

# Belong

THE JOURNEY



 CONNECT

 GROW

 SERVE

 HOLY SPIRIT

 PARTNER

## PARTNERING WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

God's family functions much like a natural family does. Every member has roles and responsibilities, takes ownership, protects, loves, supports, and makes sacrifices that help the family succeed. The "Church" is God's family. It's both local and global.

*"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He 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 4:15-16*

**LOCAL CHURCH**  
Matthew 18:15-22



**GLOBAL CHURCH**  
Matthew 16:15-20



## WHY THE LOCAL CHURCH MATTERS

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Local church communities gather together on a regular basis to build each other up in their faith and champion God's purposes, salvation, love, commands, and justice in their local area. God wants every believer in Jesus to be a healthy member of a local church family. In this conversation, we want you to better understand **who** Petra Church is, **why** we exist, and **where** we are going together.

### Believers in a local church should do these 3 things together:

 **CONNECT**

We all need a place to belong. A place where we are accepted for who we are. A place that functions as a healthy family unit where relationships thrive, and there is commitment to the wellbeing of one another.

 **GROW**

We grow best in the security of loving, safe relationships. In community, we receive care, teaching, encouragement, and correction from each other. We strive to be a safe place where we have permission to not be perfect but to simply keep growing toward Jesus together.

 **SERVE**

Each community of local church believers shares the same vision and values. Together, we build the kingdom of God by aiming at the same goals and equipping every member to play their part. *Everyone* is needed. We all have spiritual gifts God wants to use to build his kingdom.

### OUR MISSION

“We are empowered to bring Jesus’ love, healing, and hope to the world!”

### PETRA’S HISTORY

Petra began as a church plant in 1983. Petra is part of the *Hopewell Network of Churches*, a nondenominational fellowship of churches with Anabaptist roots. The network consists of about 17 churches stateside and 9 international networks worldwide! Petra also values collaborating with other like-minded ministries both locally and globally.

## OUR CORE VALUES

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These are the non-negotiable priorities that drive everything we do here at Petra Church. We are passionate about these 7 Values!

**1. The Father Heart of God**

We love seeing people awoken to the fatherly love of God. God, the infinite creator, and perfect judge, loves each one of his children uniquely. This revelation of his goodness helps us relate to his healing, affection, and friendship as well as his instruction, protection, and government.

**2. Devotion to Jesus**

We are passionate about every person encountering Jesus and experiencing personal salvation and relationship in him. Our goal is for everyone to follow him, grow in him, love like him, serve like him, and lead like him.

**3. Empowerment of the Holy Spirit**

We want to abide in the Holy Spirit and participate in his ongoing ministry, gifts, and power to grow as Jesus' disciples and complete the mission he entrusted to us.

**4. Commitment to Scripture, Worship, and Prayer**

We prioritize the authority of God's Word in our lives and cultivating habits of worship and prayer, both personally and in communal gatherings. These are essential to our connecting to God's presence and Lordship.

**5. Living in Community**

We express loving relationships as a church family by connecting, caring, serving, growing, and leading in healthy groups and teams.

**6. Healing and Freedom**

We are devoted to developing a culture of compassion and healing. Freedom comes through God's gracious love and redemptive truths, and through loving and committed relationships. These are essential ingredients to the restoration of our lives, families, and communities.

**7. Sharing Jesus and Serving Others**

We are committed to sharing Jesus' love, healing, and hope through personal relationships and intentional outreach locally and globally. We build God's kingdom through practical and spiritual gifts to meet needs and serve others.

## PETRA PRACTICES

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Here are some ways we may do things differently than other churches.

### 1. PERSONAL SALVATION

Here at Petra, we believe everyone needs to experience their own personal salvation and relationship with Jesus Christ. *1 Corinthians 3:11, Matthew 16:16-18*

— Other churches may believe that being born a Christian, being born into a Christian family, or “going to church” is what makes us Christian.

### 2. BELIEVER’S BAPTISM

Here at Petra, we believe every believer is baptized into God’s global family based on their own confession of relationship with Jesus Christ. *Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19*

— Other churches may believe in being baptized as a child or equating baptism into God’s global family with a commitment to their church through membership.

