



# MEMBERSHIP

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# Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to consider becoming a member of Live Oak Church. We believe this step is important because **being connected and committed to a local church is the best way to learn how to follow Jesus** and his way of life. We have intentionally made the membership process simple and straightforward. Our goal is to provide you with a clear pathway to help you grow in your faith and participate in Live Oak Church.

These pages explain the membership process as well as the vision, structure, and beliefs of Live Oak Church. Please read with prayerful consideration, and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions. We would love to talk about the process or any questions you have.

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# Membership At Live Oak Church

**Membership at Live Oak Church is a commitment to follow Jesus and practice his way of life in community.** The Book of Acts describes the original church as a community of people practicing their faith together, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread, including The Lord's Supper, and to prayer...and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved," (Acts 2:42,47 ESV) The key word is devoted. They were devoted to following Jesus together as a community.

Thomas Cranmer, who was burned at the stake for his faith in 1555 AD, wrote, "the duty of every believer is to follow Jesus, gather together each week for worship and fellowship, and to pray, work and give for the spread of the kingdom of God." We agree and believe that every Christian has a responsibility to become a member of a local church community, where they are committed to worship, fellowship and the work of building the kingdom of God.

In light of this, we have made the membership process at Live Oak Church very simple. To become a member of Live Oak Church you have to commit to worship together on Sundays, break bread regularly with other believers, serve others to strengthen the church and give generously for the spread of the kingdom of God. The beauty of this approach to membership is that these are the same steps

of faith in our discipleship process. So in essence, **becoming a member of Live Oak Church is simply committing to practice the steps of the discipleship process.**

We believe making the decision to become a member of a local church is an important step in your discipleship to Jesus Christ, but not a decision to be taken lightly. You have to decide to transition from casually showing up when it's convenient, to committing yourself to Jesus, His way of life and His people. Is it worth it? Absolutely! When you live out your faith in this way you experience personal growth, contribute to the overall health of Live Oak Church and the surrounding community and bring glory to God.

**What if you are not ready to commit to all of the discipleship steps above. Can you still be a part of Live Oak Church?**

Of course! Jesus welcomes and invites everyone to his table and ultimately into his family in the kingdom of God. So, **you are accepted and welcomed at Live Oak Church no matter where you are on your spiritual journey.**

It doesn't matter whether you are trying to figure out what you believe, if you are looking for a new church or you have been coming for years, ▶

we are happy you're a part of our church community. But you need to know that we will always challenge and encourage you to take steps of faith that will help you grow in your relationship with God. Anne Lamott said it this way, "God loves you the way you are...and loves you too much to let you stay there."

This is the purpose of membership at Live Oak Church: To provide you with a clear pathway to help you become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. If you have questions about any of this or would like to talk with someone about your next step of faith let us know! To schedule a meeting visit the Connection Table on Sunday or email [Hailey@theliveoak.org](mailto:Hailey@theliveoak.org).

### How do you become a member of Live Oak Church?

1. Read through these pages to make sure you understand the vision, basic beliefs and leadership structure of Live Oak Church.
2. Listen to the message series "Welcome To Church" online at [theliveoak.org/membership](http://theliveoak.org/membership).
3. Schedule a meeting with one of our church leaders to discuss membership. To schedule a meeting visit the Connection Table on Sunday or email [hailey@theliveoak.org](mailto:hailey@theliveoak.org).

We believe membership to a local church is an important and necessary step in your discipleship to Jesus Christ, and we look forward to helping you discover where you are in the process and discern your next step.

# The Vision of Live Oak Church

**Live Oak Church exists to see people transformed by Jesus Christ.**

Our aim is life transformation. Not simply a life improvement or an upgrade to your standard of living, but a complete change that produces the life you are looking for. Jesus described it this way: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 NLT) **Jesus offers you real and eternal life. The only way for you to experience this is through a complete transformation**, like what happens when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly! We believe this kind of change is only found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The first step of life transformation is to begin a relationship with Jesus by turning from your sin, believing in the Good News of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and being baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When you do this everything changes. God forgives you, cleanses you, adopts you, seals you and empowers you with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, and the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV) The Spirit goes to work in your life, taking what is broken and restoring it to the Father's original design and beauty, making you whole.

