

Our Church Family

(Adapted from Raymond Woodward's *Life Course 101*)

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.
Let all things be done decently and in order”
(1 Corinthians 14:33, 40).



In the animal kingdom, no creature can grow above nine inches without a skeleton. In the same way, every local church needs a supporting structure if it is to be healthy and grow properly. Since the church is a God-ordained institution, its structure should not be determined by culture, business practices, or even denominational traditions. Rather, the **NATURE** of the church should determine its **STRUCTURE**. At The United Pentecostal Church, we believe what the church is should determine how it is organized.

1. The church is a **FELLOWSHIP**.

- **The top priority in a fellowship is unity.**
“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).
- **Any attitude that causes disunity is sin.**
“Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won’t be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

2. The church is a **FAMILY**.

- **Families operate on the basis of relationships, not rules.**
“You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds” (1 Peter 3:8).
- **The stronger the relationship, the fewer rules you need.**
“(A Pastor) must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his family, how can he take care of God’s church?” (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

3. The church is a **BODY**.

- **We are a body, not a business. We are an organism, not an organization.**
“And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence” (Ephesians 1:23).

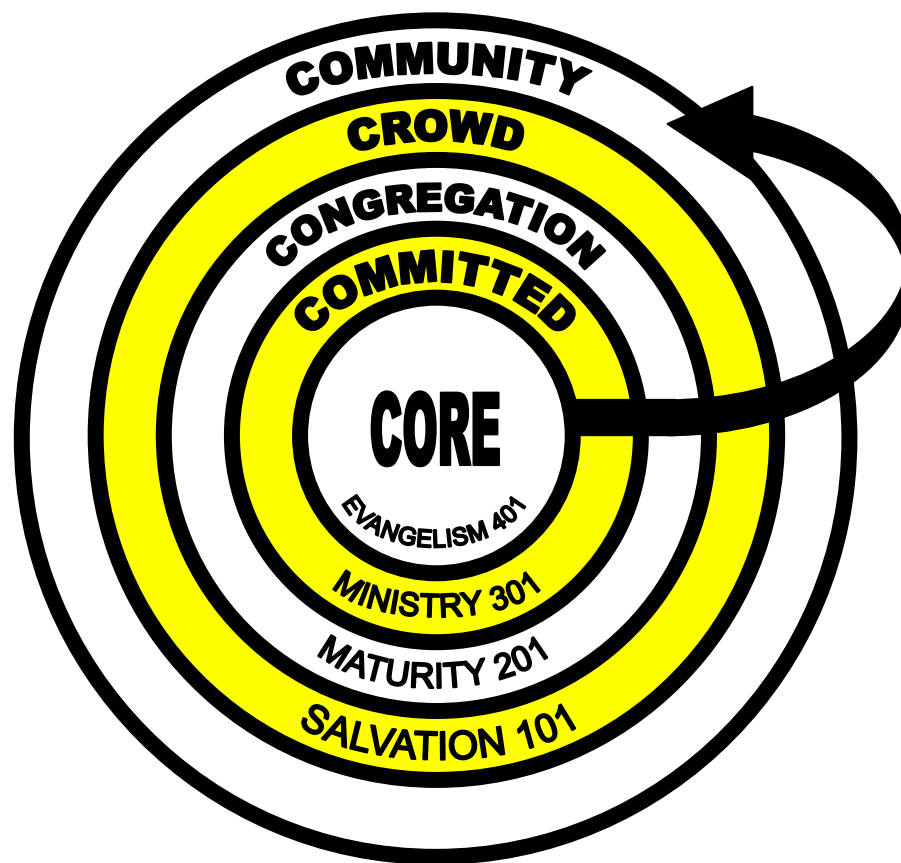
- **We therefore function on the basis of spiritual gifts, not merely elected offices.**
“There are different ways God works in our lives ... A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church” (1 Corinthians 12:6-7).

4. The church is a **FLOCK**.

- **It is therefore cared for and led by shepherds.**
“To the elders I say ... Be shepherds of God’s flock, serving as overseers ...” (1 Peter 5:1-2).
- **This Biblical structure frees the pastors to be the administrators and the people to be the ministers.**
“God gave ... some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of ministry ...” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

At The United Pentecostal Church, our process for seeing lives changed by the power of God can be diagrammed in five concentric circles, as illustrated below. Our goal is to keep people moving from the outside to the center by encouraging spiritual commitment.

Your Commitment



As you move through these five circles, along the way you will be asked to make **FOUR COVENANTS** with God: a **Salvation** Covenant, a **Maturity** Covenant, a **Ministry** Covenant, and

an **Evangelism** Covenant. We do not ask our members to do more than the Bible clearly teaches, but we do expect them to do the things the Bible expects of every Christian. And we do ask people to enter into these four covenants because **WE BECOME WHAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO.**



The difference between church attenders and church members, and between the spiritually immature and the spiritually mature can be summed up in just one word – COMMITMENT!

The difference between being an attender and a member is like the difference between living together and getting married. If two people are just living together there is no commitment; either one can walk away at any moment. Marriage means you are committed for the duration!

A person who says, “I’m committed to Jesus Christ but I don’t want to be committed to a local church,” is obviously a very immature believer. The Bible tells us that the church is the Body of Christ on earth and the Bride of Christ in Heaven. Jesus gave His life for the church. The more like Christ we become, the more we are willing to give our lives for the church. Church membership is not just a ritual; it is a step in your spiritual development.

At our church, we recognize the need for a **COMMITMENT** to a local church family for the following reasons ...

1. A Biblical reason
(our example is Christ’s commitment to the church)
2. A cultural reason
(It is an antidote to our society’s lack of commitment)
3. A practical reason
(It defines who can be counted on by the leadership)
4. A personal reason
(It produces spiritual growth in the individual)

My Salvation Covenant

Having experienced Bible salvation, as taught in the book of Acts, I declare before God and the members of my church ...

I have experienced the New Birth (Acts 2:38) ...

- By repenting of my sins
- By being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of my sins
- By receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues

I protect the unity of my church ...

- By submitting to the leadership
- By acting in love toward other members
- By resolving conflicts in a Biblical manner

I share the responsibility of my church ...

- By praying for its leadership and growth
- By being faithful in my attendance
- By inviting the unchurched (those who do not go to church anywhere) to attend and welcoming those who visit

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Study Questions

1. List and briefly explain four (4) things about the nature of the church that determine its structure. Support each answer with Scripture.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

2. What one word sums up the difference between church attenders and church members? _____

3. What one word sums up the difference between the spiritually immature and the spiritually mature? _____

4. List and briefly explain the four (4) reasons why we need a commitment to a local

church family.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

5. According to Acts 2:38, the New Birth comes when I have experienced what three (3) things?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

6. How do I protect the unity of my local church? List three (3) things.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

7. List three (3) ways I share the responsibility of my local church.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Additional Notes
