

## 4.

### *The Church Covenant*



### *The Pledge To Strive For Church Advancement And Prosperity*

In the second paragraph of the **Church Covenant** it is stated;

**” We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit.....to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality”**

Again, the **Church Covenant** is a voluntary **agreement** and **pledge** entered into by the members whereby they promise to conduct their lives in such a way as to bring glory to God, promoting the spiritual well-being of the church.

This portion of the **Church Covenant** proclaims a common **commitment** and **purpose** among the members of a **New Testament Baptist Church** to the spiritual prosperity of the church of which they are a member! Each member of a local **body of Christ** has a **responsibility**, an **obligation** and an **accountability** to seek the aid of the **Holy Spirit** in order to contribute to the spiritual **advancement** and **prosperity** of the church of which they are a member!

In considering this portion of the **Church Covenant** it is important that each member realize that A LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT BAPTIST CHURCH CANNOT BE ANY MORE OR LESS THAN ITS MEMBERS! THE CHURCH WILL NOT RISE ABOVE THE SPIRITUALITY OF ITS MEMBERS! This fact places an enormous **responsibility** upon each member of one of the Lord’s churches!

#### I. THE PLEDGE OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT

##### **A. This Is A Pledge Of Church Members To Put Forth The Required Effort:**

To “**strive**” is “*to make effort, to endeavor with earnestness, to labor hard and earnestly at a task, and to exert oneself*” THIS IS A PLEDGE OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION! The **Church Covenant** is a pledge of common **commitment** to a common **purpose!**

##### **B. This Is A Pledge Of Church Members To Contribute To The Progress Of And To Enhance The Church Of Which They Are A Member:**

Each member pledges to;

**“strive for the advancement of this church”**

This is a pledge to be dedicated enough to put forth the **labor**, the **exertion**, and the **time** necessary to cause the church to be always moving forward in what the **Lord** would have the

church to be! It is a pledge of each member to be a part of the church proceeding, and pressing on!

### **C. This Is A Pledge Of Church Members To Make The Church Of Which They Are A Member Better:**

Each member pledges “to promote” (elevate, and advance) the church of which they are a member. This means that each member is willing to contribute, to assist, to help in making the church what it ought to be! In reality, this portion of the *Church Covenant* is a pledge by each member to be a true addition to the church of which they are a member [Acts 2:41-47]. It is said of the *Lord’s church* at *Jerusalem* that “*there were added unto them about three thousand souls*” [Acts 2:41]. “*And the Lord added daily such as should be saved*” [Acts 2:47]. THIS IS MORE THAN A NUMERICAL ADDITION! There was not just an increase in number, but there was an improvement! THEY WERE TRULY ADDITIONS! Through this addition there was a continuance in the things of God! EVERY CHUCH MEMBER SHOULD STRIVE TO BE A TRUE ADDITION TO WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD BE, AND NOT A SUBTRACTION OR AN INCUMBRANCE TO THE CHURCH OF WHICH THEY ARE A MEMBER!

The phrase;

*“We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit.....to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality”*  
IS A PLEDGE OF ACTIVE INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRESS AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE CHURCH! For this each member is obligated, responsible, and accountable!

### **D. This Particular Pledge Reveals Something Of The Nature Of The Lord’s Church:**

This part of the *Church Covenant* reveals that the *Lord’s churches* are progressive institutions! The commission that the *Lord* left His *churches* demand progress [Matthew 28:18-20]. The instructions that He left for church discipline demand progress [Matthew 18:15-18]. The Lord’s purpose in giving “*pastors and teachers*” to His *churches* is that the church will progress [Ephesians 4:12-16]. Paul’s various exhortations to the *churches* of the *Lord* reveal that they are to be progressive institutions! The *Lord’s* messages to the *churches* of *Asia* reveal that the *Lord* expects His *churches* to progress! A CHURCH IS ONLY AS SPIRITUALLY PROGRESSIVE AS ITS MEMBERS!

## **II. THE SPECIFIC AREAS OF ADVANCEMENT**

*“We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit.....to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality”*

### **A. Knowledge:**

There is the pledge, the commitment, the responsibility, and the obligation of each member  
*“to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge”*

The **church** is to be a place of spiritual **knowledge** and therefore it is incumbent upon each member to be advancing in knowledge! It ought to be the desire, and the earnest effort of each member to **grow in the knowledge of the Lord, and in the knowledge of the truth** [**Ephesians 1:18; 3:19; Philippians 3:10; I THESSALONIANS 4:4; I Timothy 4:3; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; I John 2:3; 5:20**]. A CHURCH CAN ONLY BE AS SPIRITUALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE AS ITS MEMBERS! A CHURCH CAN ONLY BE AS DOCTRINALLY SOUND AS ITS MEMBERS! In order to advance in knowledge, **one must always study the Scriptures, and always make application to their daily lives, practicing what they know, and one must consistently hear the Word of God preached and taught!** A CHURCH CAN ADVANCE IN KNOWLEDGE ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MEMBERS ADVANCE IN KNOWLEDGE!