### 3. EVERYONE IS A MINISTER

Here at Petra, we believe that God equips every believer in the community to be a minister of his love, grace, and truth. *1 Peter 2:5-9, 2 Corinthians 3:6*

— Other churches may believe that only a clergy can do ministry work.

### 4. A TRANSFORMED LIFESTYLE

Here at Petra, we believe every believer is trusting in God’s grace while daily being conformed to Jesus’ perfect love and truth. *Acts 2:42-47, Matt. 16:24-25*

— Other churches may believe in relying on creeds, communion, or ideology to affirm “right standing” with God.

### 5. BIBLICAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Here at Petra, we believe New Testament leaders operated within a team of elders who discerned God’s vision, strategy, and wisdom for the community. *Acts 15, 14:23, 16:4*

— Other churches may believe in voting on church decisions or imparting authority with no accountability.

## BECOMING A MEMBER

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If you believe God is calling you to make Petra your “home church,” we encourage you to consider taking the next step of commitment to our church community by becoming a member.

### COMMITMENTS:

**1. GROWING SPIRITUALLY:** I commit to...

- Growing my personal relationship with Jesus through regular habits of worship, prayer, and reading his Word.

**2. GROWING IN COMMUNITY:** I commit to...

- regularly attending Sunday services
- cultivating honest relationships in teams and groups
- striving towards love and forgiveness for one another
- striving towards truth and accountability with a heart of compassion
- speaking in ways that builds others up

**3. CONTRIBUTING TO PETRA’S MISSION:** I commit to...

- praying for Petra’s growth and health
- sharing the gospel with those God has placed in my life
- welcoming and caring for those in our Petra community
- discovering and using my gifts and talents
- regularly tithing 10% of my income to God’s kingdom in and through this church  
–See *Appendix Tithing for info*

**4. SUPPORTING CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY:** I commit to...

- supporting the vision, values, and purpose of my church and its leadership
- following the Biblically-based direction and counsel of the leaders
- coming under the spiritual authority and accountability of this community
- making every effort to protect the unity of the church

## REQUIREMENTS:

- 1. SALVATION IN JESUS.** I have personally received Jesus Christ as my Savior.
- 2. WATER BAPTISM.** I am 10 years old or older and have been publicly baptized as a believer.
- 3. BELONG.** I have completed all 5 BELONG topics.
- 4. AFFIRMING PETRA'S VALUES.** I affirm all of Petra's core values, especially the *full authority, inspiration, and practice of the scriptures*, as the source of ultimate truth and accountability for both my life and church life. I also agree with the *affirmation of the Holy Spirit's ministry and authority* in the believer's life today: his holiness, his fellowship, his gifts, and his unique baptism of power.
- 5. NEXT STEP CONVERSATION.** I have scheduled or have already had this one-on-one conversation with one of our pastors/leaders. *Once you have completed all 5 BELONG topics, you will receive an email with a link to schedule this conversation.*
- 6. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION.** I have filled out the membership application (*found at the end of this packet*) and have turned it in at BELONG or at one of the Hubs.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

If you agree to these commitments and have completed all 5 BELONG topics, then you may fill out a *Membership Application*—provided at the end of this packet. Your signature on the application is your way of committing yourself to Petra's church community.

If you have any questions as you're working through this process, please email [info@petra.church](mailto:info@petra.church) or call us at 717-354-5394. We'd love to help!

