

Membership Informational Guide

richwoods
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CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Membership Process

Richwoods Christian Church has a process for those interested in becoming covenant members of our church.

Information

First, we ask that you read through the *Key Information* section to better understand Richwoods Christian Church and what membership is all about. There is also a *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQ) section, as well as a detailed doctrinal statement containing specific information, which can be helpful.

If you have questions or need clarification about any of the information, please contact our offices at 309.691.5252 or email us at office@richwoods.org and we will forward your query to an elder or staff member. We do our best to reply promptly to all questions and concerns.

Affirmation

Second, you need to meet with a church leader, formalizing your intent for membership by signing the Membership Covenant. Once you are ready for this part of the process, it is up to you to take the initiative! You can do this either in person or by using the get connected card at a Weekend Service. A third option is to email the office (office@richwoods.org).

At this brief meeting, a church leader will affirm that you not only read the packet, but that you also agree with the *Key Information* provided here. They will then ask you some general, non-threatening questions about your faith journey, pray for you, and receive your signed membership covenant.

We have three requirements for membership at Richwoods Christian Church.

1. Confession of Faith

A person must be willing to confess Jesus Christ as his/her Savior and Lord.

2. Baptism

A person must be baptized by immersion. If one has already been baptized by immersion as a believer in Christ, they do not need to be re-baptized. If one has not been baptized by immersion or if he or she has been baptized by sprinkling another baptism must be performed. If you have questions or concerns regarding our interpretation of baptism, a booklet on the significance of baptism is available at the Connection Point or can be requested from the office.

3. Membership Covenant

This is simply a written covenant expressing your desire to join Richwoods Christian Church. The covenant is intended to make your membership process more meaningful while also serving as a point of reference in your commitment to the church, as well as the church's commitment to you.

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior, having been baptized by immersion and being in agreement with the Key Information, I feel led to unite with the believers at Richwoods Christian Church by becoming a member. In so doing, I agree to live out my faith by being involved in the church as God continues to lead me. Furthermore, I will support the church with the giving of my time, abilities and finances. In addition, I will be accountable to the church leadership in matters concerning my relationship with God and with others, fully aware that my testimony affects the whole church.

We highly recommend anyone considering membership attend our **Discovering Richwoods** Class. This class is offered quarterly on Sunday night from 4:30-7:30pm. **Discovering Richwoods** gives a clear and thorough explanation of who we are as a church, what we do and why we do it, and where we are going.

Though this class is not required for membership, it has proven to be very helpful for new members to engage with us in the mission and vision God has placed on our heart.

The Role of Elders (1 Peter 5:1-4)

The Elders are men affirmed by the congregation. They bear the authority in, and the responsibility for, leading the church. Elders determine the direction and vision of the church establishing guidelines, budgets, and boundaries for the church. Elders are charged with protecting and maintaining doctrinal purity for the church while helping ensure the care-giving needs of the church are satisfied, and actively pray for the church and its members.

The Role of Staff (Ephesians 4:11-12)

The staff is responsible for managing the day-to-day details of ministry. They train, delegate, and empower the church body to carry out the vision and mission that the Elders believe God has called us to.

Our Lead Pastor is the primary teacher, voice of Richwoods' vision/mission, and liaison between the staff and elders.

As a multi-site church, each campus is led by a Campus Pastor. The Campus Pastor's role is to lead campus staff & ministry leaders, shepherd the people.

Central Services staff are managed by the Executive Pastor. They are responsible for building and maintaining support structures & systems that are shared across all campuses and necessary in a larger church.

Across all our staff environments, additional staff members are hired according to the specific needs of the church. It is not the responsibility of staff to DO all the ministry in the church. Their role is to ensure that the ministry is done (Acts 6; Eph. 4).

The Role of Volunteers (Acts 6:1-4)

While we do not formally emphasize the title of "deacon", we do emphasize the volunteer role through other titles: Team Leader, Coach and Area Leader, to oversee specific areas of ministry in the church.

