

# **Island Community Church**

## **Participating Membership Manual**

To assist you  
in taking  
significant steps  
in your lifelong  
journey of  
following Christ

## Introduction

Island Community Church exists to help people become mature, joyful, confident followers of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, Jesus taught two great truths that furnish the core values of ICC. They are known as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

*Mark 12:30-31*

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.*

*Mark 16:15-16*

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

*NIV*

To keep it simple we say, "Love the Lord with everything you have; and remember that you have never looked into the eyes of a person that didn't matter to God." God has called each of us to know Him intimately and to introduce others to Him in loving, honest relationships.

We desire to be a Biblical community. That means we must grow in our knowledge of - and most importantly - our love and obedience to God. Our desire is not to be an organization, but to become an interdependent *organism*. God wants us to function as one body, rather than a conglomerate of saved-but-isolated Christians. That means that we must be Christ to one another – to genuinely care for each other, to be accountable to one another, and to support each other.

Perhaps the most essential step anyone can take after becoming a Christian is to move from being a *spectator* to becoming a *key player*. To be a player, it is customary to join the team. It is not enough to simply say, "I am a baseball player." If you are not playing on a team, there is something missing! When you become a participating member, you move from being a

spectator in the stands to being a starter on the playing field. But this is far more important than a game – *it is our very reason for being on earth.*

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 Island Community Church is to affirm both where you are spiritually and what spiritual-life direction you are taking. It is a step of discipleship, a milestone on the lifelong path that was laid out by Jesus.

How does a person become a participating member? It is essentially a four-step process described by the headings Investigation, Affirmation, Confirmation, and Celebration.

Are you ready to take a serious and joyous next step in your Christian journey of becoming a participating member of Island Community Church? If so, just turn the page –

## **SECTION ONE**

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# **Membership With Island Community Church**

## CHAPTER ONE

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# Why Membership?

*Romans 12:5*

***So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.***

***NIV***

Island Community Church purposes to be a safe place for seekers to hear the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. But that alone does not make ICC a church. One of the core elements that makes a church a church is community. There are visitors, attendees, and then there are members.

One might assume that as long as you profess Christ, what is the need for any further identification with a local church? Isn't it enough simply to call yourself a Christian and attend services somewhere regularly? What is the need or point of formal membership?

### ***Three Reasons***

First, the concept of membership is Biblical. While the term "church membership" is not 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 a devoted, participating part of that body.

Second, formal membership is valuable to the leaders of the church as they seek to fulfill their God-given task of shepherding. It is difficult, at best, to shepherd those who belong to another flock or no flock at all. ICC, by its very nature and design, attracts people of all types and levels of commitment – seekers, observers, guests, committed Christians moving into the area,

and the uncommitted. (We hope that will always be the case.) But at some point, it is important to identify those who truly comprise the “flock” of ICC – the core that can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church. These are also the committed “family members” who should receive priority in the allocation of finite church resources.

*Galations 6:10*

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

*NIV*

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, membership benefits the individual. In a culture where commitment is no longer highly valued, recognizable membership is an important step that moves each of us out of the vague clouds of our good intentions into the clear light of committed participation. It presents a challenge to “step out of the bleachers” and publicly affirm a commitment to Christ and His work through the local body. In this sense, membership can be a significant, “defining moment” in one’s lifelong discipleship journey.

### ***“Positional” and “Participating”***

But how exactly do you define a member? In a sense the Bible describes two kinds of membership. Scripture is full of references to the once-and-for-all union with Christ and His body, which happens at the instant of your conversion (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:13-22, 4:3-6; Colossians 1:13-22). At that moment, you become a “positional member” in the universal Church of Jesus Christ, based solely on His merit and grace. “Positional membership” is eternal and unchanging.

But then the Bible also urges “positional members” to continue growing by becoming “participating members” in a

specific local assembly (Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:25-31; 14:12, 26; Hebrews 10:24-25; I Timothy 3:14-15). Obviously, you may be a “participating member” of several different local bodies during the course of your lifetime while maintaining a permanent “positional membership” in Christ’s universal Church. We cannot see the invisible bond of “positional membership,” but we can identify those who are the “participating members” here at Island Community.

## ***The Five G’s***

How can “participating membership” be described biblically? An outline called “The Five G’s” borrowed from Willow Creek Community Church provides a convenient and simple answer to this question.

### ***GRACE***

The individual appropriation of the saving work of Christ. This occurs when a person transfers a dependence on self-righteousness and trusts fully in the fact that Jesus Christ, God’s one and only Son, died on the cross, paying all the penalty that was owed for our sin.

(John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)

### ***GROWTH***

The ongoing evidence of a changing life and pursuit of Christ-likeness. This would include following the Lord’s instruction to be baptized after salvation and to participate regularly in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.

While never reaching the goal, it should be the desire of every Christian to live out the fulfillment of the Great Commandment – to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbors.

(II Peter 3:18)

## ***GROUPS***

Participation in the body of Christ and connection with others in significant relationships through small groups.

(Acts 2:46)

## ***GIFTS***

Serving Christ's body according to each individual's spiritual giftedness and passions.

(Romans 12:6-8)

## ***GOOD STEWARDSHIP***

Honoring God with one's resources of time, talent, and treasure. This includes giving of your time in serving others through ministry opportunities of the church, using your life for God's purposes, and honoring Him with your material resources: supporting the church using the biblical principle of tithes and offerings as a goal to carry out the ministry locally and abroad.

We believe these five statements capture the essential "marks" of someone devoted to Christ and His Church. These characteristics are Biblical – they have not been artificially manufactured. As such, we believe they should provide the criteria for participating membership at Island Community Church. Simply put, if you are evidencing these characteristics within our body, then you truly are a participating member. As a church, we want to formally affirm that fact and celebrate it!

### ***Four Steps To Participating Membership***

1. **Investigation** – The prospective member listens to a tape and completes a Bible study exploring membership in general, the Five G's, the Statement of Faith, and the

- distinctives of ICC. Each person does the work at his or her own pace.
2. **Affirmation** – The prospective member now responds to questions based on the study completed. This is a time of personal, private self-evaluation where each individual affirms whether the marks of a participating member are true in his or her life.
  3. **Confirmation** – The prospective member meets with a trained leader to discuss the affirmations made and to confirm participating membership. Any difficult issues are referred to an elder to assist the prospective member.
  4. **Celebration** – New participating members are presented to the church so that the whole community can rejoice together.

Individuals will also reaffirm their commitment to participating membership periodically. Our intent is not to burden people by asking for this reaffirmation, but to see that membership remains a meaningful covenant for all who claim it.

### ***Where Do I Go From Here?***

If you wish to explore a participating membership at ICC, all you need to do is continue what you are doing now – read this manual and complete the study materials. Then schedule a confirmation interview and discuss your answers to the response and affirmation pages. After you're confirmed, we'll celebrate! If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to call the church office. The membership process at ICC has been designed to be a personally enriching, discipling step in your ongoing walk with Christ. We hope you will experience the many benefits of taking this step soon.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# Steps to Becoming A Member

**As we've seen in the previous chapter, we who are in Christ are technically already full members of the body of Christ. We have an invisible, unbreakable bond that ties us to Christ and to each other. But "participating membership" is about making the invisible visible; the abstract concrete. The chart on the next page explains the four steps involved in formal union with Island Community Church.**

**Investigation  
By  
The Prospective  
Member**

During this phase, a prospective member learns about becoming a participating member. At his or her own pace, the prospective member studies Scripture as it relates to the characteristics of a participating member, follows the tape and reading materials, and learns about the philosophy and distinctives of ICC.



**Affirmation  
By  
The Prospective  
Member**

Using a questionnaire filled out privately, the prospective member then responds personally to the material studied during the investigation phase. The prospective member declares in writing his or her intentions regarding joining ICC, and also honestly notes any reservations or uncertainties that need to be discussed during the membership interview to follow.



**Confirmation  
Of  
The Prospective  
Member**

This phase is simply a personal interview, usually conducted by a small group leader or one of the pastors. Key membership issues are discussed, and any concerns or unusual circumstances affecting membership are covered. The interviewer then affirms the prospective member or refers the remaining uncertainties to be resolved by the elders of the church.



**Celebration  
Of  
The Prospective  
Member**

Once the prospective member has been affirmed by a leader in the church, all that remains is to officially announce during a service that the person has become a participating member and to celebrate that fact. The new participating member also receives a Participating Membership Certificate welcoming them to the membership of Island Community Church.