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

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- A. We believe in one God, eternally existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Matt. 28:19, Heb. 11:6, Deut. 6:4
- B. We believe in Jesus Christ as God who became flesh, born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life, was crucified for our sins, was resurrected from the dead, and ascended, sitting at the Father's right hand the exalted Lord and head of the church. Phil. 2:5-8, Rom. 1:4, Col. 1:15-19, Eph. 1:22-23, Jn. 1:14, Heb. 1:1-6
- C. We believe in the deity and person of the Holy Spirit, his indwelling presence, regenerating work, empowering baptism, spiritual gifts, and equipping ministry in the church today. Ezk. 36:26, Acts 1:4-5, 2:1-18, Joel 2:28-29, Jn. 14:26, 16:7-10, 13
- D. We believe that all Scripture is the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God and is fully reliable and trustworthy. It is inerrant in the original text. 2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Jn. 10:35 Gal. 1:11-12, Prov. 30:5, Heb. 4:12
- E. We believe God created the heavens and earth and all that is in them. God has created human beings in his divine image with a special dignity accorded to them out of all the works of creation. They were designed for relationship with God. Human life, personhood, and value all begin in the mind of God and are established as scientific and moral facts at conception. We believe all human life is equally valuable and worth saving, healing, protecting, and preserving from conception to final breath. Gen. 1:1, 26-27, 31, 3:8-9, Jn.1:3, Ps. 8:5-6
- Revised 1/24/2024 – Approved by the Elders
- F. We believe, beginning with Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion, that we have all received a sinful nature and have been given over to the enslaving powers of evil, eternal death, and separation from God. Gen. 2 & 3, Rom. 1:21-32, Rom. 5-7, Ps. 14:2-3, Eph. 2:1, Rom. 3:12, 23
- G. We believe that only through Jesus Christ God offers salvation from sin and a new way of life. We receive God's salvation and are born again by the Spirit of God when we repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is by faith, through God's grace, that we are saved. Jn. 3:16, Acts 4:12, 1 Jn. 4:14, 2 Cor. 5:19, Matt. 26:28, Eph. 2:5-9, Rom. 3:20-31, Rom. 5:1-21, Heb. 2:14-15, Col. 2:13-15
- H. We believe the church is a community of redeemed people worldwide under the Lordship of Jesus who meet regularly to be disciplined, worship, share communion, fellowship, and carry out the great commission together. Jesus established the local church to function with ordained leaders and a form of governance that protects, guides, and releases people in their gifts to minister. The church functions under the theocratic rule of God with clearly defined elders. Local churches are accountable to apostolic leaders. Eph. 4, Acts 2, Acts 11, 1 Cor. 12:12-13, Gal. 3:26-29

- I. We believe the mission of the church is to take the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations, making disciples of them, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things as commanded by Jesus Christ. The mission of the church includes ministry to the poor and helpless. Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18-20, Mk. 1:15, 2 Cor. 5:14, Eph. 2:17-20
- J. We believe that the baptism of believers with water is a pledge of their covenant with God. It identifies them with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is a sign of their cleansing and freedom from sin and their commitment to walk in the way of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Immersion is our primary mode of baptism. Rom. 6:1-6, Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:22-24, 36-41, 8:26-39, Gal. 3:26-29, Col. 2:10-15
- K. We believe that through the Lord's Supper, the church renews its covenant with God and with each other and participates in the life and death of Jesus Christ until he comes. 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 1 Cor. 11:23-32, Lk. 22:15-30, Jer. 31:31-34
- L. We believe in practicing discipline in the church to liberate erring brothers and sisters from sin and to restore them to a right relationship with God and to fellowship in the church. Matt. 18:15-22, Jn. 20:23, Gal. 6:1-2, Deut. 19:15, Eph. 4:15, 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 2 Cor. 2:5-11
- M. We believe that God created humankind in his image, intentionally male and female (Genesis 1:27), with each bringing unique qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a wonderful gift from God to be expressed in marriage for procreation, union, and mutual delight (Hebrews 13:4) or in celibacy in devotion to God (1 Corinthians 7:35). We believe that marriage, as described in the scriptures, is the union of one biological man and one biological woman<sup>1</sup> and is a sacred covenant designed by God to be a lifelong relationship and commitment between a husband and a wife (Matthew 19:4-6). We will teach and uphold God's marriage design as described in scripture between a biological male and a biological female but also seek to minister to the aforementioned who suffer the consequences of its brokenness. We also affirm, believe, and will teach the Scriptures, which state that...
- Fornication, which is sexual relations prior to marriage, is sin. (1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3)
  - Adultery, which is sexual relations outside of marriage, is sin. (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:27)
  - Homosexual behavior, which is sexual relations between the same sex,<sup>2</sup> is sin. (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27)
  - Gender Dysphoria and Transvestic Disorder can lead to sinful behavior where one chooses to identify as a gender other than their innately assigned-at-birth biological sex, which is contrary to the sacredness of God's creation when he made Adam and Eve as distinctly male and female. (Genesis 2:21-24)
  - Entertaining thoughts<sup>3</sup> or involvement in pornography, pedophilia, lascivious conduct, and any altering of one's innately assigned-at-birth biological sex is sin. (Psalm 101:3, Matthew 5:29)