Role of women in ministry

The church encourages any person male or female to exercise his or her spiritual gifts, to be involved in corporate prayer, leadership, and teaching. They must demonstrate submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and the attitude of a servant toward others. In regard to the position of deacons (ministry and small group leaders) in the church, we believe that women may serve along with men. The biblical support for women serving as deacons is seen in Romans 16:1, 3, 7 where Paul specifically names Phoebe and other women who are hard at work for the Lord. As a result at RCC we have women present communion meditations and serve communion, as well as women who serve in leadership positions. On the other hand, in regards to the position of elders in the church, only men should serve as elders. Two passages that support this view are: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9. Women can hold any position in the church they desire, except the position of elder. We respect that others choose to interpret these verses differently and it is not our intent to be biased, but our understanding of these passages lead us to stand on this conviction.

NOTE – *This list of non-essential doctrines is not exhaustive. If you have questions about a specific issue that is not represented in this statement please contact an Elder or Staff Member.*

Political Opinions and/or Issues

A person's political beliefs are not essential to a saving faith in Christ and are not essential doctrine in our church. However, because governments are only in power through God's plan and approval, the bible does say that a believer should submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1). Political systems come and go through history and are of earthly importance not eternal importance. This doesn't mean that some of these beliefs and systems are moral or that they follow the Bible's teaching of fair treatment to others. Jesus himself, however, accepted people who held views that were politically unacceptable in his day. Without hesitation, Jesus embraced slave owners, a tax collector, Samaritans, and a Roman occupation soldier.

Our
Core
Beliefs

These values represent underlying principles that govern and guide our church while it carries out its purpose, striving to achieve its vision.

Authenticity

We believe that healthy relationships and a healthy church require its members to be transparent and genuine. This includes acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, as well as relating to each other with love and honesty (Mark 12:30,31; Psalm 51).

Relevance

We believe that the message of the Bible is timeless and unchanging. Yet, the means and methods of communicating the truth of scripture are always changing. We desire to creatively communicate the gospel in ways that make it relevant, meaningful and engaging (Acts 17; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Biblical Authority

The Bible is the foundation and core of what we believe, practice and teach. The scriptures are the ultimate source of authority in our church (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Conditional Security

The concept of eternal security is the belief that once a person has been “saved” through a redeeming faith in Christ, that person cannot lose the gift of salvation. Another description of this belief is the term “once saved, always saved.” Accepting or rejecting this concept is not generally regarded as an essential doctrine in our church because the essential beliefs in the divinity of Christ, his resurrection redeeming grace are not questioned. In addition, the matter of eternal security is not directly discussed in the Bible, even though the Bible does encourage us to be secure in our faith and not walking in fear. Yet, the Apostle Paul consistently reminds us that a Christian’s earthly life is comparable to a long marathon and not to a quick sprint. With these admonishments, Paul appears to warn believers that continuing to sin or starting to sin again, without repentance, can cause a believer to fall away. Paul laments that even he could be “disqualified for the prize.” Furthermore, some biblical verses caution us that a sinful believer is considered worse in God’s eyes than a sinful unbeliever. As a result, we believe in what we call “Conditional Security”, which simply states that a person can choose to walk away from a saving faith in Christ, but they should be secure in their faith and not be afraid of losing their salvation with every stumble. Ultimately God alone is the gracious and righteous judge. The bottom line is that the Bible is filled with warnings about “falling away” and we believe those warnings are there for a reason. Some Biblical references for Conditional Security are as follows; Mat 12:31-32, Luke 8:13-14, John 15:1-8, Acts 5:11, 20:30, Romans 8:12-13, 14:15-20, 1 Cor 9:27, 10:12, 2 Cor 13:5, 1 Tim 1:19-20, 4:1, Heb 2:1-4, 6:4-6, 10:19-39, 12:14-17, Jas 5:19-20, 2 Pet 2:1,20-21, Rev 2:1-7. Verses used to support the view of Eternal Security are; John 3:36, 10:27-30, Romans 8:29-30, 37-39, 11:29, Eph 4:30, 2 Tim 1:12, 4:18, Heb 7:25, 1 Pet 1:3-5, 2 Pet 1:10-11, 1 John 2:19, 3:9, Jude 24.