## **Becoming a Participating Member at Island Community Church**

### ***INVESTIGATION AND AFFIRMATION***

You are currently in the investigation phase. As you read, study, and listen to the accompanying tape, you will be getting a clear picture of participating membership. You'll also gain a better understanding of your own spiritual situation. At the completion of your personal Bible study, you'll fill out an affirmation sheet. Point by point you will honestly assess your current spiritual health and commitment to the distinctives of Island Community Church. This study is personal and confidential – you will discuss your answers during the confirmation interview, but you keep the affirmation sheet afterward. The more honest you are with yourself, the more valuable this part of the membership process will be.

### ***THE CONFIRMATION INTERVIEW***

The next step after completing the independent study is to schedule an interview with one of our membership leaders. This may be your small group leader or a member of the pastoral staff. This is set up by calling the church office, expressing your desire to set up an interview. The purpose of the interview is NOT to determine whether you are a “perfect Christian!” The purpose is to affirm your commitment to Christ, to this church body, and the lifelong process of spiritual growth.

Occasionally an issue will be raised during the interview that requires more discussion. *No interviewer may deny a prospective member upon his or her reservations alone.* If there are concerns, the next step will be to bring in a member of the elder board to discuss whatever issue may have created the reservation. Only after at least two interviewers have the same concern, someone may be asked to delay becoming a participating member. (This is not a denial of membership but a

time to seek answers for any issue which needs attention.) A specific plan will be laid out and agreed to by everyone so that the prospective member knows what should happen in order to move toward full participating membership. It is important to recognize that when issues are brought to light that put the membership process on hold, confidentiality will be maintained. Our intention is not to embarrass or shame anyone, but to address the issue and move forward toward wholeness in Christ.

At the completion of the interview, the interviewer will recommend your confirmation as a participating member. He or she simply signs the New Participating Member Confirmation Form to indicate that all requirements have been met, and then returns that sheet to the church office. At the next meeting of elders, your name will be officially presented and entered into participating membership.

### ***CELEBRATION***

The final step is to celebrate publicly your new participation membership. Because you are now a part of the local church, that context is where we desire to celebrate your commitment. Throughout the year, we will designate various times during a church service to welcome new members in an open, non-threatening way. We will also encourage new members to sit with their families and their small group at that time. Because a small group is, after all, the “church” in its smallest manifestation, we want you to be welcomed into membership as you sit with those who are the closest members of your earthly and spiritual family.

## CHAPTER THREE

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# Responsibilities and Privileges Of Membership

In a phrase, the main responsibility of every member of Island Community Church is to receive His love and to participate in the life of the church by simply following Christ. We are to do as He would do, live as He would live. That which qualified you as a participating member – the Five G’s - is all that will ever be expected of you: driven by His love, you live in grace, commit to growth, be in a group, use your gifts, and practice good stewardship.

### ***FOUR RESPONSIBILITIES***

Another way to look at the requirements of membership is to break them down into the following four areas:

**RESPONSIBILITY #1 – Personal Purity:** *To bring to the church a submitted, Spirit-filled self.*

Our connection with the Lord is the source of everything we have to give to others, and Jesus made it clear: “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). A yielded heart is a powerful tool in God’s hands. When we become convinced that our own personal purity and spiritual maturity are the greatest gifts we can bring to each other, we will diligently seek God and submit to His Spirit daily.

**RESPONSIBILITY #2 – Relational Integrity:** *To pursue honorable and loving relationships in the family; among friends, co-workers, and neighbors; and in the body.*

It does no good to keep one part of our body healthy if we continually mistreat another. The unhealthy part can jeopardize the well-being (and even the very life) of the strong parts – a diseased liver will eventually stop even a healthy heart from beating. Our relational world is a lot like our physical body – we cannot afford to neglect any part of it and think it will have no adverse effect on other parts of our lives. Participating members take seriously Paul’s admonition: “So far as it is up to you, be at peace with all men.” (Romans 12:18) We must pursue loving behavior with all people in our world, and reconciliation in strained relationships. Though there are times others will not allow us to make peace, we do what we can so that we can say with Paul, “For our proud confidence is this...that in holiness and godly sincerity ...we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.” (2 Corinthians 1:12)

**RESPONSIBILITY #3 – Organizational Loyalty:** *To contribute to the church your time, talents, and treasure and to be responsive to the leadership God has established.*

If someone is a participating member of ICC, that participation will be evident. Other than attending services passively, what does your calendar show about your connection to the church? Would someone watching you over the course of a typical week acknowledge you’re a “player” rather than a sideline observer? Is the church a place where you give or merely take? If everyone was involved with the same degree of passion and loyalty as you are, would this be a healthy church? Are leaders glad you’re on the team, or do you make their jobs harder?

**RESPONSIBILITY #4 – Interpersonal Maturity:** *To seek to serve more than to be served.*

When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He not only wanted to show His love toward them – He pointed out the profound implication of His actions. He asked, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." (John 13:12-15)

Sometimes we fall into the regretful, almost infantile attitude of wanting "the church" to do more for us. But WE are the church. If the church isn't doing something, WE'RE the one not doing it, and WE'RE the only ones who can make it different. Too often we slip into a consumer mentality- we "shop" for services we think are important. But we're not the shoppers at a spiritual convenience store: we're the proprietors here. Stocking the shelves is OUR responsibility. "Meeting needs" is what WE do for others, and in the process, we find out what Jesus meant when He said it is more blessed to give than to receive.

*Washing feet...isn't that the servant's job?* No, it was the Savior's job. And He told us it was also ours!

***PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP***

Just as the key word "participating" describes the responsibilities of members, that word also implies that there are benefits. Specifically, being a participating member means that you now have the right to influence the key decisions of the church. Participating members also receive priority for facility usage and staff members' time (such as wedding, funerals, benevolence needs, personal support in your area of ministry, etc.). From time to time, meetings or other functions are held which are for "members only." These events are usually called to

either inform the core of the church of a major concern or to garner input from the body. Therefore, they are limited only to those who are participating members. Finally, virtually all leadership positions in the church require participating membership as prerequisite. The primary reason to become a participating member, however, is not to gain a personal advantage, but to identify ourselves with the characteristics, or marks, of Biblical maturity. Since we're all pursuing Him, we ought to be pursuing these qualities as a way to be pleasing to Him - first and foremost.

**PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION BELOW**

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mi \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Unlisted \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No?

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female Birth Date: Month \_\_\_\_\_ / Day \_\_\_\_\_ / Year \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed

Spouse's Name If Married \_\_\_\_\_ Is Spouse A Member \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

The Month/ Year I Started Attending ICC \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Before coming to ICC I had accepted Jesus as my Personal Savior \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Date I received Christ \_\_\_\_\_ Date I began to follow Christ \_\_\_\_\_

Before coming to Island Community I was active in another church \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Denomination \_\_\_\_\_ Church Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address of former church (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

I now serve in the following ministry area(s) \_\_\_\_\_

I am in an ICC small group \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No Leader's \_\_\_\_\_

I am investigating the following ministry and/or small group(s).

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

***Please bring this completed form to your interview.***

***After it is signed, return it to:***

***Island Community Church***

***83250 Overseas Highway***

***Islamorada, FL 33036***

***Let's Celebrate!***

## **SECTION TWO**

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# **Island Community Church Distinctives**

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### **It All Began in a Living Room...**

Throughout the sixties and early seventies, a very effective youth ministry known as “Ranch,” lead primarily by graduates or students from Florida Bible College, had tremendous impact throughout the United States. A group of students from Florida Bible began to come to the Keys to establish “Ranch” to reach students attending Coral Shores. A few of these students began to feel the call to build an effective, evangelistic church. In fact, you might say that this was a youth group growing up and recognizing the need for a church with a passion for the things they were passionate about. This vision was further fueled and encouraged by a group of Keys families who were weary of doing church the “same old way.”

These early pioneers were passionate about several things – reaching seekers and the unchurched was at the heart of almost everything they did. They were also deeply committed to break away from the dead religiosity that was prevalent in the churches of the area. They believed that God was a very big God and that He could do extraordinary things in the Florida Keys. As a result, they had big dreams and vision for the growth and ministry of Island Community Church.

The first official service was held in Floyd and Melissa Russell’s living room. Relaxed, informal services would be held, and afterwards the kids would all change into bathing suits and go for a swim in the Russell’s boat basin which also served for some years as the baptistery.

It wasn't long before we outgrew the Russell's living room. As a result, the church rented a building known as the "Old Post Office" (across the street from our current site). This was a time of rapid growth. Like many churches of the late 60's and early 70's, a bus was purchased to pick up children for Sunday School. The difference was that this bus was purchased with pieces of eight from a 1611 Spanish Galleon recovered by a treasure salver attending ICC. The church was experiencing such rapid growth that another bus was purchased (with real dollars), and both buses served as Sunday school classes once they were parked for the morning.