This is a slow life-long process that begins when you become a Christian, continues throughout your life and is completed when you pass from this life through death to eternal life. And the good news is that you can be confident that God will finish what he started in you. The Bible says, "I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

(Philippians 1:6 NLT)

## Our mission is to LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE and MAKE DISCIPLES.

The mission of the church is to do the work that produces life transformation, and that work is discipleship – the process of learning to follow Jesus and his way of life. Discipleship is not a program that fits into your busy schedule, it's a whole new way of life in the kingdom of God. Jesus summed it up with The Great Command (Matthew 22:37-40) and The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). He essentially said, Love God, Love People and Make Disciples.

Dallas Willard said that the single greatest issue the world faces is whether people who call themselves Christians will actually follow the ways of Jesus, "steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence." This is the greatest issue in the world today because Jesus and his way of life have the potential to transform any problem we face in the world today.

The good news is that learning to follow Jesus is a slow, life-long process that is full of grace and help from the Holy Spirit. This means you can relax and trust God to work in you as you follow Him, taking steps of faith and practicing this new way of life of loving God, loving people and making disciples.

### **Our discipleship strategy is to help people follow Jesus and practice his way of life.**

The way we help people follow Jesus and practice his way of life is through a basic discipleship process made up of time-tested spiritual disciplines (steps of faith). It's helpful to look at these steps of faith in two ways. On one hand, you never master or outgrow them. But on the other hand, after much practice, there is a point when you can confidently say you are following the way of Jesus.

Here are the steps of faith:

**Worship Together** on Sundays to nourish your soul and to glorify God.

**Worship Alone** throughout the week to nourish your soul.

**Break Bread** regularly with friends to motivate and encourage one another.

**Serve Others** to strengthen the body of Christ.

**Give Generously** to support the work of building the kingdom of God.

**Share Jesus** with people who are lost and searching for real and eternal life.

**Worshiping Together** is the practice of gathering with other believers to worship on Sundays. At Live Oak, we pray together, sing together, listen to Scripture together and celebrate communion together. ▶

This is an indispensable aspect of following Jesus. Jesus said, "Where there are two or more gathered in my Name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20) We believe Jesus is always present with His people through the Holy Spirit, but when we gather together in His Name, **He shows up in a unique and powerful way that nourishes our souls.**

This is why the writer of Hebrews said, "Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially as the day of The Lord draws near." (Hebrews 10:25 NLT) These days it's easy to neglect worshiping together, so you have to decide to make it a priority in your life. When you do, you ensure that your soul is consistently nourished, you stay connected to the church community and God is glorified.

**Worshiping Alone** is the practice of spending time alone with God. At Live Oak, we teach people to spend time alone with God by practicing spiritual disciplines. There are many different spiritual disciplines, but a few of the most common and helpful ones are reading scripture, prayer, rest, fasting and solitude.

This is an important practice because **God uses spiritual disciplines to nourish your soul in His presence, form your character and train you to live like Jesus** in your daily life. The Bible says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is working in you, giving you the desire and power to do what pleases Him." (Philippians 2:12-13 ESV NLT)

It's important to point out that practicing spiritual disciplines is a partnership between us and God, where God does most of the work. We "work out" our faith by putting the disciplines into practice, depending on God to "work in us, giving us the desire and power" we need to follow Him. So this means the spiritual disciplines don't have any spiritual

power in and of themselves, they are simply tools that connect us to the real power, God's presence in us.

Developing a new practice requires being consistent over time, and eventually it becomes a normal part of your life. The same is true with spiritual disciplines. When you make worshiping alone a part of your daily life, you ensure that your soul is consistently nourished throughout the week.

**Breaking Bread** is the practice of meeting regularly with other believers. The original church "devoted themselves to...fellowship, breaking bread and sharing meals together." (Acts 2:42, 46) At Live Oak we break bread by meeting regularly in community groups, discipleship courses, fun activities, and over meals or coffee.

This is an important practice because God created you to be in relationship with others. The Bible says, "It is not good to be alone." (Genesis 2:18) This is true for many reasons, but the most important is that you are vulnerable when you're isolated and disconnected from other believers. And from a discipleship standpoint, it's always better to follow Jesus with people than try to go at it alone. Proverbs 27:9-10 tells us, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."