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<sup>1</sup> As described in scripture between one innately assigned-at-birth biological man and one innately assigned-at-birth biological female.

<sup>2</sup> Whether innately assigned-at-birth or surgically altered

<sup>3</sup> Engaging in fantasy



- Any kind of other sexual perversion is sin. (I Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:19)

All of these are outside of God's blessing and design for sexual expression. We further believe that sexual sins can be forgiven by God's grace when those involved repent, turn from, and seek deliverance from these sins. (I Corinthians 6:11) We, as a church, including our counseling department, will not support or affirm anything that...

- Promotes sexual immorality, or;
- Promotes the acceptance of homosexuality or any altering of an individual's innately assigned-at-birth biological sex as a lifestyle approved by God, or;
- Defines marriage as anything other than God's design of one man<sup>4</sup> and one woman<sup>5</sup> for life.

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- N. We believe that Jesus Christ calls us to discipleship, to take up our cross and follow him. Phil. 3:10, Rom. 12:1-2, Matt. 5-7, 1 Peter 2:21, 2 Tim. 2:11-12, Mic. 6:8
- O. We believe it is God's will for Christians to refrain from violence in human relationships. This includes how we treat the unborn and elderly. Led by the Holy Spirit, we will follow Christ in the way of peace and the sanctity of human life. Isa. 2:2-4, 11:1-9, Hos. 2:18, Matt. 5:8-12, 38-48, 6:14-15, 26:52, 1 Peter 2:21-24, 1 Cor. 6:1-16, Rom. 12:14-21
- P. We place our hope in the reign of God and its fulfillment in the day when Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead: the unsaved into the everlasting punishment of hellfire and the saved into eternal bliss with Christ. We await God's final victory, the end of this present age of struggle, the resurrection of the dead, and a new heaven and a new earth. Judg. 8:23, Mk. 1:15, Phil. 2:8-11, Rev. 11:15, 15:3-4, 21 & 22, 1 Cor. 15:12-58, Jn. 5:28-29, Matt. 10:28, 23:33, Matt. 9:43-48, Lk. 16:23

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<sup>4</sup> Innately assigned-at-birth biological male, husband

<sup>5</sup> Innately assigned-at-birth biological female, wife

## APPENDIX: TITHE

Financial giving is a Biblical principle taught in both the Old and New Testament. God directed his people to give the first fruit of their crops and herds, 10% of their income, and special offerings throughout the year.

The practice of giving one-tenth of our income, “tithe,” to God is found in the first book of the Bible. Abraham tithed through the priest Melchizedek 430 years before the Law of Moses required it (Genesis 14:20, Hebrews 7:1-10). Jacob is later seen practicing the tithe in Genesis 28:20-22. Later, the Mosaic law gave clear instruction to tithe on all their cash, crops, and animals (Leviticus 27:30-32, Deuteronomy 14:24-25, 26:1-15, 2 Chronicles 31:4-14).

### **Tithe was Considered 10% of a Person’s Income**

Whatever income is to us—whether it be our salary, business, gifts, or inheritance—is considered money that flows through our hands. In the New Testament, we continue to see the spiritual community practice giving a tithe of all they possessed (Matthew 23:23). Instead of declaring that tithing is no longer part of the New Covenant, Jesus instructed that it was proper and right to give their tenth. Nowhere does Jesus say the tithe is discontinued.