It did not take long to realize that "the Old Post Office" would soon be outgrown, so the founding pastor, Bruce Porter, began to pray for the Cinamorada movie theater. Without making a lot of public noise about this request, Bruce continued to pray over the course of the next couple of years. In 1972 and '73, the movie theater was rented by the church to host large events. Then one afternoon in 1973, an unassuming man walked into the church and said, "Let's go buy the movie theater." With that simple statement as the backdrop, we walked across the street to the theater, and the man laid down the cash to make the purchase. The final movie to be listed on the marquee was "The Godfather." How appropriate! We quickly changed the marquee to read "God, The Father!"

It wasn't long before the church family turned an old movie theater into a place of worship. Within that same year, the church body acted on the conviction that a Christian school was a necessary part of the ministry of ICC. Classrooms were added, and Island Christian School was founded in 1974. A few years later the property where the current high school and preschool are located was purchased, and, eventually, the adjoining 150 acres were purchased, all through the generous gifts and labors of God's people. Since then, a satellite church and preschool have been established in Marathon to better serve the needs of Middle Keys' families.

The '70's represented an exciting, adventurous time for Island Community, but it also had its growing pains. The mid to late '70's was a time marked by deep commitment, but it was often driven by extreme legalism. But that was not the historical origin or philosophical intent of the founders of ICC. In the early 80's, a group of church members and elders began to try to flesh out what an Acts 2 church should look like. That process is still on-going today and hopefully will be throughout the existence of the church. To see what we have learned in this process, turn to Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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# The Vision and Values Of Island Community Church

***Luke 19:10***

***For the Son of Man came to seek and to save  
what was lost.***

Have you ever stopped to think about what Jesus' core value was? It's a pretty important thing to consider, because if Jesus had a core value, then shouldn't it be central to the vision and value of the church? Some religious leaders came to Jesus and asked Him about His core values. Look at what He had to say as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

***Matthew 22:34-40***

***Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"***

***Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.***

***NIV***

Jesus tells us that everything hangs on these principles – to love the Lord with everything you’ve got and to love your neighbor as yourself.

***Jesus had a mission.***

He came to earth from heaven knowing His purpose. Even at the age of twelve, He told his parents, “Did you not know I had to be about My Father’s business?”(Luke 2:49)  
At the end of His ministry, He prayed with confidence, “I have accomplished the work which You gave me to do.” (John 17:4)

***Jesus also had a vision.***

He saw the preferable future, the new humanity His mission would make. He knew what He had to be like - and what His followers would have to be like - for the world to stand up and take notice. He built a community of believers - a core of twelve at first - that would be the foundation of a vast community of followers that would fulfill His vision. Knowing His disciples’ exciting potential but precarious position, Jesus prayed, “As You have sent Me into the world, I also send them into the world.” (John 17:18) Now look at the vision statement that Island Community Church has adopted as its core value:

***Building a Christ-centered community  
Committed to the fulfillment of the Great  
Commandment and the Great Commission.***

You can see that it is our goal to emulate the mission and vision that Jesus thought most important. But mission and vision statements accomplish little if there is no plan.

## ***Jesus had a plan.***

His ministry unfolded in stages. He began with twelve very unlikely candidates to lay the foundation for His plan. He said “No” to many opportunities when they were the right things at the wrong time.

With no shortage of needs, He had to be selective about the people and possibilities in which He invested. Disciples had to be chosen from among many interested volunteers (and sometimes He called people right out of their preoccupation with other interests!) Workers needed to be trained before being sent. Jesus sometimes moved on to new ministry opportunities even when people wanted Him to stay. He recognized that some “ministry growth” would be detrimental to His long range plan, so he stifled it – He told certain people He’d just healed not to go public.

The control He exercised in relation to His ministry was always in response to the leadings of His heavenly Father – as the appropriate way to facilitate His mission and vision in accordance with His values. **His death** on the cross as the bearer of our sins, and **His resurrection** serve as the culmination of His daily earthly ministry. But that was not the end of the plan! He did two very important things just before He ascended into heaven – He left His Holy Spirit to live permanently in all who have received His gift of forgiveness; and He gave us very clear marching orders:

### ***Acts 1:8***

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.***

And it was from that small band of followers that Christ built His church. We find the model for the early church expressed in Acts 2:42 - 47. It only makes sense for ICC to do everything in its power to copy the Acts 2 church.

## ***In His Steps***

We who call ourselves Jesus' followers at Island Community Church desire to carry on His mission. We also want to identify our core values, keep them aligned with those of Christ, and act on them consistently. While the message of Jesus Christ is timeless, the forms and programs we use to further His work are flexible – they must be servants, not masters. We claim no infallibility for any of our ideas, but we believe we'll be more fruitful if we follow a well-defined, strategic plan; always remaining open to how the Spirit may take us in new, unexpected directions. Our corporate imperatives will require mid-course corrections as we face future challenges.

## ***Our Mission, Vision, and Values***

THE MISSION OF ISLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH

WHAT WE ARE DOING

***Building a Christ-centered community  
Committed to the fulfillment of the Great  
Commandment and the Great Commission.***

As we live out the Great Commandment, the natural outpouring should be a burning passion to be salt and light to individuals and a culture that are far from God, and to bring them to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Jesus went beyond rescuing people from hell; He wanted to make them fit for Heaven. Through the various ministries of ICC, our desire is that people not only meet Christ, but also over time, grow in their faith so that they live obediently to His commands and are conformed to His character.

We cannot fulfill Christ's mission alone as individuals. We are a church because God wants us to be something together

and represent Him with our unified diversity. Our goal together is to further His kingdom in our midst, but we also, in obedience to His Great Commission, labor to extend His kingdom world wide. Our work is not over when we become a Biblical community – we're a Biblical community so that we can accurately reflect Him to the world.

The Bible gives an outline to describe God's design for His church. To the extent that we engage in these activities, we fulfill God's purposes in our midst. This outline might be summed up in a simple fourfold description:

***Exaltation*** – Corporate and private worship of God our King.

***Evangelism*** – Bringing seekers and irreligious people to meet Jesus our King.

***Edification*** – Building up the relationship we have with our King.

***Extension*** – Reaching into society with the compassion and justice of our King.

## **THE CORE VALUES OF ISLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**VALUE #1:** We believe that lost people matter to God, and, therefore, ought to matter to the church.

**VALUE #2:** We believe that the church should be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.

**VALUE #3:** We believe that Christ-followers should manifest authenticity and yearn for continuous growth.

**VALUE #4:** We believe that the church should operate as a unified community of servants with men and women who are good stewards of their spiritual gifts.

**Value #5:** We believe that anointed teaching and yielded responses to the Holy Spirit are the catalysts for transformation in individuals' lives and in the church. This includes clear, relevant Biblical teaching and reclaiming the arts for the cause of Christ to appeal to as many senses as possible in communicating God's truth, character, and attributes.

**VALUE #6:** We believe that loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life.

**VALUE #7:** We believe that life-change happens best in small groups.

**VALUE #8:** We believe that building up the body of Christ must be an every day task. It demands Christian education at the earliest possible age and daily ministry activities and resources to help individuals formulate a biblical world view.

**VALUE #9:** We believe that excellence honors God and inspires people.

**VALUE #10:** We believe that churches should be led by those with leadership gifts.

**VALUE #11:** We believe that the pursuit of full devotion to Christ and His cause is normal for every believer.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### **A Strategy for Building the Church**

Jesus once explained, by means of an analogy, an important aspect of how His church was going to develop. He said new wine should be put in new wineskins instead of trying to reuse old ones. Through this metaphor, He taught about the distinction between the eternal, unchanging aspects of His work (that is, the wine) and the outward packaging of that activity (the wineskins). We are not free to re-prioritize the work of God, but His work can be done in a variety of ways through a variety of means supported by a variety of structures.

The Spirit who worked in the Old Covenant times is the same Spirit who is working in the New. But He is doing fresh things in fresh ways, and the old “wineskins” of the past must give way to new ones. Grounded in the eternal Word of God, ministry must be adapted to be relevant to the hearers. Jesus’ unchanging Gospel must go forward in the language familiar to the people we are trying to reach. That includes familiar elements of culture. It would be as foolish to speak English to a Spanish audience as it would be to try to use outdated methods to reach seekers in today’s culture.

Part of the love we express to the lost is to adapt our message to their ears, to “become all things to all men, that (we) may save some,” as Paul put it in I Corinthians 9:22. This adaptation is not an adaptation of content, but of form. True followers of Jesus remain true to His message, but they find ways to convey it so their hearers respond to the content rather than the packaging. Even if they reject the message, we can be

confident they've made their decision about the genuine article, not a misunderstood caricature. No one method will ever work in every culture, and even within the same society, a variety of ministry approaches will be necessary for every person to hear God's Word so they can understand.

