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Introduction

Gathering crowds, constructing new buildings, even reaching outside the walls of the Church do not serve their purpose unless people become mature believers and follow God in their everyday lives. How do we know if we're doing this effectively? We define what people on the road to full devotion look like, and then affirm all among us who are on that road. We could call these people "participating members." They are no longer spectators. They're even more than sideline cheerleaders. They're down on the playing field, and are now, without hesitation, part of the game. Only it's not a game. It's our very reason for being on earth.

Where does membership fit in? Becoming a member is the culmination of a series of important steps, but it's not an end in itself, any more than finally being hired means your work is finished. To become a participating member of Riverside Community Church is to affirm both where you are, and where you are going, on your spiritual path. It's a step of discipleship, a milestone on the lifelong path that was laid out by Jesus, on which all true believers walk with dedication and resolve.

Why Membership?

"...so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other." Romans 12:5

Four reasons for having formal membership:

- 1. We believe the concept of membership is biblical. While the term "church member" is never used in the Bible, the concept is implicit throughout the New Testament. Believers clearly identified themselves with a specific local body and were challenged to become devoted participants.
- 2. Formal membership is valuable to the leaders of the church as they fulfil their God-given task of caring for the members of the congregation. Riverside, by its very design, attracts the unchurched. We hope that will always be the case. At some point, however, it is important to identify those who are part of the church body here at Riverside - the core that can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church. These are also the "family members" who receive priority in the allocation of church resources (as commanded in Galatians 6:10 "Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone - especially to those in the family of faith.").

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

(Please cut out and turn in this application to the office, and set up an appointment with a Riverside Pastor.)

I have read and understood the "qualifications for membership" at Riverside Community Church, and agree to subscribe with the Holy Spirit's constant help, to each of them.

Name: _____

Birthdate: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____

Date of Salvation: _____

Date of Baptism: _____

Former Church Affiliation: _____

Date of Interview: _____

I also commit to the best of my ability, that if Riverside Community Church should at some point no longer be my home church, that I will notify the leadership at Riverside.

Signature: _____

Pastor's Signature: _____

of our regular services. (Please take a pamphlet from the lobby, fill in the application, and submit it to the church office, or talk to any of our Riverside pastors.)

4. Discipling

Prayer, worship, and Bible study are vital elements in deepening one’s walk with Christ. Describe how you are presently nurturing your spiritual growth, on your own, through these spiritual disciplines.

Do you regard the Bible as God’s final authority in all areas of the Christian life and do you desire to be wholly obedient to it? Yes_____ Yes, except for _____ No _____

Do you desire to extend Christ’s saving grace to others in your circle of influence, and, as a participating member of Riverside, use the events and other evangelistic efforts for that purpose? Yes _____ No _____

If no; why not? In what ways have you actually done that recently?

The Riverside Statement of Faith summarizes the basic truths of Scripture. Do you wholeheartedly affirm that statement? Yes _____ No _____

If not, what are your specific reservations?

Conclusion

We hope this opportunity to take a “spiritual inventory” has been rich and affirming. Remember, we are not looking for “perfect Christians” who live struggle-free lives. We are looking for those who are committed to Christ, to His church, and to ongoing growth.

3. Perhaps most importantly, experience shows that membership benefits the individual. In a culture where commitment is not valued as highly as it once was, recognizable membership is an important step that moves each of us into the place of committed participation. It presents a challenge to “step out of the stands” and publicly affirm a commitment to Christ and to a specific local body. In this sense, membership can be a significant “defining moment” in one’s lifelong discipleship journey.

4. As a Registered Canadian Corporation, Riverside is required by law to have formal membership to authorize certain legal transactions, such as property purchases and sales.

What is a Member?

This is a legitimate question that needs some clarification, since the Bible actually describes two kinds of “membership”. We who are in Christ are technically already full members of the body of Christ. There is an invisible, unbreakable bond that links us to Christ, and to each other. This is “positional membership”.

The Bible also urges “positional members” to continue growing by becoming “participating members” in a specific local assembly (Romans 12:4-8). Obviously, you may be a “participating member” of several different bodies during the course of your lifetime, while maintaining a permanent “positional membership” in Christ’s universal Church.

