

THE DISCOVERY CLASS
OF
NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP

NEW LIFE'S DISCOVERY CLASS

(new member or prospective member orientation overview)

WHO WE ARE

WE ARE A LOCAL CHURCH FAMILY

Our Definition of a Church is : Biblically , a church is a group of disciples of Jesus Christ who have been **KNITTED** together from the heart to Worship and Serve God, together. Biblically, IT IS **NOT** a nonprofit corporation, a charitable religious tax-exempt organization that is a church. A church is **not** a place either, biblically. It is **PEOPLE** (disciples of Jesus Christ) who have found that following God together in **building each other up** in their **most Holy FAITH AND SPREADING** that FAITH is the most **important** thing in Life.

We are an independent, non-denominational, unincorporated, distinct, local, Protestant, Evangelical, Jesus-Glorifying, Bible church. We are a local church family that seeks to love God, love one another, and love those around us with God's Love and Truth. We are seeking to become a **RELEVANT** church with exciting praise & worship, with full surrender to the authority of God's Word, and seeking to promote an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

There is much confusion about the role of the church in today's society. Churches have struggled for centuries to remain accessible to the world without being bogged down in its excess. Often this struggle has led to powerless churches serving only themselves or the traditions they have been handed. This is a far cry from what God intended the church to be. We, as a local church family, are dedicated to promoting the never-changing biblical message in a world that necessitates ever-changing methods. We want to impact the people in our surrounding community with God's Love and His Good News found only in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

We simply focus on helping people find **New LIFE** in Jesus Christ, helping them grow in their relationship with God, helping them grow in their relationship with each other, and helping them with understanding and applying God's Word to their lives. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; John 3:1-20)

As people, though, we are imperfect. We are "under construction". We like to view ourselves as being under construction by God. **God is not finished with us, yet.** Each one of us is at varying stages of growth in our relationship with God, our knowledge of God's Word (i.e. the Bible), and in our serving of God for His glory.

What binds us together is the **LOVE and TRUTH** of God based upon His Holy Word (i.e. the Bible). God sent His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, to die upon a cruel cross for our sins. Because of this great Love God has for us, we seek to know, love, and serve our **RESURRECTED** Savior and LORD better, serving Him together, as we seek to grow in loving and serving one another in the process. (1 John 4:7-19; Romans 5:8).

AUTONOMOUS

That means that we are a distinct local church family that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-reproducing. We do not have any denominational governing body over us telling us what to do or how to do it. We would also consider ourselves a **FREE CHURCH**. This means that no civil and/or political authority has jurisdiction over what we do or how we do it. We are a local church family composed of free people, who are disciples of Jesus Christ, who have freely associated ourselves, together, in covenant, to worship God, serve Him, and obey Him according to His Holy Word, the Holy Bible. As thus, we have placed Jesus Christ as the Head of our church, not any governing body, be they ecclesiastic, civil, or political. We are a local church family that has organized ourselves to carry on our own affairs of ministry under the direction and guidance of God based upon His Word (alone), being led by His Spirit. We do not have to answer to any other religious, ecclesiastical, or civil governing body for who we are or for what we do. Being organized in this way, we are not a business, a corporation, or even a non-profit charitable corporation governed by the IRS. Therefore, we are unaffiliated, non-denominational, unincorporated, and unregistered with any governmental agency. And, of course, in the United States, this is perfectly legal and this is how almost all churches were organized for hundreds of years, following the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock.

WHO WE ARE (CONT...)

LEADERSHIP

Our church family's leadership team has been organized based upon certain Biblical patterns of servant-shepherding leadership. We wanted to make sure we were following the New Testament pattern and mandates regarding leadership, according to God's Holy Word. Our leadership team consists of a group of men whom oversee the people and ministries of this church family in a loving, caring, and shepherding way (1 Peter 5:1-5). We call this leadership team "**elders**".

The pastoral-elders are a leadership team who care mostly for the overall, spiritual areas of our church family, such as doctrine, ministries, ministry leadership, vision and direction, and other related areas. They are not in charge of everything, but do oversee the overall ministry of the church to make sure it is all going the way God wants it to. They are to lovingly give direction to the overall ministry of the church family and provide ministry opportunities that help with the spiritual growth of the church family. Elders are pastoral in nature and, according to scripture, must be **able** to teach God's word for the equipping of the people of God, so that the people of God will do the work of the ministry of the local church more effectively and fruitfully.

(please see Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-7; 20:28-31; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,17)

To SUM IT UP...

We are followers of our Messiah, Jesus Christ, who are saved by God's undeserved loving kindness, who are seeking to be more in love with Him as time goes by. We are not perfect, yet, but we do want God to continue to work in our lives to make us all He wants us to be and guide us into all that He wants us to be doing, for His glory. We aim at simplicity in knowing, serving, and loving God better.