### ***A Timeless Message for Our Times***

Island Community is not preaching a new message. At the core of who we are and what we do is the rich treasure of Jesus' 2000 year old Gospel. We have no desire to alter our Savior's message. We do want to translate it and present it in the vernacular understandable to our culture. As someone who is considering joining Island Community, you need to know this important truth: Island Community's innovative distinctive is not our theology. We stand firmly in the historic Christian faith "once for all delivered" to the Church (Jude 3). The Old Testament and the teaching transmitted by Jesus through His apostles contained in the Bible govern our individual beliefs and conduct. It is our full and final authority.

We are, however, deeply committed to using a variety of methods and methodologies for reaching seekers. We believe it is essential to understand and study the culture to which we are ministering and to develop programs that will most effectively communicate God's truth to them. That methodology –what we call the "Seven Step Philosophy" – is the summary of the strategy to reach those still seeking. It isn't our message; it's the plan for delivering our message.

### ***Seven Steps – Seeker to Saint***

We do not claim that this Seven Step Philosophy is the only approach to reaching seekers. WE certainly don't think it's THE Biblical formula, though it is supported by Biblical examples and principles. It is no more or less than a pragmatic approach that

works. It is effective in reaching the lost, and beyond that, it guides them to maturity in Christ. In short, it's the track we follow for cultivating fully devoted followers of Christ. In simple form, here are the Seven Steps with brief explanations:

### ***1. BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP***

The first step is to reach out to the “unchurched” personally. Rather than beginning with the message of Christ, we seek to make connections so that when we do share the message, we have credibility. People are more inclined to consider a radical message from a trusted friend than from a stranger. The love and interest we show cultivates the ground in preparation for sowing the seeds of the Gospel.

### ***2. SHARING FAITH VERBALLY***

If you were a witness in a courtroom trial, you would simply describe accurately what you saw. That's what we do when we “tell our story” of what Christ has done for us (our salvation experience and changed life) to our seeking friends. When we describe the life we knew, the Savior who loves us and paid for our sins, and the changes He's made, there is no more convincing or compelling evidence for who Jesus is. It is not enough to just be “nice people” – unbelievers must hear why we are the way we are, Who can save them, and how.

### ***3. INVITING SEEKERS TO A SERVICE***

Every weekend, we use the services at the church to present the clear message of Christ and some aspect of the Christian life. We attempt to present the message in such a way that the “already convinced” can grow and the seeker can hear Christ clearly communicated. We attempt to use a variety of means to get the message across in a compelling and often

unexpected way. The combination of the groundwork done by the individual's verbal witness followed by the impact of a highly relevant, creative presentation brings home the message so that the unchurched may consider anew the age-old truth of Jesus Christ.

Our weekend services are also designed to facilitate a process of evangelism: that is, most people are not ready to throw out their world-and-life-views after sitting through one church service. Experience shows that people need time to process information. When the process is honored, the commitments made take root better than poorly informed, impulse decisions.

#### ***4. BECOMING PART OF THE NEWFOUND COMMUNITY***

At some point the seeker makes a decision to accept Christ as his Forgiver and to yield his life to His leadership. When he does, generally the next step is to begin to get more involved in the life of the church. This generally includes faithfully attending services and classes offered by the church; participating in various worship events, adopting a personal time for Bible reading and prayer, and participating in the ordinances of communion and baptism.

#### ***5. PARTICIPATING IN SMALL GROUPS***

Life change happens best in the context where you can be known authentically and where you share your spiritual journey with others. Getting plugged into a small group provides the best place for growth, support, fellowship and accountability. Between four to ten believers gather at least two times a month to share their loves, learn from God's Word in a discussion format, and serve one another. Groups often also serve the

body at large, either by being a serving group, or through periodic short-term service.

## **6. SERVING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Every believer is given a unique spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit, and that gift is to be used for the common good of the Body of Christ and others. In addition to our spiritual gift mix, each of us has certain things we genuinely enjoy doing. Certain aptitudes, personality types, and life experiences all combine to make us who we are and allow us to fit a unique niche in the Body of Christ. We use the acrostic S.H.A.P.E. to help us be reminded of this truth.

**S=spiritual gifts**

**H=heart**

**A=aptitude or abilities**

**P=personality**

**E=experiences or education**

Whether in a small group or on a serving team, every participating member knows he or she is truly part of the church when his or her S.H.A.P.E. is being used to further God's work in the church – and beyond.

## **7. STEWARDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

When God becomes Master of our spending and giving habits, we can be confident He is master over one of the most personal areas of our lives. All our resources are entrusted to us to use for Kingdom purposes as well as for meeting personal needs. This is an important next step -to allow God to have freedom in this area of our lives. That way, what we keep, as well as what we give (using the Biblical instruction of 10% of our income as a starting reference), honor Him in every respect and allow us to say “thank you” in a tangible, satisfying way.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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# How Is ICC Governed?

### *Ephesians 4:15-16*

*...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

The head of Island Community Church is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We seek to reflect His priorities in what we do and how we do it. No decision is ever made that would knowingly contradict any teaching of Scripture. In addition, through the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we endeavor to discern God's program for us as a church. Whenever we implement a plan, we desire to keep one eye on our effectiveness and the other on the next step God seems to be showing us.

### **MULTIFACETED LEADERSHIP**

On a human level, three groups of people direct the ministries of Island Community Church. These bodies are the participating, voting members of ICC; the elders; and the staff. The elders are members of the body who provide general watch care and oversight. They continually evaluate the teaching ministry of the church and review major ministry decisions and strategic initiatives. They desire to use their

wisdom, discernment, and shepherding gifts to ensure the church remains on a true course biblically. Scripture indicates that the ultimate decision-making authority in the church rests with the elders.

The participating, voting members of ICC have the opportunity to vote each year to set the church budget and assist in determining other major church directional decisions. All major church decisions are voted on by the church body as directed by our by-laws.

The staff directs the day-to-day affairs of the sub ministries of the church. They are paid so that they can devote the best hours of their day to building ministries. The management team - a sub-grouping of the key leaders on staff – directs the staff as a whole. The staff then supports the strategies and priorities determined by the management team. The staff's main job is to build and coordinate ministry and volunteers to advance God's purposes through the church. The management team's main function is to give leadership to the staff and church.

In addition to these groups, a volunteer financial advisory committee assists by advising the administrative team, elders, and church body in areas involving stewardship.

The way these groups work together can best be stated as follows: the staff directs the ministries of the church with overall leadership provided by the management team. These ministries are supported by the policies and financial resource allocation determined by the participating membership and recommendations of the finance team. All the activities of the church are carried out under the watch care and supervision of the elders. (For additional information and clarification, request a copy of the church bylaws.)

## ***SERVING IN UNITY***

What makes ICC work smoothly is the God enabling, humble, servant-like spirit of these groups of people. We desire that leaders at all levels do not see it as their role to “lord it over” those in their charge, but desire to serve the body with their gifts and to advance the Kingdom of God rather than build an “empire.” We would hope that members of the church sense this servanthood in action and likewise esteem those in leadership. Whether as a leader or a follower, everyone in the church is submitted to Jesus Christ, and we all consider others as more important than ourselves. (Phillipians. 2:3) This spirit of cooperation and appreciation is one of the remarkable features of the ministry of ICC and is one of God’s greatest blessings to our body. It is a fragile gift, however, and any person desiring to become a participating member should value and protect it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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# What We Believe

*II John 1:9*

*Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*

The Island Community Church Statement of Faith summarizes our beliefs as a church. As mentioned earlier, our theology is not innovative – anyone familiar with historic Christian doctrine will find that these statements fall in the center of evangelical theology (“evangelical” means theology derived from **evangel**, or the Gospel; in other words, it’s Biblical theology rather than speculative theology or theology rooted in tradition.) We try not to be dogmatic about matters on which Bible-based believers have held divergent views. We want our core beliefs to be centered in Christ and His message as found in and supported by the clearest passages of Scripture. More obscure doctrine or teachings with less support are left to individuals to sort out on their own – we take no official position in these areas.

### **WORDS TO LIVE BY**

The following pages contain our Statement of Faith. We’ve added a few explanatory comments to clarify and help apply these vital doctrines. As you read these statements, you will see that they are rich with spiritual truth. Do not try to hurry through these pages, but read them slowly and thoughtfully.

Ask yourself throughout, “What difference does this truth make in my life? If I didn’t know or believe this, would it matter?”

*Island Community Church Statement of Faith  
What Island Community Church Believes*

Stated Briefly:

Island Community Church believes that its mission is to build a Christ-centered community committed to the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

**Matthew 22:37-38**

**Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment.**

**Mark 16:15-16**

**He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."**

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, which is uniquely God-inspired, without error, and the final authority on all matters on which it bears. As the Bible teaches, there is one God, eternally existing in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — each possessing all the attributes of Deity.

