead, with a sin nature and eternally separated from God. (Rom. 5:12, 18)
- We believe Jesus Christ died on the cross as a **substitutionary sacrifice** for the sins of all people. He was buried and then resurrected on the third day, appearing to his disciples. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 4:25)
- We believe in the salvation of sinners **by grace through repentance** and faith in the perfect and sufficient work of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, by which forgiveness of sins is granted. (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 9:12, 22; Rom. 5:11)
- We believe Jesus Christ **ascended** into heaven, in His exaltation as Heavenly High Priest, and in His personal, literal and bodily coming to earth again a second time to establish His Kingdom's reign. (John 14:2-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Heb. 4:14)
- We believe in the **person of the Holy Spirit**, His convicting and regenerating work, and abiding presence in the true believer. The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers and He has been sent to be the **Comforter** and **Empowerer** of the Christian Church, to enable believers to produce the **fruit of the Holy Spirit** and to experience the spiritual manifestations of the Holy Spirit for the common good of the Body, according to the Scriptures. (John 16:13, Eph. 4:7, Rom. 12:6, Gal. 5:22, 1 Cor. 12:4-11)
- We believe that all Christians are called to a **life of godly character**, devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and service to Him. (Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 6:14, 7:1)
- We believe that the **universal Church** is a company of the called-out ones; it is the body of Christ where all believers join together to pursue the work of the ministry of Jesus Christ with Him as the Head. We believe that the local church is an autonomous group of believers who join their lives together by a covenant. The **local church** is governed by the Scriptures and operates under the Lordship

of Christ with **pastor-elders leading** the people toward faithfulness in Christ. The office of the **pastor-elder is limited to men as qualified by the Scriptures.** (Eph. 1:22-23, 1 Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9 1 Pet. 5:2-4)

- We believe in water baptism by **full immersion** as a confession by the believer in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and an expression of faith and obedience to His command. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:37-41, 19:1-6)
- We believe in the **breaking of bread**, commonly called communion or the Lord's Supper, where bread and the cup are the symbols of celebration and remembering Jesus' sacrifice. (1 Cor. 11:28-32)
- We believe in **eternal life** for the believer and **eternal punishment** for the unbeliever who has rejected the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as Savior. (John 5:24, 3:16; Mark 9:43-50; 2 Thess. 1:9)

Has confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. *That means:*

- I have individually **accepted** (by a confession of faith) that the death and resurrection of Christ is the **only means** to achieve spiritual peace and relationship with God. (Rom. 5:12, 18)
- I acknowledge that Jesus died a **substitutionary death** on my behalf — the death I deserve.
- I have **repented** from my old lifestyle (my sins) and commit to walking with Jesus, who is the **only way** to restore relationship with the Father. (John 3:16-18; Rom. 3:23-26)

Has been baptized in water. *That means:*

- Subsequent to my conversion I made a **public declaration** of my faith in Christ by choosing to be fully immersed in water as a picture of the death of my "old man of sin" and the resurrection of the "new man" who walks in holiness. (Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21)

Submits to the leadership of the elders. *That means:*

- I understand that **Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church**, which includes this local church, and that **pastor-elders** in a local church are the highest form of **human government** in this church.
- I know that church is **not a democracy** but led by men appointed and recognized with the gifts of and grace for leadership (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:7, 17).
- I am convinced that these men carry weight and **authority given by God** and recognized by man.
- I will do all that I can to aid them as they desire to **guard** me, **guide** me and provide **government** of my role in Southlands, and this includes **submitting to their discipline.** (Matt. 18:15-17; Ps. 141:5; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; Gal. 6:1-5, 8; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9; 3:10-11; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 2:5-7, 14-25)

- These men are my **primary protection** when it comes to seeking counsel, perspective or aid in decision making.
- I will commit to **pray for them**, their ministry and their families. (Heb. 13:18)

Is not a member or in leadership in another local church. *That means:*

- Though I may occasionally attend, befriend or have relationships in and with other churches, I agree that Southlands is **my spiritual home**.
- The pastor-elders of Southlands are the leaders I am **choosing to be in submission to** and allow them to speak into my life, decisions and behaviors. (Heb. 13:17)

Is faithful with their time (attendance), talents (service to the body) and treasures (money). *That means:*

- I will be faithful in **attendance** at the Southlands family both at a weekly gathering and at prayer.
- I will actively and faithfully pursue a means of **servicing my church family** through **volunteering** my time to assist with the various ministry and service opportunities. (Rom. 12:1-8)
- I will ensure that I practice community through attendance and commitment to a Southlands-sanctioned **life group**. (Heb. 10:23-25)
- I will faithfully and regularly **contribute financially** to Southlands in a cheerful and biblical manner (tithes, offerings, benevolence and first fruits), thus enabling us to fulfill our mandate. (2 Cor. 8-9; 12:7-31; 1 Pet. 4:10-11, Luke 11:42)

Will maintain the bonds of peace and unity. (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1-5, 8; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:1-8, 2 Cor. 12:20). *That means:*

- “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and in purpose.” (Phil. 2:1–2)
- Because we believe that Christ reconciled us firstly to God, but secondly to one another in his body the church, we will make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit both between local churches and within our local church. Unity does not mean complete agreement or conformity. Through the cross we can be united in diversity as we attain to the unity of the faith. (Eph. 4:1–16)
- We maintain unity primarily by speaking the truth in love to our neighbor, rather than speaking about them. We recognize that the tongue has the power of life and death, and acknowledge that the sinful nature has a tendency to avoid face-to-face communication and resort to gossip, malice and slander, which grieve the Spirit. (Eph. 4:16–32)
- We acknowledge that whether we take offense or cause offense, the initiative

remains with us to go and seek peace. Forgiveness requires that we send our debtor away debt free, because we have been sent away debt free at the cross. (Matt. 18:15–35, Matt. 5:23–24)