Spiritual Gifts of the Holy Spirit

We believe that God gives spiritual gifts to every believer (1 Cor. 12:11). These gifts vary in number, function, and purpose (1 Cor 12:8-10; 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11). We believe that God still imparts and enhances these gifts into the lives of believers, where they serve to glorify Him (1 Peter 4:11) and to build up the church body (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:12). Of all the gifts the most controversial and potentially divisive is the supernatural gift of tongues and interpretation (1 Cor 12-14). We believe that God can still use this gift in the lives of believers, but we do not practice it in our services for the following reasons: It is for personal edification more than the whole church (1 Cor 14:4), we are to focus on building up others, not ourselves (1 Cor 14:9,12), it can confuse unbelievers in the service (1 Cor 14:23), and ideally it is not meant to be used in the worship service (1 Cor 14:19-20). Therefore, we do not forbid or deny this gift but we do not practice it in group settings and we encourage those who believe they have this gift to use it only in private prayer and meditation to God (1 Cor 14:28, 39). Another controversial gift is the gift of supernatural healing. This gift was used by Jesus and the apostles to prove that their authority was from God (Luke 5:24). The use of this gift is still documented, although rarely, and usually in the same sort of circumstances. We believe that God works through the miracles of modern medicine today just as surely as He is capable of supernatural healing. Therefore, anyone who requires extended medical attention and/or is not miraculously healed of any or every ailment should not be considered to be lacking or deficient in faith or the presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 12:7-10).

Continual Growth

When something stops growing it starts dying. This is true in our personal lives as well as the church as a whole. We believe we should continually be striving to mature in our faith, as well as reaching out to others with the gospel message (John 15:8; Acts 4:4; 2 Peter 3:18).

Empowered Membership

We believe that the church does not exist to simply 'feed' its members, but healthy churches are those where members take responsibility in sharing their gifts and abilities. When this is done everyone has a part in helping the church achieve its mission (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:1-16).

Dependency Upon God

We believe in a responsibility to be diligent in our walk and to actively pursue service. Yet, we acknowledge our strength comes only from God and our success depends solely on the Holy Spirit's work in our lives (Psalm 127:1; Zechariah 4:6).

Eschatology (End Times)

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ shall return, that only God knows the time of His return, and that we are living in the “last days” or “end times.” We are waiting for Christ’s return (Matthew 24). The Bible also clearly states that the main priority concerning the end times is not to be infatuated with times, dates, and seasons, but simply to be “on guard” and “ready” for that day and hour (Mark 13:33). Beyond those basics, there are many schools of thought concerning the specific aspects of the “last days” or “end times,” none of which can be conclusively proven by scripture. As we approach the book of Revelation we need to take into account its historical and literary context so that we do not interpret what is meant to be symbolic and make it literal. The book of Revelation was written to encourage persecuted Christians in the first century, describing events that took place in the first century and it does not depict current events. Thus, we believe all “messianic” prophecies found in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament. We believe the concept of a “Rapture” preceding the “second coming” of Christ and a literal thousand year reign of Christ, are in all likelihood incorrect (while these views are very popular today they were never articulated until the late 1800’s). While we firmly take these positions, we do so in a spirit of humility, for we strongly believe that differing eschatological “end times” theology should not become divisive between Christians.

The Church

The word “church” is sometimes confusing because of its many meanings. Church can represent a particular building, a denomination, an organized faith or a group of people that meet in a home. None of these terms is particularly biblical. The Bible tells us the church was the people of God established on Pentecost (Acts 2).

The New Testament Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, meaning “called out assembly.” This word was chosen by God to make a statement about community and the corporate identity of His people (1Cor. 1:2). We believe the church is God’s people today under the new covenant, just as Israel was under the old covenant.

Jesus promised to build his church with his people (Matt 16:16-19). Jesus prayed for unity of his followers (John 17:20-23). Peter described the church as “living stones fashioned into a building wherein spiritual sacrifices are offered to the Lord” (1Peter 2:4-10). Christ followers are growing to be more like him and ministering to others in the context of community. Each person in the church contributes through his or her spiritual gifts and abilities (1Cor. 12:4-7). We believe the church has form and function. Acts 15 speaks of a “church council” to govern. There are also elders and pastors to lead, teach, comfort, and admonish (1Tim. 4:14; Eph 4:11).

