

## **Tree of Life — Membership Discernment Process**

Becoming a member of Tree of Life Christian Fellowship involves a mutual discernment process by the individual (or family) desiring to join Tree of Life and the Church Council led by the pastor.

During the process both parties will prayerfully learn about each other while also discerning if there is a good fit for membership in Tree of Life. The normal discernment process involves four steps for those desiring membership:

- 1) Demonstrate a strong commitment to participating in the full life of Tree of Life by building the habit of weekly attending our Way of Jesus Liturgy and Agape Feast (Sundays from 9:30 am to noon) over the course of about a year.
- 2) Attend a four-session course taught by the pastor:
  - a) “The Story of the Way”
    - Learn the overarching narrative and story of the Old Testament.
  - b) “The Way of Jesus”
    - Learn the Way of Jesus and how he fulfills the Old Testament (the whole Gospel of Matthew must be read in advance by the prospective member).
  - c) “Walking the Way”
    - Learn about how Christians follow Jesus through Faith (Baptism), Hope (Repentance), & Love (Communion).
  - d) “Walking the Way Together”
    - Learn about how Tree of Life walks together through the Way of Jesus Liturgy & Agape Feast, the Way of Jesus Lectionary and calendar, its ministries, and its constitution.
- 3) Meet with the pastor for two individual sessions:
  - a) Time for vulnerably sharing one’s life story (the major events, turning points, and traumas) and spiritual journey.
  - b) Time for setting spiritual goals for one’s life with Tree of Life under its pastoral care, using “The Way of Jesus — Inventory” as a guide.
- 4) If unanimously approved by the Church Council, the new member will typically be received as a member of Tree of Life Christian Fellowship through a commitment ceremony on Pentecost Sunday.
  - a) NOTE: If the new member is not baptized, then baptism will also occur at the time of the commitment ceremony.

The constitution of Tree of Life Christian Fellowship includes the following about our church's confession, way of life, and what it means to be a member:

### **Article II: Confession**

This church confesses the crucified and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth, as testified to in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke (& Acts), and John (& Revelation), as the image & Son of our heavenly Father, the eternal Lamb & Word of God made flesh, the giver of the Holy Spirit, the only Lord to be listened to and obeyed, and the only Savior of all creation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Gospel accounts, is the only rightful lens, interpreter, and fulfiller of the Holy Scriptures (Old & New Testaments). Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we accept all the prophetic and apostolic books of the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God and as the only rule and norm of all faith and practice (2 Tim 3:16-17). No teaching or practice in conflict with the above will be tolerated in this church.

### **Article III: Way of Life**

This church pursues and follows the Way of Life that our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed through his own example and teachings that are found in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke (& Acts), and John (& Revelation). No Way of Life that is in conflict with the example and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ will be accepted in this church. Our Lord Jesus Christ summarized his own example by humbly washing his disciples' feet (John 13) and summarized his own teachings in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5—7). The Apostle Paul summarized the example and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Way of Faith, Hope, & Love (1 Cor 13:13). Our Creator God daily sustains this church in following Jesus's Way of Faith, Hope, & Love through the sacraments of Baptism, Repentance (Confession/ Absolution), & Communion.

<b>The Way of Faith — Baptism</b>	<b>The Way of Hope — Repentance</b>	<b>The Way of Love — Communion</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Surrendering to the Creator</li><li>● Listening to the Creator</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Confronting Our Past</li><li>● Waiting on the Creator's Future</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Sharing with the Church</li><li>● Caring for All Creation</li></ul>

### **Article IV: Church Members**

This church is composed of Church Members—those who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit, who publicly adhere to the Confession (Article II), and actively pursue the Way of Life (Article III). Church Members must continually demonstrate faithful and regular participation in the worship, prayer, and study life of this church, submission to the pastoral leadership, teaching, and admonition of this church, and the sharing of time and resources with this church (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; Rom 12:1-21).

The Church Council (see Article VI below), under the leadership of the Pastor, determines who qualifies for and maintains Church Membership and is responsible for overseeing their faithful walk and growth in the Way of Life. Those who deviate from the path of following our Lord Jesus Christ will be rebuked and corrected by the Church Council. Those who refuse to repent, despite the continued and loving corrections of this church, will be publicly removed from Church Membership (Matt 18:15-20). However, no matter the gravity of the error, genuine repentance and transformation of life will always allow for full forgiveness and reinstatement into this church.