God created humans to have fellowship with Him, but they defied God by sinfully going their own way. As a result, we need God's saving grace to end our alienation from Him. Salvation comes only through God's saving grace — not human effort — and must be received personally by repentance and faith.

Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, lived a sinless life on earth and voluntarily paid for our sin by dying on the cross as our substitute. This accomplishes salvation for all who receive

grace by trusting in Him alone. He rose from the dead and is the only Mediator between God and us. He will return to earth one day to consummate history.

The Holy Spirit draws sinners to Christ. He permanently indwells and equips believers for personal growth and service to the church. The church's role is to glorify God and serve those in need. At the end, everyone will experience bodily resurrection and the judgment. Those forgiven through Christ will enjoy eternal life and fellowship with God.

Listed below is a more detailed and traditional Statement of Faith that Island Community Church has historically maintained.

1) The sole basis for our belief is the Bible, which is uniquely God-inspired, without error, its original documents being the “God-breathed” Word of God, the written record of His supernatural revelation of Himself to man, without any errors in its statements. It is the final authority on all matters on which it bears. II Timothy 3:16; John 10:34; Psalm 89:34; Hebrews 6:18; II Peter 3:16; Revelation 22:18,19.

2) There is one God, eternally existent, Creator of heaven and earth. He is manifested in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each possessing all the attributes of Deity. Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; John 14:9; I Timothy 3:16; I John 5:7; Genesis 1:2.

3) The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God who took on flesh and dwelt on earth. He is sinlessly perfect and gave Himself as our substitute (substitutionary atonement or sacrifice) by shedding His blood and dying on a cross as the payment for our sins. After three days He came back from the dead. His death, burial, and resurrection was the payment and proof that all of our sins (past, present, and future) have been paid. 1 John 2:2; II Corinthians

5:21; Hebrews 2:9; 9:2-28; 10:10-14; Acts 13:38-41; Titus 2:14; I Peter 2:24; I John 3:5.

4) God is absolutely sovereign and in His sovereignty gives man a free will to accept or reject the salvation that He has provided. It is God's will that all would be saved and that none should perish. God foreknows, but does not predetermine any man to be condemned. God permits man's destiny to depend upon man's choice. I Timothy 2:4; II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2; II Peter 3:9; John 5:64-65; Acts 10:34; I Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:5-14; Romans 8:29-30; 9:30-32.

5) Each member of the human race is fallen, sinful, and lost; regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of man. The moment a person receives Christ as his Savior, the Holy Spirit immediately indwells him, and he/she is sealed until the day of redemption. Romans 3:23; John 3:7; 7:39; I Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 1:13-14; Luke 24:49; Titus 3:5.

6) Man is saved by undeserved mercy through faith in Christ's redemptive work, and nothing of man enters into his salvation. It is a free gift. Man's efforts, or works, regardless of how good or well intended they are, have nothing to do with it. Neither before nor after salvation do man's works determine man's salvation. Salvation is by the finished work of Christ, and nothing can be added to it. Eph. 2:8, 9; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 11:6; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; Romans 3:22.

7) Every true child of God possesses eternal life, being justified freely by grace, through faith in Christ and His redemptive work. He is sanctified by God, is sealed with the Holy Spirit, is safe and secure for all eternity; and he cannot lose his salvation. However, a Christian can, through sin, lose his fellowship, joy, power, testimony, and reward, and incur the Father's chastisement. Relationship is eternal, being established by the new birth.

Fellowship, however, is dependent upon conformity to His will and purposes for our lives. I Corinthians 3:11-17; Hebrews 12:5-11; I Corinthians 11:30-32.

8) The Church began with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and is composed of all those who have placed their trust in Christ as personal Savior. By the Holy Spirit we are all baptized into the one body of Christ. Water baptism is not a part of salvation, but is a testimony to the world, demonstrating that one wants to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 6:19, 20; Acts 2:1-4; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:5; Acts 10:47.

9) A True child of God has two births; one of the flesh, and the other of the Spirit, giving man a flesh nature and a Spirit nature. The flesh nature is neither good nor righteous. The Spiritual Man does not commit any sin. This results in warfare between the Spirit and the flesh, which continues until physical death, or the return of the Lord. The flesh nature of man does not change in any way with the new birth, but can be controlled and kept subdued by the new man. John 3:3-7; Romans 7:15-25; 8:8; Gal. 5:17; I John 3:9; I Peter 2:23; I John 5:18; I John 1:8.

10) The true child of God is not under the Law, but under grace: saved by grace, and disciplined by grace. Romans 6:14; Romans 11:6; II Corinthians 3:17.

11) Repent (metanoieo) means "to change the mind." Repentance in salvation means a change of mind from dependence on self, philosophy, or religion as a means of attaining forgiveness for sins and earning salvation. We must be fully dependent upon God's way of salvation. While repentance in its pure meaning and definition does not in any sense include a demand for a change of conduct before or after salvation, it is understood that the inter working of the Holy Spirit will lead to a

new walk and set of desires. Acts 20:21; II Corinthians 7:8-10; Matthew 21:32.

12) There will be a resurrection of the saved and the lost; of the saved unto eternal life, and of the lost unto eternal punishment. These two resurrections are separated by at least a thousand years. I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:1-5; Matthew 25:41.

13) Satan is a real being, the author of sin, and he and his angels shall be eternally condemned due to their rebellion and rejection of God. Ezekiel 28:15, 17; Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41.

It is every Christian's duty and privilege to make clear God's plan of salvation, wherever and in whatever vocation he or she may be. Mark 16:15; I Thessalonians 2:4; I Peter 3:15.

The general plan of salvation as outlined in God's Word is as follows and is believed and practiced by Island Community Church: There are, of course, no set steps in leading a person to Christ. This is a general outline that has proven successful.

- All have sinned. Romans 3:10; 3:23; Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9; James 2:10.
- The penalty for sin is death. Romans 6:23; Ezekial 18:20.
- Perfection is required to enter heaven. Revelation 21:27; Habakkuk. 1:13.
- Man can do nothing on his own to obtain this perfection. Ephesians 2:8,9; Galatians. 2:16; Romans 4:5.
- God provided One to bear our sins in our place and to impute to man His righteousness. That sin-bearer is Jesus Christ. II Corinthians. 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Isaiah. 53:6; I Peter 3:18.

- Man needs only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior for salvation. John 3:16; Romans 10:9; John 1:12; Acts 16:31.
- Man can be certain of his salvation now, and can be sure that his salvation cannot be lost because eternal life is just that - eternal. John 6:37, 39; John 10:28; I Peter 1:5; Hebrews 10:10-14; I John 5:13.

We view the following doctrines as doctrines that one should not part fellowship over, and opinions may vary on some aspects of these. But we hold them as part of our historical statement of faith and beliefs.

14) We believe in the personal pre-tribulation and pre-millennial return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-11; Revelation. 4:4; Isaiah 26:17-21; 27:1; II Thessalonians 2:1-8; Revelation 3:10; Luke 21:36; Titus 2:13.

15) God can heal, but physical healing is not in the atonement. God heals miraculously today when it is His perfect will to do so. Healing cannot be claimed through the guarantee of the atonement. At times, it is God's will for sickness not to be removed. II Corinthians. 12:8-10; James 5:14-16.

16) The gift of tongues (other dialects or languages) was a manifestation of the Spirit's power solely for the demonstration of God's wisdom, purpose, and power in the establishment of the early church, and always was in a language that was in use. Acts 2:16; I Corinthians 14:22. As in all workings of God, He may choose to allow this gift to be used today to explain His plan of salvation to one who may not speak the language of the speaker. Island Community Church does not embrace what might be called the "Modern Tongues Movement."

## SECTION THREE

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# Characteristics of Participating Members

## *Introduction to the Five G's*

Gardening can be both challenging and rewarding at the same time. The gardener has no power to make his plants grow. He prepares the site, plants the seed, fertilizes the soil, and cares for the plants as they grow; but he cannot create life. Yet every good gardener cultivates his crop because he knows he must do the RIGHT things even if he can't do the most important thing. That means he pays attention to the health of his garden. He monitors it constantly, observing the important indicators of life: seedlings that break through the soil, green color which denotes health, and changes that show growth. If those things are absent, he works to reverse the detrimental effects of whatever threatens his plants. He takes all of this action, yet remains utterly dependent on something other than what he can do to make his crop successful. Such is the life of a gardener.