Our Mission & Vision

This statement is a result of congregational input, and over one year of prayerful discussions among our leadership.

You’ll notice that it does not include specifics about dates, numbers, or locations. Those items will take care of themselves down the road.

Our primary concern is to convey the desires that we unanimously agree the Lord is laying upon our hearts regarding the kind of church that we are striving to be.

Helping

We're not here to coerce, force, pressure, manipulate, or rescue people. We are here to help people encounter and move towards God. We can't make anyone believe God or obey God. All we can do is use our words, actions, and deeds in order to influence people toward God. God is the one that works in people's lives - we are called to be his ambassadors and envoys.

People

Being a church provides a lot of distractions, pulling people away from finding and following Christ. Not buildings. Not budgets. Not programs or ministries. Not numbers. Not obligation or religious activity. It's about people. This is important to remember because people are messy. God sent Jesus into this world, and Christ gave his life for people.

Find

Individuals need to come into a personal and saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The primary reason for Christ to come into this world was to save people and bring them into relationship with God. Not only did Jesus come to save people, but he called us to be his ambassadors and proclaim his message to others.

And

God's purpose for people is so much larger than simply believing and going to heaven. We can't be content with just believing - we must strive to know God and his will in greater ways; learning to understand his purposes, calling, and intentions for our life.

Follow

God desires that we enter into a life-long process of becoming more like Jesus. Conforming our character, values, beliefs, thoughts, and actions to become increasingly more like Jesus. The Bible uses a variety of terms/phrases to describe this over-arching purpose God has for all of His people.

Christ

It's all about Jesus, and all for Jesus. It's not about Richwoods. God is bigger than this church. He is bigger than any personality. Bigger than any cause, mission, building or program. He is the author of life, the redeemer of our souls, and the source of our eternal destiny. We exist by his will and for his glory. The church exists by him and for him.

Believers Baptism

Baptism is the believer's response to the command of Christ. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." These mandates make it clear that baptism should be done once a person understands God's plan and is willing to believe and follow it. Though many Church traditions practice infant baptism, that precedent is nowhere found in the Bible. Every specific example of baptism in the New Testament was done by immersion, following a person's decision to follow Christ (Acts 8:36-38). Baptism is the consummation of one's faith, symbolizing the fact we are dying to our old life and now living for Christ (Romans 6:3-5). Baptism is the public acknowledgement of our belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the event that one was "sprinkled" as a child, we believe he/she should still be baptized by immersion since this is the biblical pattern and purpose. This doesn't invalidate their past experience but rather, is an act of obedience based on a fuller understanding of God's will (Acts 19:1-6).

Authority of Elders

It is evident from the beginning of the church that the position of elders is present. In Acts 11:30 the church in Antioch sent their gift to the elders in Judea. In Acts 20:17 Paul calls for the elders of the Ephesians church to speak to them. In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter says "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder." On Paul's missionary journeys he always appointed elders at each local church. Even in his absence he instructed Titus on the importance of establishing Elders over all the churches (Titus 1:5). The Elders are the authority-laden leaders of the local church. The elders have been given authority over the congregation and entrusted with their care (Heb.13:17). Their responsibilities include: determining policies and decision-making for the church (Acts 15:1-29), protecting the doctrinal purity of the church (Acts 20:28-29), shepherding and caring for the church members (1 Peter 5:1-3), and praying for the church (Acts 6:4).

We believe God desires for us to be:

A Church with a Pulse :: that is vibrant and passionate; a healthy congregation that strives to grow — not only in number, but also in maturity

A Church that Engages :: and intentionally draws its people into life-changing relationships with Christ and each other

A Church of One Heart :: where members of varied backgrounds, unique opinions, and diverse abilities understand the value of their God-given talents as they work in unified purpose for God's glory

A Church with Opportunities :: that offers its members numerous options to serve and receive from an ever-increasing variety of specialized, high-quality ministries while striving to maintain closeness and a sense of belonging

A Church that Impacts :: through love and truth, serving as an influential presence in our community and Christ's envoy to the world; a congregation where God forever changes the hearts and lives of those who encounter it.