You need a community of people where you really know and trust one another, love and support one another, spur and encourage one another, confess and pray with one another and share and celebrate life with one another. When you make time to cultivate strong relationships like this, you ensure that you will always have people in your life to help you along the way.



**Serving Others** is the practice of serving in and through the local church. At Live Oak, we serve others by using our spiritual gifts to strengthen our church community, we serve locally to show the love of Christ to our neighbors in need, and we serve globally to help make disciples of all nations.

We believe God has uniquely gifted you to serve in the local church. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT), **"A spiritual gift is given to each of us for the common good."** And when you use your gift the whole church benefits. Paul said it this way, "Jesus makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (Ephesians 4:16 NLT)

So, if you're just watching, not using your gifts, the church is missing out on what you have to offer, and you're missing out on seeing God move in you and through you!

An easy way to get involved in serving others is to join a ministry team on Sunday mornings. There are many ways to serve, and we could always use more help. When you decide to serve, you contribute to the growth of the whole church body, making it strong and healthy, and as a by-product, you grow too.

**Giving Generously** is the practice of giving financially to the work of the local church. At Live Oak, we teach people to give a percentage of their income to the local church, working towards the goal of giving ten percent.

This is an important practice because God loves when His people give generously to the work of building His Kingdom. The Bible says, "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. And God

will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need, and plenty left over to share with others." (2 Corinthians 9:7-8 NLT)

In other words, don't be stingy with your money, but also, don't give in response to guilt or pressure. God doesn't need your money. He wants you to give willingly and joyfully out of trust in Him, gratitude for His provision in your life and awareness that He is the one who gives you the ability to earn in the first place. The beauty of God's design is that by giving, you provide for the needs of the local church, and you are blessed in return by seeing God provide for all of your needs.

If you're not already in the practice of giving generously to the local church, we recommend that you pick a percentage, even as little as one percent of your income, and give at that percentage until you're ready to increase it, working your way to ten percent. We firmly believe that when you give, you position yourself to see God's provision in your life, and that He does more with ninety percent than you could ever do with one hundred percent.

**Sharing Jesus** is the practice of sharing the Gospel with people who are lost and searching for life. The gospel is the good news of what Jesus Christ has done to restore a broken world and sinful people back to God. It's the true story of God's love, humanity's rebellion, amazing grace and the restoration of all things.

At Live Oak, we teach people to pray for opportunities to share this Good News with people who are lost and searching for life, in a relational way that is "gentle and respectful." (1 Peter 3:15), and most importantly, to live attractively to people who don't know Jesus.

Sharing the good news of Jesus is essential because this good news “is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16 NLT) **Jesus not only saves us from the penalty and power of sin, but he also provides us with the life we are looking for.** Real and eternal life.

We can't keep this kind of news to ourselves, we are called to share it with everyone we know! And when you do, you ensure that the people in your life have the knowledge and the opportunity to turn to Jesus for salvation and new life!

**If you have any questions about our discipleship process, please don't hesitate to ask.**

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# The Basic Beliefs of Live Oak Church

## **Bible**

We believe the entire Bible is the Word of God written down by men under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because it's God's Word, the Bible is true and without error. The Bible points to Jesus Christ alone for Salvation and provides everything we need to know for living the Christian life. Our response is to humbly submit to God by using His Word as the standard for making all of life's decisions.

## **God**

We believe there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three persons are equal in divinity and authority, but have distinct roles in the way they relate to one another and to creation. Our response isn't to try to completely understand God, but to worship Him as He is revealed to us in the Bible and to allow the mystery of God to increase our humility and respect for Him.

## **Humanity**

We believe God created man and woman in His image to have fellowship with Him and to live a life of worship to Him. Because of one man's sin all people are born with a sinful nature. As a result, people are separated from God, unable to please him and condemned to death. Our response is to live with a deep awareness that above all else, humanity needs a Savior.



## **Jesus Christ**

We believe Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a perfect life, died as a sacrifice for sin and was raised to life. He ascended into Heaven and will return again. Our response is to point everyone to Jesus Christ alone as God and savior.

## **Salvation**

We believe salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned by anyone. People are saved when they place their faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone. At the moment of salvation people are forgiven of sin, brought back into a relationship with God and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Our response is to worship Jesus with gratitude and to proclaim the Good News of salvation and new life in the kingdom of God to all people.