We are organized in a **simple** way. We have pastoral-elders for our leadership team so that we can serve God better as a local church family. Our leadership team is ultimately under the authority and leadership of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ... who is the **Head** of our church family. In all of this, we are all accountable to God and to one another in our church family, and this includes our leadership team.

Questions:

1. What type of church family are you looking for?
2. Do you think that there is a "perfect" church on planet earth, right now?
3. Do you have any questions regarding the way we are organized as a church family?
4. Do you have any questions regarding the way we have leadership structured?

WHAT WE BELIEVE

You should have received a copy of our Constitutional Covenant. Please see section Article III. That section embodies our statement of faith.

Although this is a brief overview of the tenets of our faith, it is just that, a brief overview. We view these as essentials and are non-negotiable of being a part of this local church family.

The Holy Bible is the final authority regarding doctrine within this church family, but having such a "faith" guideline helps us to focus on essentials that are non-negotiable and helps us all, as a local church family, to be on the "same page", doctrinally.

Discussion:

1. Are there any points of our "essentials" that you have questions about or that you might disagree with?
2. Are these "essentials" compatible with your *personal* "statement of faith" in Christ?
3. Could you see yourself (and family) fitting in with these "essentials" within our local church family?

BODY-LIFE MINISTRY (what we do together in ministry)

Simple Ministry Process:

Our Ministry Process motto and Missions Statement motto is:

“Reach Sinners, Build Believers, Release Leaders”.

This encapsulates the overall mandates of the church from Jesus Christ directly and indirectly through His apostles. This motto is based on the following Scriptures: Matthew 22:37-40; 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2. This motto helps us see which “ministries” fit and don’t fit within our simple, overall ministry process. We can use this as a simple filter for considering new ministries or church activities. We can ask the question, “Will this new ministry or activity ‘Reach Sinners’ and/or ‘Build Believers’ and/or ‘Release Leaders’ or will it be a waste of our time?”

So as a local church family we look at our simple ministry process in the following way:

We must **Reach Sinners**. We have been commanded by our LORD and Savior to love our neighbors as ourselves and to make, grow, and multiply reproducing disciples for Him. So, we as church family need to continually work toward this end. We must design and redesign various ministries so that we can properly, effectively, and fruitfully do this. We do not want to put stumbling blocks in the way of those responding to God’s call of salvation. We must be ready and prepared to reap a harvest... to make, grow, and multiply reproducing disciples for Jesus Christ our LORD and Savior.

We must **Build Believers**. This relates to the discipleship and sanctification process of growth of the believer. This involves corporate worship and equipping times. It involves medium and small group teaching and fellowship settings, as well. The discipleship, edification, equipping, training, and nurturing process of the believer is so very important and crucial. We must continually design and redesign ministries so that we can effectively participate in this area of Body-Life ministry, together.

We must **Release Leaders**. One of the most important objectives a local church family can accomplish is the preparation for the future ministry of that fellowship. In order to accomplish this, 2 Timothy 2:2 comes into play. We must continually train and equip new leaders for various areas of ministry within the church... in a way... kind of ... we seek to work our way out of job by replacing ourselves, many times. Maybe, even, eventually planting and daughtering new churches, missions, and other ministry opportunities that do not exist now, but will in the future. Why? Because we have spent the time necessary investing in the next generation of potential leadership. **“Leadership is everything”**, has been quoted by various people. But this adage is absolutely true. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did with His disciples. Although it was a small group... it was a small group *with a purpose*. Unleashing His church, with effective leadership, all over the earth. Leadership is what God uses to advance the gospel. We must release these equipped and trained leaders into the ministry leadership God has called them into (please read Eph. 4:11-16 for more on this subject).

This brings the process into **full circle**. It shows us how we can take a new believer → and then disciple, equip, nurture, and train that believer toward leadership, so that he/she can lead others to Christ... and then he/she can disciple, equip, nurture, and train them toward leadership... and so on and so on and so on... etc... until Jesus comes back. Let’s make sure that the **“Circle is not broken”**. The goal is multiplication of disciples **AND** leaders.

LIFE GROUPS

We believe LIFE Groups (what we call our “cell groups”) are one of the best environments for growth and life change. A LIFE Group consists of around 4-15 people who practice the “one anothers” of the Bible on a regular basis. The LIFE Group atmosphere is a comfortable setting where you can tackle the tough questions and challenges of life. It is also where we pray and care for one another and are missed when we are not there.