We are striving to be the church that God desires us to be!

Salvation by Grace through Faith

What is probably the best known Bible verse (John 3:16)

lays the foundation for salvation through faith:

“...whoever believes in him shall not perish but has

eternal life.” Such belief is effective because of the

underserved love of God (grace). The apostle Paul

expands upon the idea in his letters to the various

churches. Romans 3:21-26 for example, clearly states

that righteousness comes by grace through faith and

that no one deserves and/or earns it, but attains it only

by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Other confirming

statements in Romans include: 4:1-8; 5:1-5; 5:15-17.

Ephesians, also amplifies the doctrine of salvation by

grace through faith from the very opening (1:3-10). All

of the fullness of our salvation starting with forgiveness

on through our eternal destiny is granted to us by way

of grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8-10 provides a clear

and concise statement of the doctrine of salvation by

grace, evidenced by good works, which are ordained by

God. Good works are important and expected by God.

Our works cannot earn salvation, but they are the result

of it. These works are a primary means by which we

return God’s love to Him. Furthermore, the Bible clearly

states that good works are the evidence of a genuine

saving faith in God (James 2:14).

Creation

We believe the Bible teaches that God is the creator of all things. Creation is attributed to each of the members of the Trinity: to God the Father (Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 44:24, 45:12, Psalms 33:6), to God the Son in (John 1:3,10, Colossians 1:16), and to God the Holy Spirit in (Genesis 1:2, Job 26:13). They created the vast universe, the heaven and earth, and all of mankind (Gen 1-2; Jn 1:1-3). We believe that God's creation is good in intention, design, and essence (Gen 1:2-26; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-17) and due to man's sin is fallen, but due to God's grace is redeemable (Gen 3; Rom 8). Not only did God create mankind, but He did so in His own image and for His own purpose (Gen 1:27). As a result we hold to the following statements. First, the origin of man is in the mind of God. Mankind is no accident, but was created according to the purpose, plan, and pleasure of God. Second, Humans have a unique place as the pinnacle of creation, reflecting the image of God. Both women and men together reflect the image of God – nothing else in creation is made in His image. Thus, we are both privileged and responsible. Third, we bear a special relationship to God and have a specific role in creation. God created us to be His children and to rule and have dominion over creation.

Frequently Asked Questions

This section presents more detailed information concerning membership at Richwoods Christian Church. This information is not required reading, but is intended to help answer some common questions we are asked.

What is a membership covenant?

A covenant is an Old Testament practice of two people (or groups) entering into a binding agreement. These agreements carried with them a mutual sense of responsibility, expectation, and benefits. The biggest difference between a covenant and modern day forms of commitment is that a covenant carries the idea of relationship with it rather than just an impersonal document.

When we ask members to sign a covenant, they are basically committing themselves to serve God as part of this church family. The church in turn is committing itself to help edify and challenge that person in their faith.

I've read the covenant, but what are practical implications?

This is an example of the kinds of biblical exhortations that are given to people who are committed to the body of Christ.

- Serving with ones talents and abilities (1 Peter 4:10)
- Living a life worthy of Christ and seeking to grow in Him (Phil 1:27; Col 1:10)
- Supporting and honoring the leadership of the church (Heb 13:17)
- Inviting accountability (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Thess 3:6)
- Financially supporting the work of the ministry (1 Cor 16:2)
- Being in agreement with the vision, values, and calling of the church (Phil 2:1-2)
- Regularly participating in worship and fellowship (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47)
- Manifesting a servants heart (Phil 2:5-11)
- Praying for the church (1 Thess 1:1-2)

Is Membership required?

No, you are not required to join Richwoods in order to worship, participate in Small Groups, or serve in several areas of ministry. One can be very involved in Richwoods without ever committing themselves to membership. However, some positions of leadership can only be occupied by members.