And such is the life of the church! The apostle Paul said, "You are God's field," in I Corinthians 3:9. We are completely dependent on God, yet we must look for the signs of life and combat the presence of what threatens our spiritual health, both individually and collectively. We must look for the

characteristics of a healthy church and see if we have them. Together we become gardeners, monitoring symptoms of ill-health and doing whatever is necessary to correct it. We must always remember that we are caretakers, not creators of spiritual life. It is God in our midst that provides life and growth.

What are some of the signs of a healthy garden – of spiritual life and health? Are there any diagnostic tools that might help us in this process?

Willow Creek Community Church has developed such a tool. They call it the “Five G’s”. When a church has participating members living out the characteristics of the “Five G’s,” it is a good indication of its spiritual health. Individuals not progressing in the “Five G’s” indicate poor spiritual health, and something has to change.

We want each person desiring participating membership to work through a spiritual study that will benefit both you and the church. This exercise gives you the unique opportunity to look deeply and honestly at your current spiritual life.

## CHAPTER NINE

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### G #1 GRACE

## *The Foundation of Our Life With God*

### *Firsts and Beginnings*

We've all experienced them - the beginning of life, our first day at school, our graduation, our wedding day, the birth of our children. These are great moments in life.

Remember what it was like to be a beginner? A beginner often overlooks crucial factors that make their beginnings possible. They may forget that their beginning required numerous steps leading up to it. The kindergartner isn't dwelling on how mom went shopping for supplies and new clothes and spent hours trying to help him be prepared for what he would experience in that first day. The graduation day represents years of study and preparation. The wedding day is not the day the couple "fell-in-love." They began a courtship sometime earlier, and this day represents the official beginning of their life together.

There is one beginning that is more important than any other in this life. It is the moment we receive God's grace as our own. GRACE – the word means "a favor we didn't earn," and it is by grace that we begin the Christian life. But God's grace involves more because He did a lot of work behind the scenes long before we responded. He literally came to earth in

the person of Jesus Christ, and by means of the death of Christ on the cross, He paid our sin debt that had separated and alienated us from God. The incredible truth is that Jesus never gets tired of loving us and growing us; and He NEVER gives up on us. His grace has staying-power! He pursues us even when we are wayward, and His constant desire is to point us in a new direction toward Him.

Now if you're having difficulty getting a clear picture or practical definition of grace, don't feel alone. Many people have trouble with a clear understanding of grace even though we use the word quite freely. Some even come from a spiritual tradition where the term has had a different usage than the way it is used in the Bible. So we all need to understand what grace means – from a Biblical definition – and then solidify our understanding of our own beginning with God. For some of us, this very study will be the doorway into that first experience of grace that enables us to say, "I finally understand what grace is, and I'm sure I'm a recipient of it." For others of us, we will be able to affirm afresh how truly amazing God's grace is!

### ***Our Need for Grace***

- Some people assume that they are not-so-bad. They feel that they have tried to live a good life and treat others fairly, so they don't need any special help from God. Let's see if scripture addresses this. Read the following passages, and in your own words write out the message of the following verses:

Romans 3:10 -18, 23

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Galatians 3:22

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Isaiah 59:2 and 64:6

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- Sometimes we can be too proud to make such an admission of moral failure. How would you describe the relief God stands ready to offer so that we do not have to shy away from being utterly honest admitting our sinful condition?

Matthew 11:28-30

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Isaiah 1:18

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I John 1:8-9

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Romans 8:1

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- Sometimes, we're afraid to admit our sinfulness because to do so feels so hopeless, and we feel so worthless. Many of us react to that sense of despair and decide to become "religious" – we try to change our behaviors so we feel – and appear – better. After reading carefully Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:4-7, write a letter to yourself explaining why you can't and don't have to earn God's acceptance.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

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- To forgive someone literally means to release that person from indebtedness. But if you forgive a debt, the money must then come from somewhere else – usually you, the debt-forgiver. In the spiritual realm, God’s forgiveness means we’re released from spiritual debt. But our sins don’t just vanish into thin air. What is the mechanism for paying our spiritual debt according to these verses?

I Peter 2:24

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Hebrews 10:10-14

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- Now consider your own life. Why would you agree that you need God’s grace in order to have a relationship with Him?

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***Our Response to God***

- Once we're at that position where we've been honest about our need for God's help and forgiveness, what does the Bible say is the next step?

John 1:11-12

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Acts 16:30-31

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Romans 10:9

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Galatians 2:16

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- Describe briefly the time in your life when you gave up trying to obtain God's favor through any accomplishment of your own and rested in the work of Christ on the cross for you. If you haven't done that yet, or aren't sure if you have, note that below.
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- What does the Bible reveal concerning God's behind-the-scenes work in preparation for welcoming us into His family of grace?

John 6:37, 44, 65

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Ephesians 1:3-6

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- As you think about it, what does His preparation mean to you personally?

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***The Outward Sign of Grace Received***

- What was the response of new believers – those who had recently received grace – that visibly demonstrated what God had done in their lives according to the following verses?

Acts 2:37-38, 41

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Acts 8:36-38

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Acts 16:14 - 15

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- According to Romans 6:4-5, what does baptism signify?

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- Many people – maybe you, too – were baptized as a child. But the pattern in the New Testament (example: Acts 18:8) is “believe and then be baptized.” Why do you think it would be appropriate for a person to be baptized AFTER his or her conversion, instead of before it?

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## CHAPTER TEN

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### G #2

### *Growth*

### *Progressing as a Christian*

***“I think we need to throw this plant out – it’s all withered and brown.”***

***“The company is in trouble – our net sales have leveled off for the last four quarters.”***

***“Christina is already two months old but hasn’t grown beyond her birth weight – we’ve got to do something, Doctor!”***

What do the above statements have in common? They all presume it’s in the nature of vital things to grow. All living organisms are programmed by their DNA to go through stages of growth until they eventually reach maturity. To be alive, by God’s design, is to change and to grow.

Why, then, do some Christians not grow spiritually? We would rush a child to the hospital if she failed to grow. How can we take similar steps to protect our inner health when we stagnate and stop “gaining weight,” spiritually speaking?

The first “G”, *Grace*, emphasized our beginning the Christian life – our first encounter with God’s grace. The second “G”, *Growth*, is about our ongoing response to God’s grace over a lifetime. Our walk with God begins by grace,

and it also continues by grace. Unfortunately, just as people misunderstand the extent of God’s work to initiate our Christian life, they fall into the trap of thinking their work – following the rules – automatically produces spiritual maturity. To try to grow through one’s own efforts alone is as much out of harmony with God’s plan as not growing at all. Both lead to spiritual frustration.

The purpose of this study is to discover a balance between owning the responsibility to grow – which requires resisting what keeps us from growing – and trusting in the help and power of the Holy Spirit to bring about Christ-like character in us. That tension will be with us all of our lives. But if we will commit to move forward, we will experience the blessings of God’s grace active in our everyday lives – and marvel at the resultant miracle of spiritual growth.

### ***Pursuing Growth***

- In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul uses several different words or phrases to describe the quality of faith the people had. List below as many terms as you can find from those verses.

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- In Ephesians 4:14-16, Paul describes two opposites: what *should not* be the case for believers, and then what should. List below as many of the characteristics of those opposites as you can find.

Dangers to Avoid...

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The Path to Follow...

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- Peter paints a similar picture in II Peter 3:17-18. In both passages – Paul’s and Peter’s – who is assigned the responsibility for spiritual growth? What are you doing now in your own life to fulfill the command of vs. 18?

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- Practically speaking, what else could you do to further your “growth in grace”?

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- Paul the Apostle knew well that Jesus had saved him, yet he talks of a “striving” and a “reaching” for something in Philippians 3:12-14. How would you put into your own words what Paul was working so hard to do in his life?

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- In light of what you just wrote, what does verse 16 mean?

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- What is Jesus trying to say about growing as a Christian in John 15:4-5?

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- How do you reconcile Christ's command to "abide" with the strong commands to "strive" in previous passages studied?

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## ***TOOLS FOR GROWTH***

### ***THE BIBLE***

- What do the following verses teach about the importance of Scripture in the life of a growing Christian?

Psalm 1:2-3

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Hebrews 4:12

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Psalms 119:9-24

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- According to II Timothy 3:16, who is the real author of the Scriptures?

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- What are the different ways you are equipping yourself with the Word of God? II Timothy 3:17

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- How would you put in your own words the warning in James 1:22-25? What specific ways are you tempted in this area?

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### ***Prayer/ Solitude/Worship***

- What does Luke 5:16 and 6:12-13 tell us about Jesus' prayer life and His need to get alone periodically? What are the implications for you personally?

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- How is it possible to obey Ephesians 6:18 in our day and age?

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- What could you do to be more obedient to that verse?

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- Why does David worship God in Psalm 145:1-7? How does worship benefit us, His creatures?