These are relational-based in-home small groups of 4-15 people who meet in various members’ homes throughout the week at various times in various locations. Although these groups will utilize some brief Bible Study during their gatherings, we would not consider them “Home Bible Studies”, since the focus is not on learning/mastering the concepts/subject/topics in a cognitive way only. But the focus in these in-home groups is on applying God’s Word within the context of relationships, mutual accountability, fellowship, love, and caring for one another, together. These groups also might become great ministry opportunities that one can use to invite unchurched neighbors or friends who might come into a home but might not step foot in a church building.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES:

Briefly, here are some of the benefits and privileges of becoming a member of NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP:

1. **You will have pastoral covering from your new church family.** Since we have **covenanted** together for caring for each other, the church family with you and you with the church family, we can **count** on each other, in an “accountable” way. If a person is a “*church-hopper*”, for instance, he/she could not be counted on to attend or be a part of the overall church family life... also, where would his/her loyalties be... to which local church body? In that kind of situation, how could we know how to care for that person? So, being a part of this church family, as your **only** Church Family, allows this church family and her leadership team to be able to work with you and care for you in a more biblically effective and fruitful way. Thus, we all know where our loyalties stand.
2. **You can be involved in Body-LIFE Ministry.** And, as God leads you in the future, you may even be able to help out with leading a ministry team in some way. This church family only allows those who are members, who have covenanted to be an active, supportive, and participatory part of this church family, to help out with any church ministry or to be a part of any leadership role or function. Since you are a “*born again*” follower of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, we **assume** you have come here to minister and serve in our church family, in some way, based upon the Spiritual Gifts God has supplied you with, for the edification of this local church family. In essence, we assume that you have come here to “*put your hand to the plow and to not look back*” (Luke 9:62). We hope that you have not come here to just sit in the “pew” during our public Worship Celebrations, just to be ministered to (*i.e.: a “pew” potato*). God wants all of us to be ministers to one another, with one another, and to minister to the lost, together. (see 1 Peter 2:9 → “the priesthood of the believer”... all believers are ministers of God’s Love and Truth).

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS:

How you can become an ACTIVE, COMMITTED, VITAL, and SUPPORTIVE member of this church family

1. **You must be a saved, born again follower of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the God of the Bible.** (the Son of God; the Living Word of God; God in the flesh; the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob; the one and only Creator, Sustainer, Judge, Ruler, and Redeemer of the Universe).

In order to be “*born again*” or saved, Biblically, the following must apply to your life:

- a. You must admit that you are a sinner, that you have broken God’s Holy Laws, and that you cannot save yourself from God’s just and holy wrath and judgment (i.e.: the penalty of sin). (Acts 20:21; Romans 3:9-20,23; 6:23)
- b. You must trust in God and repent of your sins, personally:
God sent His One and Only unique Son, to suffer and die upon a cross for your sin, He was buried in a tomb (*He was really physically dead*), and He rose from the grave 3 days and nights later, bodily. You must believe that God punished Jesus Christ for your sin, in your place, and that His shed blood was and still is enough to save you from your sin.
(1 Cor. 15:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7-8; 1 Peter 1:18-19)
- c. You must personally believe, trust, and have faith in what God did in Christ Jesus in His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection, that this was enough to secure your eternal redemption, your forever forgiveness of sins, your forever justification before a Holy and Righteous God, your everlasting life of a personal relationship with God forever. You must personally believe this, surrender to Him and trust in Him, and turn away from sin, selfishness, and from following the world... and turn toward God and follow Him alone for your life and salvation. (Romans 3:19-26; Romans 5:1-8; 6:23; 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:8-9)

If this is true in your life, that you are trusting in God alone, through Christ and His COMPLETED WORK OF REDEMPTION** for your salvation, you are born again (John 3:1-20,36).

** (Christ’s crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection)

If this is **not** true about you, then we can help you take this most important step of your whole life and help you trust in God for your salvation as we have explained above.

2. **Believer’s Baptism.** As we have stated before, although we do not believe a person is saved during water baptism or that water baptism saves anyone, we do practice this rite as a part of our obedience to our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ according to the pattern we see in the New Testament documents. We see in the pages of the New Testament that when people trusted in Christ for their salvation, those who became “*born again*” followers of Jesus Christ, they were baptized in water very soon after their salvation. Therefore, we too, follow this Biblical pattern. And, we also, have a mandate within the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) that is very clear regarding baptizing disciples of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in order to be considered as a candidate for membership within this local church family (i.e.: *New LIFE Fellowship*), you will need to be a “*born again*” follower of Jesus Christ who has been water baptized in full immersion in **the NAME** of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

If you have not been scripturally baptized in water by full immersion, we need to schedule that as soon as we can, since you must be baptized in water by full immersion before you can be considered for membership.

If you are a baptized, “*born again*” follower of Jesus Christ, you have fulfilled the requirements for being a candidate for membership of **NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP**.

MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS:

What is expected of you as you become an ACTIVE, COMMITTED, VITAL, and SUPPORTIVE member of this church family?