God's Word

God has been revealing Himself to mankind since the beginning of history so that we may know Him and His will. The most elemental way that we receive God's Word occurs by means of the way creation itself shows His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature. Building on what is displayed by this world, God called a people to Himself that through them He might be more correctly understood and experienced. This calling and gathering came to it's culmination with the entry of the God-man, Jesus Christ, into our world. The whole story of this gathering is provided for us in God's Written Word, the Bible. God appointed, equipped, and inspired certain members of His people to record His interactions with and His instructions to His people by inspiring their writings by the Holy Spirit. The end result is that even though they wrote as men of their times, their words recorded God's timeless truth. Yet as important as that is, the ultimate purpose of the Bible is revelation of Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Jesus Christ being the God-man is the perfect revelation of the Triune God and His will for us. Also, by being the God-man, Jesus perfectly received God's truth. The result of all this is that by knowing the Written Word and being united by faith to Jesus, the Living Word, we can know God personally and receive His guidance for our lives and deal with the issues that confront us on a daily basis.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The belief in the literal physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a basic tenant of the Christian faith and an absolutely essential belief in our church. All four gospels describe Jesus’ resurrection. The apostle Paul writes that the risen Jesus appeared to more than 500 believers at one time (1Corinthians 15:6). Even a cynical witness, Thomas saw the risen Jesus and was convinced (John 20:24-28). The resurrection of Jesus fulfills biblical prophecy, fulfills Jesus’ promise to rise in three days and reveals His divinity by His victory over death. Jesus’ resurrection guarantees that someday everyone who trusts in Him will share in the fullness of His victory over death through their own resurrection. Even now, everyone who is united to Jesus Christ by faith is already participating in the reality of the new creation because the resurrection is the foundation of our new life in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

What is the biblical basis for church membership?

The Bible clearly teaches that when a person becomes a Christian they become a member of Christ’s body (Acts 2:41; 1 Cor 12:12). This is not an option; it is a factual result of one’s decision to become a Christian. The analogy of Christ’s body represents a universal and invisible Church that is made up of Christians from every continent, culture and color (Rev 7:9). Therefore, when one accepts Christ as his/her Savior, God adds him/her into His universal or global Church. This is often referred to as positional membership.

A second aspect has to do with the various local congregations that make up the universal Church. While there were a variety of churches in the first-century (Philippi, Rome, Corinth, etc.), there was never a mandate for a believer to ‘join’ or become a ‘member’ in reference to a local church. Yet, the Bible does imply that when one became a Christian they also identified themselves with the local community of believers (Acts 2:42-47). As Church historian and theologian Stanley Grenz wrote, ‘The idea of a self-sufficient, isolated Christian was inconceivable to first-century believers.’ When a person identified him- or herself as a believer in Christ he/she immediately began to identify and join fellowship with a local group of believers (Acts 20:20).

Furthermore, the importance of belonging to a local church is illustrated by the fact that virtually all the messages in the New Testament (NT), outside of the gospels are communicated in the context of church communities (see NT Epistles; Revelation 2-3). Furthermore, identification with a local congregation was significant in that, letters of commendation were passed from church to church when believers traveled to different places (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1-3; 1 Cor 16:3). The Bible distinguishes between how the church should respond to rebellion and sin by those who belong to Christ and a local congregation and those who don’t (1 Cor 5:1-12). Perhaps the most influential basis for belonging to a local church is found in the analogy of the Church as a human body (Romans 12:4-8). When a finger is severed and separated from the body, it is no longer able to fulfill its function. Likewise, a believer without a church is not fulfilling God’s intention for his/her life (2 Cor 8:5).

Why is membership important?

There are also several practical reasons why church membership is important. For one, it allows the church and its leaders to know who they are responsible to care for and minister to (Gal. 6:10). Secondly, membership is a legal necessity in our nation to enforce standards of belief and church discipline if necessary. Thirdly, we believe that the individuals who commit to membership will benefit from that commitment.

They receive priority in the allocation of limited resources and the use of the facilities; they have the opportunity to be involved in key decisions including the affirmation of Elders and staff; they are able to use their gifts and talents without limitation; and they have the privilege of sharing in the church's mission and vision.