Benefits of Membership

Some of the benefits of membership include:

- having the spiritual covering of the umbrella of Riverside and it’s leadership.
- the right to vote on church business as it comes up at our annual Annual General Meetings (AGMs) or occasional Special General Meetings.
- the opportunity to serve on council or eldership and in the leadership of Riverside.
- the joy and sense of belonging from serving and participating with a group of believers.

How Do I Become a Member?

We believe that the Christian life is a process. It involves continuous healing, growth, and fruitfulness. There are several characteristics that God describes in His instruction manual - the Bible. We see health and growth in these characteristics as prerequisites for membership at Riverside Community Church.

The process of becoming a Participating Member:

1. Everyone is encouraged to actively participate in the process of discipleship through: a Community Group, Discipleship course, or an age or gender specific gathering. (You can pick up your free copy of Riverside's Discipleship Booklet at the Connect Desk).
2. The prospective member must also attend a membership class. These are offered roughly every two months.
3. The prospective member must complete the Personal Response pages following in this booklet.
4. The prospective member is to set up an interview with one of Riverside Community Church's Membership Team. Those team members are displayed at the back of this manual. Please bring your Personal Response pages and any questions you may have from the "What the Foursquare Church Believes" study guide.

The Purpose of Riverside

Vision Statement

We are a community where everyone belongs and many believe.

Mission Statement

For them to become disciples.

2. Belonging

Are you responsibly using your gifts in a place of service within the church?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, in what area? If no, is there a specific reason? Do you intend to pursue some form of service in the near future? In what area?

Are you aware of the Missions opportunities available at Riverside, and have you considered which one(s) you could support?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you believe the way you use your material wealth is God-honoring in all respects? Yes _____ No _____

In light of the tithe as a biblical model for giving, do you regularly support this church? Yes _____ No _____

If not, describe your current practice and ways you're moving toward this goal.

3. Believing

How does someone become a Christian in the true sense of the word? Describe how that happened for you.

Have you been baptized as a believer? Yes _____ No _____

Describe when and where:

Note: While we respect the religious heritage of those who have been baptized as infants, we believe Scripture teaches that baptism should come after a person has personally received Christ. We therefore require that a person be baptized by his or her own choice before becoming a participating member at Riverside (although that baptism does not need to have occurred at Riverside). If you have not yet been baptized since you became a Christian, we ask that you do so at any one

Personal Response

Up until now in your membership process, you've been primarily "taking in". Now it's time to move beyond learning and theory to make some very specific affirmations. The questions and statements that follow encapsulate the essential values, beliefs, and commitments we all hold in common as participating members at Riverside. The ability to affirm or not affirm these statements defines who is really a part of our church and who remains a guest or an observer. Use this guide to make your own responses to the affirmations and beliefs of Riverside Community Church, as our vision and mission statements.

1. Community

Consistent with God's call to commitment and community within a local church body, do you regularly participate in the corporate Sunday gatherings of Riverside? Yes _____ No _____

If not, is there a specific reason?

Do you affirm the specific mission and objectives of Riverside?
Yes _____ No _____

Do you pledge your cooperation to the pastors and those in leadership positions? Yes _____ No _____

Are you connected to a small group of believers at Riverside for the purpose of growth, loving support and accountability?
Yes _____ No _____

If no, would you like to be? Yes _____ No _____

Describe the quality of your small group life and how it is impacting your spiritual growth.

As far as it is up to you, are you committed to pursuing the unity of the body of Christ at Riverside? Yes _____ No _____

If not, please explain.

Values

- The Bible as God's prime method of communication to all people.
- Faith in Jesus Christ as the ultimate pathway to God.
- The local church as the practical expression of God's love to the world.
- The partnership and participation of every adherent, regardless of age, in all aspects of healthy church life, both corporate and personal - worship, prayer, service, giving, caring, discipleship and evangelism.
- Ministering to the needs of families, marriages, children, teenagers and all individuals in whatever family structure they find themselves.
- That all this would be done with kindness, fun, creativity, passion and warmth.

Riverside Community Church is affiliated with the Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada (www.foursquare.ca) which means:

- We are governed by the doctrine and administrative policies of our parent organization.
- We are pastor-lead, church staff-empowered, church council-advised, church body-supported and world focused.