- 1. Active, participating, worshipful, expectant and consistent attendance in our Worship Celebrations.** Our weekly, public worship gatherings are extremely important, biblically, according to Hebrews 10:24-25... we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves as is the habit of some... but we need to gather even more and more as we see the DAY (*the day of Christ's return*) approaching (*paraphrase*). Therefore, we are commanded by God to gather together in larger, public settings in which we can worship, praise, thank, pray to, and glorify God. We, also, gather in these larger settings to learn from God's Word as God speaks through pastoral-teaching leaders for the equipping of God's people, so that God's people can become more effective and fruitful in doing the work of ministry in and through this local church family (... we understand unanticipated employment, business, and sickness situations and occasions that come up now and again. What we are talking about here is an overall consistency in attendance and participation on a normal, regular basis.)
- 2. Consistent and regular participation in a LIFE GROUP.** In order for you to grow in the LORD, biblically, you need to be involved in mutually accountable relationships in fellowship with other believers. You need to be in a small enough setting in which you can get to know others and you can give and receive mutual love, care, support, edification, equipping, fellowship, prayer, and accountability in Christ according to God's Word (i.e.: the "one anothers"). **LIFE GROUPS** provide the best setting for the "one anothers" to be fulfilled in a more relational way. We believe that you will grow and be nurtured in the LORD in the context of relationships in a more effective way within a LIFE GROUP.
- 3. Prayerful Support... consistent prayerful support** of this church family's leadership, members and her ministries. Prayer on behalf of the leadership, fellow members, and the ministries of this church family is so vitally important. It has been said that it is the life's blood of any church. Your prayers are so very important and needed.
- 4. Consistent, prayerful, joyful, generous, and cheerful financial support of this church's ministry.** God wants you to financially support this ministry as your first financial support of any Christian ministry. Your financial support is obedience to God and helps to further God's Kingdom around the world. (Matt. 6:1-4; 19-20; 24-34; 1 Cor. 9:14; 2 Cor. 8:7-12; 9:6-15; Gal. 6:6-9; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Discussion:

1. Do you have any questions regarding these expectations of membership?
2. Are these expectations compatible with you (and your family)?
3. Would you see any problem with fulfilling any of these expectations?

SPECIAL NOTE:

As you seek God whether you are to be a part of our local church family, you might need to be aware that there may be some concepts and ideas about what "church" is and what "church" does... that you may need to **UNLEARN**. We will attempt to help you, as the case may be, to **LEARN** only God's Model of what "church" is and what "church" does, based **ONLY** upon His Word. You will also receive some other foundational documents, such as **Frequently Asked Questions** [<https://nlfji.org/FAQS>] and our "**DISTINCTIVES**" document, as well [<https://nlfji.org/dist>]. Please read all of them thoroughly & prayerfully before making any decision regarding being a part of our local church family. We want to emphasize that you please pray deeply regarding this decision. We, also, want you to have as much information at your disposal so that you can make a fully informed decision whether **NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP** is the church family God is calling you to be a part of.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT BETWEEN “CANDIDATE” FOR MEMBERSHIP AND WITH THE CHURCH FAMILY OF NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP:

Having received Christ Jesus as my LORD and Savior and been baptized biblically, and in AGREEMENT with New LIFE Fellowship’s statements, constitution, strategy, structure and any of her other foundational documents, I am now led, by the Holy Spirit, to unite with the New LIFE Fellowship church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members of this church family to do the following:

1. Be an ACTIVE, COMMITTED, VITAL, and SUPPORTIVE PARTICIPATING member of the New LIFE Fellowship church family.
2. Seek to fulfill the *Expectations of Membership*, as stated in this DISCOVERY CLASS document, by the Grace of God.
3. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH
 - By seeking to make sure that Jesus Christ is the HEAD of New LIFE Fellowship
 - By acting in love toward other members
 - By refusing to gossip and spread rumors
 - By biblically submitting to and following the pastoral-leadership team’s ministry leadership, vision and direction for our church family
4. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH
 - By praying for its growth on a regular, faithful, and consistent basis
 - By inviting the unchurched to attend
 - By warmly welcoming those who visit
5. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH
 - By willingly and passionately seeking to be equipped to serve by my pastoral-leadership team
 - By developing a servant’s heart
 - By discovering my gifts and talents and using them to the glory of God
6. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH
 - By attending one of our weekly, public Worship Celebrations faithfully, regularly, and consistently
 - By attending & participating in Body-Life Ministry in a LIFE Group faithfully, regularly, & consistently
 - By living a godly life, as an “ambassador” for Jesus Christ and of my church family
 - By giving of my time, talents, and treasures regularly toward the support of this ministry

Printed Name of Membership Candidate

Date: _____

Signature of Membership Candidate

(Do NOT sign this copy – keep this for your records)

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Date: _____

Signature of Membership Candidate

(please sign this copy & hand it in to a leader)