- We consider it a person's glory to overlook a minor offense, and that one who covers over an offense promotes love. Christian maturity means at times that we bear with one another, dealing with the offense alone with God. Overlooking an offense includes forgiveness, as well as resisting the urge to share the offense with others. (Prov. 19:11, 17:9)
- We also recognize that the gospel includes both pardon and a quest for reconciliation. While forgiveness may not ensure the restoration of a broken relationship to its original state, we heed the scriptural encouragement to "be reconciled to your brother." (Matt. 5:24)
- We intend to eliminate gossip in this community by neither initiating nor participating in it. We will instead devote ourselves to a culture of encouragement and honor, which is the culture of heaven. (Jn. 3:22)
- We may hold opinions that are different from what is taught, but we will not be divisive by actively spreading dissension on issues of theology, leadership or decision making. We also honor the specific biblical warning not to entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (1 Tim. 5:19)
- It is our conviction that initiating a lawsuit against a brother is unbiblical and against the interests of maintaining unity. Instead we will seek wise mediation within this church. (1 Cor. 6:1–11, Matt 5:25–26)
- While we embrace the use of social media in building church community, we will avoid the use of email, text messages, Facebook or Twitter in resolving conflict, acknowledging that face-to-face communication is best in resolving conflict.
- We believe that a church united in diversity reflects and glorifies the Triune God, and brings his commanded blessing. We also see that a united community is good for the gospel. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another." (Ps. 133, Jn. 13:35)

Is actively maturing by taking personal responsibility to grow in the grace of Christ. *That means:*

- I agree that the **Bible is the final arbiter** on all issues. (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Even though the Southlands family and leadership are there to help me grow in my relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, **I alone am responsible** for maintaining a healthy connection with God.
- I will be faithful in my times of personal **Bible reading, study, meditation and prayer**. (Ps. 105:1-2; Ps. 119:97; Acts 2:42-47)
- By walking in the grace of God, I will practice complete **purity** before marriage and will not participate in cohabitation or fornication.

- I will be **completely faithful** to my marriage partner and agree that heterosexual marriage is the only God-ordained form of marriage.
- I will abstain from **defiling myself**, my marriage, my spouse and this body by not engaging pornography or perversion.
- I will be vigilant to ensure that **“I am not brought under the power”** of activities that may be lawful but unhelpful.
- I will **quickly access** the grace of God through **confession and repentance** to my community and/or its leaders should I fall in any of the above areas. (2 Cor. 5:17; Job 31:1; Prov. 5; Rom. 13:12-14; 1Cor. 6:9-7:16; Heb. 13:4; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 8:7; Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; 1 John 1:6-10)

Is committed to Southlands’ mandated purpose. *That means:*

- I understand and adhere to the fact that Southlands is called to our **neighbors, neighborhood** and the **nations**.
- I understand that there will be **much time and resources** focused on areas of mission beyond our city as we determine to fulfill our complete mandate.
- I embrace the **apostolic call** that requires *all* of God’s children to be “sent out” into their area of influence to make disciples of Christ. I realize that that means me.
- I recognize that as a result, **my leaders may not always be at our local gatherings** as they will be in other national and international contexts fulfilling our mission.
- I know that the most effective way to reach the nations with the Good News of Jesus Christ is **in partnership with other churches** and other men gifted to the body as apostles who share our mission, vision and values. (Ps. 2:8; 82:8; 86:9; Matt. 28:19; Acts. 13:2-6, 15:36, 1 Cor. 3:7-10)

As your elders, through the grace of God, we covenant the following:

- We will conduct ourselves and exercise our faith in a manner **worthy of your followership and imitation**. We will remain **accountable to men** recognized with an apostolic call for our **personal** and **corporate** decisions. (1 Cor. 11:1, Phil. 3:17, 1 Tim. 4:12)
- We will continuously **seek God’s will** for this body as we **pray, study the Word** and **respond** to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 5:1–5)
- We as elders and the deacons that are appointed will meet and **continue to meet** the biblical criteria for leadership. (1 Tim. 3:1–13, 5:17-22, 1 Pet. 5:1–4, Titus 1:5–9)
- We will be faithful in administering the **full counsel of God** — Scripture in its entirety — and **guard against heresy** and false teachings and teachers. (Acts 20:27–31, Gal. 6:6, 1 Tim. 5:17–18)
- We will care for you by encouraging, equipping and praying for you. We will

provide opportunities by reminding you that Christ's call is for the **discipling of all nations**. (Eph. 4:11-13, James 5:14, 1 Thess. 1:7-8)

- We will exercise **church discipline** when required according to biblical principles. (Matt. 18:15-20, 1Cor. 5, Gal. 6:1)

Member Covenant

Elders:

“Father, today we acknowledge Jesus as the Chief Shepherd of this flock, which has been purchased by His own blood. We know that we will one day give an account to Him and receive our reward from Him, according to how we shepherd this flock.

By the power of the Holy Spirit who called us to this noble task, we commit to govern the church with diligence, serve her with humility, shepherd her with care, and lead her with courage. We commit to leading through example, through prayer and in faithfulness to the Scriptures. May our leadership advance the spread of the gospel, the making of disciples, the strengthening of your church, and the glory of your Name.”

Members:

“Father, today we thank you for setting us in this family as members. We submit to the authority of these elders and embrace the people of this church as brothers and sisters in Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we commit to being faithful members of this local body by serving with our talents, loving with our time and giving of our treasure, so that this body may be built up, as each part does its work. May our membership advance the spread of the gospel, the making of disciples, the strengthening of your church, and the glory of your Name.”