Finally, the Apostles often warned the local churches of specific doctrines and even specific people who were infiltrating various communities and leading people astray. Therefore, being committed to a local church fellowship provides a safeguard in protecting the individual as well as protecting the integrity of the gospel.

Humanity & Divinity of Jesus Christ

We believe Jesus Christ is the eternal divine Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary while she remained a virgin. The Bible teaches that God the Son "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" through His incarnation as Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14) and that as Jesus Christ He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man (Phil 2:6-8). During His life here among us, Jesus experienced all the realities of life that we experience including even temptation. The Bible teaches that because of this incarnation the "fullness of God" lives in Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9) and that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the exact representation of His being (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). In other words, we believe Jesus is both fully God and fully man in His nature and being. He identified with us so that we might have a new identity through Him and His accomplishment of our salvation.

Trinity

The term Trinity designates one God in three “persons”. While the word Trinity is not found in the Bible, it is a convenient way to speak of these three; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, in their essential unity. While each of these is individually God from all eternity, yet God is not a plurality. The divine nature is single and unique. Throughout the Bible we find that the Father is referred to as God (John 13:3), Jesus is referred to as God (Is 7:14), and the Holy Spirit is referred to as God (Acts 5:3-4). Yet the mystery of the Trinity is that these three separate “persons” are referred to as “one God” (Rom 3:30). We find evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament where it is written, (Deut 6:4 NIV) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." In this passage the word “Lord” is plural, but the words “God” and “one” are singular. In the New Testament we find that when Jesus was baptized, He was physically present, at the same moment the Holy Spirit visibly descended upon Him, and the Father audibly spoke from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17). All three were present at the same moment. Likewise, Jesus commanded His followers to “...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Once again we find that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate “persons” and yet they are referred to as one “name.”

Expanded Doctrinal Statement

We believe that doctrine and beliefs are important to the life of the believer and the health of the church.

We believe that doctrine and beliefs are important to the life of the believer and the health of the church. There are certain doctrines clearly laid out in Scripture which hold significance, both historically and practically. We also believe there are other doctrinal beliefs which are less clear and have resulted in disagreements among sincere Christians throughout history. Consequently, the Eldership has developed a philosophy called, essential and non-essential doctrines. They are as follows:

1. **Essential Doctrines** help us understand who God is, the nature of the salvation He has provided for us, and His will for the structure of the Christian Church. These issues and positions are of paramount importance and therefore, non-negotiable. In our opinion, they are clearly laid out in the Scriptures and lay out the historical foundations of Christianity and the structure of the church. *Prospective members of Richwoods Christian Church need to embrace these positions.*

2. **Non-Essential Doctrines** involve matters of the faith that are commonly disputed and not clear-cut in Scripture. We believe in these matters there is room for liberty and differences of opinion. Even though we hold a position on these issues we do not require that all church members share our interpretation and understanding of them. Therefore, there is room for difference of opinion in these non-essential Doctrines *as long as their expression does not undermine the leadership of the Church or threaten the Church's unity.*

Below is a list of our essential and non-essential doctrinal positions. Once again, one should be in agreement on the essential positions in order to join Richwoods Christian Church in membership, and they must be at peace with our positions and philosophy towards non-essential positions. However, it must be remembered that non-essential as well as essential doctrines define our corporate understanding of these issues and that together they provide authoritative direction for the faith and ministry of Richwoods Christian Church. If you need more information or further explanation please do not hesitate to contact an Elder or staff member.

Essential Doctrines

- The Trinity
- Humanity & Divinity of Jesus Christ
- The literal, physical, resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- God's Word
- God as the Author and Creator the Universe
- Salvation by Grace through Faith
- Believers Baptism by Immersion
- Elders as the Governing Authority in the Local Church

Non-essential Doctrinal Positions

- Eschatology (The specific order and events associated with the end times)
- Spiritual Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Conditional Security
- Political Opinions and/or Issues
- Role of Women in Ministry and Leadership

NOTE – This list of non-essential doctrines is not exhaustive. If you have questions about an issue that is not represented in this statement please contact an Elder or Staff Member.