### **B. Holiness:**

There is the **pledge**, the **commitment**, the **responsibility** and the **obligation** of each member  
*“to strive for the advancement of this church in.....holiness”*

The **church** is to be **holy** [**Ephesians 5:27**], and therefore it is incumbent upon each member to be holy! A CHURCH CAN ADVANCE IN HOLINESS ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MEMBERS ADVANCE IN HOLINESS! **“Holiness”** in man is *“a state of heart in devotion to God”* **“Holiness”** is *“to be separated, and set apart for God, to be consecrated to God”* **“Holiness”** is more than spiritual knowledge, more than a profession of faith, and more than the mere outward observance of a creed. THOUGH HOLINESS IS CERTAINLY INCLUSIVE OF THESE THINGS, IT GOES BEYOND AND IS MUCH DEEPER THAN THESE THINGS! We read in **Luke 1:74-75** that we are to *“serve Him in holiness and righteousness”* HOLINESS INSPIRES, ALWAYS INSPIRES RIGHTEOUSNESS! **“Holiness”** is *“the inward principle of Divine life”* [**Romans 8:1-5**]. It is *“the habit of being of one mind with God, hating what He hates, and loving what He loves”* Again, A CHURCH CAN ADVANCE IN HOLINESS ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MEMBERS ADVANCE IN HOLINESS! It is the **pledge**, the **commitment**, the **responsibility**, and the **obligation** of each member to personally strive after **“holiness”**

### **C. Comfort:**

There is the **pledge**, the **commitment**, the **responsibility**, and the **obligation** of each member  
*“to strive for the advancement of this church in.....comfort”*

The word **“comfort”** means *“to console, to support, to encourage, and cheer, to share in the afflictions of one another”* The Scriptures teach the duty of comforting one another [**Romans 15:1-4; I Corinthians 12:26; II Corinthians 1:3-4; I Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; II Thessalonians 2:16-17**]. The **church** is to be a place where the child of God can find **consolation** and **support** in their spiritual life, and therefore it is incumbent upon each member to be advancing in the ability to give such! A CHURCH CAN ADVANCE IN THE ABILITY TO COMFORT ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MEMBERS ADVANCE IN COMFORT!

### **D. Prosperity:**

There is the **pledge**, the **commitment**, the **responsibility**, and the **obligation** of each member

***“to promote its prosperity”***

The word “**prosperity**” means “*the state of being prosperous, to be successful, to advance, to thrive” Spiritual **prosperity** comes from **keeping the words of God [Deuteronomy 29:9]**, from **obedience**, and **not compromising God’s commands**, and **meditating in the Word [Joshua 1:7-8]**, from **taking heed to fulfill the words of God [I Chronicles 22:13]**, from **believing the Lord and His preachers [II Chronicles 20:20]**, from **seeking the Lord [II Chronicles 26:5]**, from **whole-heartedness in the service of the Lord [II Chronicles 31:21]**, and from **delighting in the Lord and His word [Psalm 1:1-3]**. A CHURCH CAN ONLY BE PROSPEROUS TO THE DEGREE THAT ITS MEMBERS ARE PROSPEROUS!*

**E. Spirituality:**

There is the **pledge**, the **commitment**, the **responsibility**, and the **obligation** of each member

***“to promote.....spirituality”***

“**Spirituality**” is “*living and doing the things of the Spirit of God*” Nine graces of the **Holy Spirit** are mentioned in **Galatians 5:22-23**, and these are expressions of **spirituality** in the lives of the **children of God**. Every **child of God** should increase in these things, and every member of one of the **Lord’s churches** pledges to do what is necessary to increase in the things mentioned as “*the fruit of the Spirit*” A CHURCH CAN DEVELOP NO FURTHER IN SPIRITUALITY THAN THE DEGREE OF SPIRITUALITY TO WHICH THE MEMBERS HAVE DEVELOPED!

This portion of the **Church Covenant**

***“We engage, therefore by the aid of the Holy Spirit.....to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality”***

is a **pledge**, and a **commitment** to **contribute individually to the advancement of the church**. This is done by **being what you ought to be**, and **doing what you ought to do**, and **using and cultivating your talents for the Lord!**

This portion of the **Church Covenant** is also a **pledge**, and a **commitment** to **grow spiritually**, and to **become more spiritually mature**. THIS SHOULD BE THE DESIRE OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD, and such is taught throughout the Word of God [**Ephesians 4:15; Philipians 1:9; Colossians 1:10; I Thessalonians 4:1, 10; II Thessalonians 1:3; I Peter 2:2**]. Personal **spiritual growth** is something that each member of this church should view as an **obligation**, and take very seriously! SPIRITUALLY **UPWARD**, AND SPIRITUALLY **ONWARD** SHOULD BE THE ENDEAVOR OF EACH ONE! Each member of this **church** vows, upon becoming a member to help promote the **prosperity**, and **spirituality** of this **church!** This vow includes a carefulness to do nothing that would **hinder** or **inhibit** the spirituality of the **church**. EVERYTHING THAT THE CHURCH IS TO BE, THE MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED TO BE! NO CHURCH CAN BE MORE THAN ITS MEMBERS!