As a Foursquare Gospel Church we believe:

Please read the scripture undergirding each doctrine and write on the following lines what you believe. The first two doctrines are given as examples.

1. The Bible

We believe the Bible is inspired by God. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2. The Eternal Godhead

We believe God is Triune, which means that God is three; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are one. "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Corinthians 13:14

3. The Fall of Man

"When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." Romans 5:12

4. The Plan of Salvation

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

5. Salvation through Grace

“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.” Ephesians 2:8

6. Repentance and Acceptance

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” 1 John 1:9

7. The New Birth

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’” John 3:5-7

8. Daily Christian Life

“So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don’t need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God.” Hebrews 6:1
“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

9. Baptism and Communion

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19
“...and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.” In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people - an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it.” 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

10. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

“And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.” Acts 2:4

Unity

We resolve conflicts quickly with gracious and direct communication to the appropriate individuals. We refrain from criticism and operate in an attitude of encouragement and support of our leaders, team, congregation, and other ministries.

Reliability

We arrive early and start on time. When we cannot fulfill our scheduled responsibilities, we arrange a willing and trustworthy person, with sufficient notice to cover for us, and communicate to our overseers.

Extraordinary Service

We strive to notice – and even anticipate – the needs of others. We escort and introduce people to the right persons and places rather than pointing or directing them.

Presentation

We take responsibility to keep God’s house clean and we do our best to present ourselves well as representatives of God’s Kingdom through our personal appearance.

Safety

We strive to maintain a safe and accident-free environment. We attend to and report all injuries immediately to assure proper care and documentation (incident reports).

Care

We immediately communicate urgent matters regarding people in our congregation to the church office, or to a pastor, to ensure a prompt response.

Stewardship

We endeavor to do everything with efficiency and excellence. We protect God’s resources by conserving energy and supplies and properly maintaining and locking our facilities and equipment.

Faith

We do a lot with a little and expect the impossible because our God is always faithful!

A Thankful People

We are thankful to the Lord, especially in adversity. We will always remember His goodness.

Joy

We rejoice in the Lord at all times. We spread joy, have fun and do our best to make things fun for others.

Here's a list of Riverside's Gold Standard Culture to help you understand and flourish...

God's Presence

We genuinely worship God and remain engaged during services, minimizing distractions.

Community

We serve consistently in a ministry and take time to be a community

Participation

We all pray for and passionately pursue the fulfillment of our vision and build solid lives by participating in services, discipleship and ministry.

3-Minute Rule

We invest at least the first three minutes following each service interacting with new or unfamiliar people to welcome them to Riverside.

Giving

We commit to faithful giving to Riverside Church by tithing on our income and by giving willingly to special projects.

Younger Generation

Kids and Youth ministries are an integral part of the heart of our church.

Excellence

We constantly strive to improve our character and competence, becoming more like Christ.

Ambassadors

We represent Jesus Christ and His church in the community.

Teamwork

We willingly make personal sacrifices to advance God's Kingdom as a team.

Communication

We make the utmost effort to communicate to everyone with warmth, courtesy and respect. We first listen to people to understand, and then respond in love.

Love

Having received the love of Christ, we endeavor to maintain an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

11. The Spirit-Filled Life

"And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:30-32

12. The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

"Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshipping speechless idols. So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have." 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

13. Moderation

"Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon." Philipians 4:5

14. Divine Healing

"Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:14-16

15. The Second Coming of Christ

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

16. Church Relationship

“So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.” Acts 16:5

“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:25

17. Civil Government

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.” Romans 13:1-5

18. The Final Judgment

“For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.” 2 Corinthians 5:10

19. Heaven

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.” John 14:1-3

“That is why they stand in front of God’s throne and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by

the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:15-17

20. Hell

“Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:10-15

21. Evangelism

“You can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.” James 5:20

22. Tithes and Offerings

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!” Malachi 3:10
“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’” 2 Corinthians 9:7

Gold Standards

Gold is universally recognized as a substance of great value and beauty. Our “Gold Standards” are key elements that we endeavor to embrace as a whole church, as we participate together in our mission:

To show God’s love & beauty in us, and to reflect the priceless gift of God’s love through us.