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### ***The Purpose of Spiritual Disciplines***

- Spiritual disciplines are not ends in themselves (as the Pharisees mistakenly thought in Mark 7:3-4). How would

you describe in your own words the result of a spiritually disciplined life according to Ephesians 3:16 - 19?

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***When Growth Is Not Happening – Addressing Sin***

- What is the clear call of God on every believer's life and conduct in I John 2:4-6 and I Peter 1:14-16?

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- As long as we're forgiven, why does it make any difference whether we sin or not?

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- What is the one disposition of our heart that angers God even more than a particular sin according to Romans 2:5?

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- Combine Psalm 38, 51, and I John 1:9 into a unified description of how to handle sin in our lives.

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***Personal Growth That Leads to Kingdom Action***

- In the following passages, Jesus talks about His eternal purpose to construct something that will never fail. What is He going to build that will be “hell-proof”?

Matthew 16:18

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- Jesus’ charge to the early Christians still holds for us today. How expansive is his plan according to His words in the passages below?

Matthew 28:19-20

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Acts 1:8

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- What implications does His plan have on your plans?
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- II Corinthians 5:18 and 20 tell us we are God's ambassadors. We usually think of evangelism as an activity we do to benefit others. How does evangelism benefit you and build up your faith when you share it with someone?
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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### **G#3**

### ***Group***

## ***Relationships That Optimize Life-Change***

Rapunzel was a beautiful princess and didn't know it. You remember the story. She was locked up in a tower with no one but the ugly witch visiting her daily to bring her food. Rapunzel didn't know the truth about herself for two reasons: she was a prisoner of someone ugly – the only other face she saw – and she had no mirrors to see herself.

There are things true about you right now – wonderful things – which you don't know or that you have trouble believing. The reason you can't grasp these things is because of the ugliness you see around you, and because you haven't had access to mirrors to show you the truth.

So how will you discover the truth about yourself – about what God has done for you, about what He is doing in you, about how far you've come? You need to see something other than the ugliness, and you need a mirror.

We've seen in the previous study that God gave us his Word, the Bible; prayer, where we can talk to Him; and His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us grow. These are valuable tools. But they aren't all He's given us. He also gave us each other.

In the body of Christ, we serve each other in various ways. This is just how God designed it. For example, we can learn when we listen to gifted teachers. When we worship together in church gatherings, we can enter a dimension of God's beauty experienced through no other means. When we sit with members of our small group, someone can powerfully remind us of what we can't see – that God is working in us, that we're going to make it, that the affection of God is not just for "the world" – it's for me.

When we're together as fellow Christ followers, someone can literally say our name and put a voice on "You, \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name), matter to God so much that He personalized His plan of salvation so there would be room for you." Or we can hear, "I know you're going through a tough time, but you're not alone; God is with you, and we're all with you." These are the moments of beauty that give us the hope that we can break free of the tower of sin which has imprisoned us for so long. They are the mirrors that show us there's another side to the ugliness to which we're so accustomed.

The Prince of Peace has come to rescue us from the tower. But His royal decree is that the people around us be His ladders of deliverance and His mirrors of accuracy. That's what "group" is all about.

### ***The Community of Christians***

- The early believers in Christ did not want to live the new life they had found alone. What do you learn about their relationships with each other from the following verses?  
Acts 2:44-47
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Acts 4:34-35

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- The writer of Hebrews actually gave a command about community life in Hebrews 10:24-25. How would you rephrase this passage in modern terms?
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***The Few in the Midst of Many***

- Jesus did not merely speak to masses of people during His ministry. What reasons can you give for His strategic decision in Luke 6:12-13?
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- Mark 3:14 describes the same incident, but adds the simple phrase “with Him” to the appointment of the Twelve. What do you think is meant by that phrase, and why was it important for them to be “with Him” for that time?

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- In addition to large groups, where else did Christians get together according to Acts 2:46 and I Corinthians 16:19?

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- What do you suppose they got out of these smaller, house-sized group meetings that they didn't get from bigger gatherings?

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- Why would it be impossible to fulfill the following Biblical commands if you were only attending weekend services without having any close relationships?

Galatians 6:1-3

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Proverbs 27:17

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Colossians 3:16

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- At times, it appeared Jesus needed just a few by His side. What is the significance relationally of what Jesus did in Mark 14:32-35?

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- Concerning Jesus' actions, can you draw any parallels to your own life and needs?

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***Christ-like Attitudes in Every Relationship***

- Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Colossians 3:18-23, and Titus 2:2-10 describe several spheres, or roles, in which we are to behave in Christ-honoring ways. How many can you identify? List them below.

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- What would you say is the common thread through all of them – in other words, what is Paul saying that applies to everybody on the above list?

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- All of us play the role of followers at some level of our Christian experience. What do the Scriptures below teach about the characteristics of a good follower in the church?  
I Corinthians 16:15-16

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I Thessalonians 5:12-13

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Hebrews 13:17

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- II Timothy 2:23-24 points out that, unfortunately, quarreling can happen among members of the church. How would you put into your own words what our attitude and response should be?

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- Put in your own words the procedure Jesus outlines for conflict resolution in Matthew 18:15-17.

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- With the passages from II Timothy and Matthew as a background, what are some of the common ways of handling conflict that are out of harmony with what the Bible teaches?

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- In which of the above ways are you sometimes tempted to respond?

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- What is the issue that Romans 16:17, I Corinthians 1:12-13, Titus 3:10, James 4:1-3, and Jude 19 have in common?

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- Why do you think the Bible is so strong about its message not to cause divisions or factions in a church?

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### G#4

### Gifts

***It was the “perfect” church. God gave everyone in that church every spiritual gift – each person had them all!***

“What a tremendous ministry they must have had,” you may think. No shortage of volunteers. If the pastor was sick one week, no problem – everyone had the gift of preaching so anybody in the church could fill in. Every small group had a leader; every ministry vacancy had a number of potential directors to choose from. And what a music ministry! Everybody played every instrument and could sing any part! In addition, there were no financial problems because everyone had the gift of giving and gave way beyond the norm for other churches.

Heaven on earth, right? Well consider some of the downsides of that scenario. First of all, a constant mood of frustration pervaded that church, because everyone had abilities that were not being used – someone else got there first. People felt limited in their area of involvement because they were capable of so much more, but no need existed for their unused gifts. In addition, individuals were frustrated that they could not develop their potential - they were unable to become the “experts” they were designed to be because

many of their gifts weren't being exercised, and so they didn't improve.

An air of pride developed because, after all, nobody could say they needed any of the other members – whatever needed doing; anyone could do it him or herself. Small group meetings were a joke because no one needed to depend on anyone, so no one did – nothing of substance was ever shared. People did not feel cared for by others because people used their own gift of mercy and encouragement on themselves!

Ministry stopped being a cooperative venture and became an activity that people used to show off their competency. People became more critical of each other because they knew they could have done it better – which, in many cases, was true. There was unprecedented turnover in every ministry because nobody felt they “belonged” – there was always another place they could serve, something else they could do, a longing to fulfill the other passions God gave them.

After considering the above picture, God's real plan of spiritual gifts in the church looks a lot more like heaven: God gave us different gifts, different abilities, different hearts, different personalities, different interests, and different experiences. Why? So we would need each other as we fit together as different organs in a body – this wonderful body called the church. He did not refuse to give us a particular gift because He does not like us; instead, He picks the gifts He gives us so that we have focus, so we can be truly fulfilled. Like a body with differing organs, our different roles and activities bring LIFE to the church; if we become separated from each other, we suffer, like a limb out of joint within a body.

One caveat: when God gave us the gifts of the Spirit so we would be different, He included the fruit of the Spirit so we

would all work as one. Gifts used properly always testify to our unity as well as our diversity.

At Island Community Church we use an acrostic to help us keep a better view of how God has “wired us”. The acrostic is S.H.A.P.E.

### ***The Need for and the Privilege of Serving***

- Read Matthew 9:36-38. Now imagine Jesus visiting one of our services. After the service, you and He sit in the lobby and watch as people walk out. He sighs as He sees the attendees pass by – and then says to you the exact words from Matthew 9. Explain in your own words what you think is on His mind and heart at that moment.

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- Do you personally think we have a “laborer” shortage at Island Community Church today? Explain why you say that.

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- What was Paul’s attitude toward working in God’s service in I Timothy 1:12?

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- Obviously, many people at ICC do not share that attitude. Why do you think that is?

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- What factors or attitudes have hindered your involvement at times?
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### ***Different Parts, One Body***

- The Bible compares the Church to a human body, with Christ as the head and all of us as different parts, or members, of the body. Summarize in a sentence or two what Paul is trying to convey in I Corinthians 12:14-26.
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- What is the ultimate reason we each have differing abilities within the church? I Corinthians 12:4-7
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- Why do you think Paul stresses the singular source behind the various spiritual activities he describes?