### **Your Money Shows Where your Heart is**

The Bible says, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). If you invest your money in God’s kingdom, your heart will be free from the need or greed of money and will be freer to love God’s kingdom. If you prioritize your own needs, wants, and concerns, your heart will continue to be weighed down by worry, anxiety, and greed and will be reluctant to give towards God’s purposes.

### **Prioritizing God First**

All worthy organizations and visions require money and physical commodities to achieve their goals—for example, the advancement of science, endowment for the arts, fighting poverty, etc. By investing the first 10% of your income, you are prioritizing God’s mission and purposes before your own purposes.

### **Where to Give the Tithe**

God instructed that their tithe and first-fruits offerings were to be brought into the storehouse and not given elsewhere (Nehemiah 10:37, 13:12, Malachi 3:10). The storehouse was part of the temple or the equivalent of the church system of today. The Levites were the ones who staffed the temple. It was out of the collected tithes that the ministries of the temple and employment in the temple were funded. Poor persons were also cared for out of the storehouse provision (Nehemiah 10:35-39, 12:44). The local church is roughly the equivalent of the storehouse today. As a rule of thumb, tithe is given to the local church for the advancement of God’s purposes through that church family. God has continued the system of the tithe to fund the ministry and purpose of the local church.

When we hold back the tithe, the work of the local church suffers, God takes it personally. The tithe is a debt we owe to God. The prophet Malachi says we are robbing God if we don't bring our full tithe into the storehouse (Malachi 3:7-12).

When they brought their tithe into the storehouse, they put it into the priest's hands as an undesignated gift for them to use as they discerned best. The same is true today. The tithe is given as an undesignated gift to be used in the way the local church leadership discerns the Holy Spirit is leading them. Primarily for supporting staff, facilities, and ministries by caring for people and reaching the lost.

### **Offerings**

In addition to the tithe, there were other types of offerings and collections people were encouraged to participate in. These additional offerings were called "freewill offerings" or "thank offerings." This was not considered a debt to God (like the tithe) but was a love gift to God to show one's gratitude and love for God (Exodus 36:3-7, Deuteronomy 12:6, Ezra 2:68). This was given either to the local storehouse or to other projects such as the building of the tabernacle and temple. In the New Testament, it was used as a special mission offering to help the poor beyond their local church; it was considered a freewill offering (2 Corinthians 8-9). Offerings beyond the tithe can be designated for purposes such as alms to the poor, supporting a missionary, giving to non-profit organizations, building pledges, etc.

### **Mutual Honor**

If we honor God in our giving, he will honor us for our faith and obedience. We teach the importance of tithes and offerings, not just because the church has needs but because it's God's way to free us from greed and enter his financial blessings for our lives. When we honor God with our giving, he promises to watch over us and provide for us.

### **Malachi 3:10-12**

*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. "Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.*

When we follow God's principles with the right motives, he, in return, pours out his blessing on our lives. Some say they can't afford to give. But the truth is, we can't afford **not** to give. For when we give, God blesses and multiplies the seed that we sow (Proverbs 3:9-10, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, Luke 6:38).

Tithing usually begins with a choice to trust God. It may feel unwise or emotionally difficult at first. But we must trust that God will take care of us if we prioritize his kingdom first. God desires us to give with a joyful heart because we love him and want to honor him. Perfect love is always joyful, generous, and sacrificial, and that includes the use of our finances.



## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Married \_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

### COMMITMENTS:

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? \_\_\_\_\_ At what age? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been water-baptized since you accepted Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_ At what age? \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: If you were baptized as an infant, we ask that you get baptized again based on your personal confession of faith as a believer.*

What is the most recent church you have attended or have held membership at?

Church's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you completed all five BELONG topics required for this membership application and had a "Next Step" conversation with a Pastor? \_\_\_\_\_

Date you completed your last BELONG topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to come under the spiritual leadership of the church and commit yourself to the confession of faith, practices, vision, values, bylaws, and terms of membership?  
If so, sign below.

**Your Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

After completion of all 5 BELONG topics, your application will be processed. Upon approval, you will receive a Membership Certificate, and your membership will be published in the Petra News. If a Pastor has further questions, he/she may ask to meet with you.