## **Christian Life**

We believe to be a Christian is to follow Jesus Christ with your whole life by seeking Him daily through spiritual disciplines and walking in responsive obedience to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives inside, transforms, teaches, guides, equips and empowers all believers to live the Christian life. As people follow Jesus, they grow in their relationship with Him, become more like Him and learn to represent Him in their daily lives. Our response is to follow Jesus by depending on the Holy Spirit's work in us each day.

## **Church**

We believe the church is the family of God, made up of all Christians from every generation. When people become Christians, they become members of the universal church. The church also exists as local communities for specific places and times. The purpose of the local church is to glorify God by obeying the great command to love God and people and the great commission to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Our response is to commit ourselves to one another to form a local church community and to work together in love and unity, with each of our gifts to glorify Jesus Christ.

## **Eternity**

We believe that everyone will spend eternity somewhere. Those who have not received the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ will spend eternity separated from God in Hell. Those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone are saved from Hell and will spend eternity with God in heaven on the new earth. Hell is a place of eternal punishment and suffering. Heaven is a place of eternal joy and peace. Our response is to allow the sobering reality of Hell to motivate us to proclaim the Gospel frequently and effectively.

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# The Leadership of Live Oak Church

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the head of the church. "At the risk of stating the obvious, every church must place Jesus Christ in the position of highest authority and devotion in both the organizational chart and the life of the church," (Mark Driscoll). Serving under Jesus' leadership and authority are elders, deacons and members.

According to the Bible, elders are men chosen to lead the church. The qualifications for elders are clearly laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These qualifications are about consistency, not perfection. At Live Oak Church we use an elder leadership team to lead the church. This team is responsible for leading and caring for the church by maintaining the vision of the church, protecting the doctrine of the church, managing the resources of the church with faith and wisdom and equipping leaders to serve in the church.

Serving under the leadership of the elders are leaders called deacons, men and women who help lead and care for the church alongside the elders. The qualifications of deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Although we do not use the title "deacon" at Live Oak Church, we do use the qualifications of deacons for all paid staff and volunteer leader positions. Using these qualifications provides a Biblical standard of accountability for the leaders of Live Oak Church.

Members are men and women who are committed to following Jesus and his way of life together in community. Members love and support the vision of Live Oak Church with their time, money and abilities to help strengthen the local church and build the kingdom of God.

## The Commitment of Live Oak Church

The leadership of Live Oak Church commits to:

- Depend on the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead and care for the church.
- Protect and maintain the vision, mission, beliefs and unity of the church.
- Steward the resources of the church with faith and wisdom.
- Lead, teach, counsel and live from the truth, authority and wisdom of the Bible.
- Empower and equip leaders to serve in the church according to character, ability and experience.
- Provide a Sunday worship gathering that nourishes your soul and glorifies God.
- Provide community groups to help you meet friends to motivate and encourage you in your faith.
- Provide ways to use your time, money and abilities to accomplish the mission of the church.
- Provide a discipleship process that helps you follow Jesus and His way of life in your daily life.

# The Commitment of Membership

Membership in Live Oak is the commitment to follow Jesus and practice His way of life in community by:

- Worshiping together on Sundays.
  - Breaking bread regularly with other believers.
  - Serving others to strengthen the church.
  - Giving generously for the spread of the kingdom of God.
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## Statement of Faith

I am a Christian, not because of my good behavior and hard work, but because I have trusted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness of sin and to save me from eternal judgment. I have been brought into a secure relationship with God and have been made new by the Holy Spirit so that I can follow Jesus in a life of obedience. I have been baptized\* to publicly declare my faith in Jesus Christ and my commitment to follow Him.


**\*If you have not been baptized and would like to talk about it, let us know!**

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## Next Step

Thank you for taking time to read about membership at Live Oak Church. We hope and pray that this has given you a clear understanding of our church vision. We look forward to answering any questions you may have, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss membership with you.

**To schedule a meeting visit the Connection Table on Sunday  
or email [Hailey@theliveoak.org](mailto:Hailey@theliveoak.org).**



Seeing people transformed  
by Jesus Christ.

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