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- Romans 12:4-8 also speaks of our differing functions in the body of Christ. What is the source of these differences?

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- Knowing that we're differently gifted in the body of Christ, what do you think are some of the potential problems to be avoided?

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### ***Every Person a Difference-Maker***

- What do you think Jesus meant by "bearing fruit" in John 15:8 and 16-17?

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- Why would Jesus make such a close connection between bearing fruit and showing ourselves to be His disciples?

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- What is the application of this truth regarding involvement in a local church?

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The following is not a biblical story, but it is worth some thought.

*A group of **fifteen** people were carrying a log on their shoulders. One man tripped and fell to the side, but the other **fourteen** continued to carry the log. As the man sat on the ground and watched his teammates march on, he thought to himself, “Why should I get up and keep carrying the log? The other fourteen seem to be doing fine without me.” It’s true that the others seemed to get along just as well in his absence. Was he right to quit?*

- Now for a twist: you are the captain of that team trying to get the log from point A to point B. What reasons would you give the man who quit so that he would get up and continue being part of the team?

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- What are the parallels in the previous story to believers in a local church?

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- What does I Corinthians 15:58 have to say about the standard for all believers of participation in ministry? How might this motivate you when you allow other things to crowd out your involvement?
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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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### G#5

# Giving and Good Stewardship

### *“Mine!”*

It is one of the first words a baby learns. By use of that term, a child differentiates between what is common property – what is “out there” – and what is under his or her control. Just as every child must establish “me” concretely in contrast to “you,” healthy development requires “mine” to be distinguished from “yours.” It’s not selfish for the child to talk this way, though the adamant declaration seems harsh to our adult ears. Social scientists have tried to engineer people- sometimes whole cultures – to reject this mind set. But they have all found that there’s something in the human makeup that requires a separation between what has a unique relationship to me and what has the same relationship with everybody - or at least no special relationship with me. It is a natural and necessary phase of development to draw these boundaries, and if children do not do so, they become pushovers and doormats living miserable adult lives.

So what does this have to do with good stewardship? Just that we cannot call it good money management to be foolish with our resources, either by hoarding, or by abandoning the responsibility of ownership. We can and should say “mine” as a starting place for knowing how to handle properly what God gave

us. Of course, technically, God is the giver of all good gifts, the ultimate source of all that we own. But we should not throw all our “stuff” away, as if that proves we are not mastered by it. We need to manage it. We need to steward it. And we do this not just by releasing a few dollars here and there to the church. We start by surveying all we have and consider in a fresh way how everything that we have – EVERYTHING, kept or released – should be used in the light of eternity.

God is not asking us just to share our “toys.” He is asking us to give our “toys” to Him – all of them – and then, in His Name, keep what we need and give the rest away. He dignifies our ownership by asking – not demanding – that we consider His ownership of us and that we reconsider how we grasp what we call our own. And so that there is no mistake about it, He had to bring a lost world home. Once there, we’ll play in His Kingdom forever, and He will eternally share with us “toys” that defy description. There will be no more fighting there. No one will ever say “mine” again. In that place, we will all freely embrace the reality that we only begin to grasp through good stewardship on earth.

***“His!”***

### ***Give ‘Till It Hurts?***

- What percentage is common to the following biblical stories of giving?

Genesis 14:18-20

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Leviticus 27:30, 32

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Malachi 3:8-10

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- Do you think Christians should adopt this same historic standard for giving? Why or why not?
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***Stewardship of Our Resources***

- In Luke 14:33, Jesus lays out for His followers what percentage of our worldly goods is His, and what is ours. What is your reaction to His teaching in this verse?
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- What's the moral of the story Jesus summarized in Luke 16:10-13?
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- In the same passage, verse 12, who do you think is the owner of the property we have been given to use until the time we can become owners ourselves?
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- What is the implication of these verses on your own possessions?

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### ***Saving and Debt***

- Why is the ant a good model of proper money management according to Proverbs 6:6-11?

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- In the passage above, why is failure to save – being a “sluggard” – compared to having an armed man break in?

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- What does the writer of Proverbs say about “get rich quick” schemes in Proverbs 28:19-20?

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- In this age of easy credit and consumer debt, what does the timeless wisdom of God have to say concerning how we as His followers handle our desires and indebtedness?

Proverbs 21:25-26

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Proverbs 22:26-27

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Proverbs 22:7

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- Why do you think the Scriptures elevate practices such as saving and avoiding debt to a spiritual level rather than just a simple monetary one?

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### ***Attitudes toward Money and Giving***

- What additional lessons about giving can be gleaned from the following passages?

I Timothy 6:8-10, 17-19

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I Corinthians 16:1-2

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II Corinthians 8:9, 12

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Luke 6:38

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Matthew 6:3-4

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- What attitudes should characterize giving according to II Corinthians 9:6-9?
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- What challenge is presented in this passage? What promise?
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## ***In Summary, mature Christians give***

**GENEROUSLY...** They know Christ has given all to them, and they know Christ owns all they have anyway.

**PROPORTIONALLY...** They try to give as high a percentage of their income as possible, recognizing the tithe (10%) as a long-established benchmark which may well be exceeded as they prosper.

**REGULARLY...** As resources flow in, they offer the “first-fruits” back to God, honoring Him before any others.

**LOCALLY...** Knowing that they claim this church as their spiritual home, they support the ministries from which they derive benefit.

**LIBERALLY...** As they are able, they go beyond giving to their own church and contribute to the cause of Christ globally.

**CHEERFULLY...** Knowing that God sees the heart, they do not just give begrudgingly to an organization- they give their offering as unto God Himself; they do so willingly, and not under compulsion, but with joyful worship as their resources flow out to serve others.

**ANONYMOUSLY...** They do not call attention to themselves when they give or expect their offering to produce an advantage in the church.

**EXPECTANTLY...** Counting on God’s promise of provision, they anticipate seeing God use their gifts and know He will work in their own lives - including financially – as they give.

## **SECTION FOUR**

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# **Membership Affirmation**

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### Personal Response

Up until now in your membership process, you have been primarily “taking in” – now it is 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 of Island Community Church. 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. Based on your personal Bible study work on the Five G’s which you have just completed, it is time to make your own responses to the affirmations and beliefs of Island Community Church. When you have completed this membership booklet, please bring or send it back to the office so a membership interview may be set up. Make notes as needed for further discussion with the person doing your interview. You will note that these affirmations are organized along the same lines as the Five G study lessons.

#### **GRACE**

- How does someone become a Christian? Describe how that happened to you.

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**Note: Much misunderstanding exists about what it means to “be a Christian.” Church attendance, belief in God, strong commitment, etc. are all good, but none of them make you a Christian in the Biblical sense. If you are at all unclear as to whether or not you are a Christian, we would like to help you work through any confusion – please do not feel embarrassed if you are not sure. Please set up a time as soon as possible to discuss your uncertainties. If you are still in the process of making this decision, please do not go any further on this response sheet for now. This matter is of vital importance to every participating member (every person really!), so please get the input we have suggested before taking any more steps.**

- Have you been baptized as a believer? (Since you made a decision to receive Christ as your Savior.)  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No

- Describe when and where.

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***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 strongly urge that a person be baptized by his or her own choice after salvation, before becoming a participating member of Island Community Church. (That baptism does not necessarily have to have occurred at ICC.)***

**GROWTH**

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

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***Note: In asking you to describe your spiritual habits, we want to be careful to avoid the mistaken notion that legalistic formulas and rigid rules guarantee a healthy devotional life. It is more important that your walk with Christ simply be characterized by regular and meaningful input. What matters is that you are becoming more like Him, and that you are taking it upon yourself to improve your relationship with Him privately, and not solely be dependent on what public meetings can provide.***

- Do you regard the Bible as God’s final authority in all areas of your life, and do you desire to be wholly submitted to His headship in it?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ Yes, except for

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\_\_\_ No

- Please discuss any reservations you have.

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***Note: If you have a major concern with living under the authority of the Bible, you will probably not want to go any further with this process – it would be out of order for anyone to be a participating member of ICC without being in submission to Scripture. We are not trying to place an unattainable goal in front of you. We recognize that as long as we live in this world we will stumble. But your primary desire and goal should be to love God with all your heart and let Christ be the CEO of your life. If you have reservations about this, we suggest that you schedule a time to speak to one of the members of our pastoral staff to discuss this.***

- In your pursuit of becoming more Christ like, what areas are most difficult for you and most frequently need more attention?

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- Are there any ongoing patterns of sin in your life that you are not willing to give up, stand against and yield to Christ?

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***Note: This question is a very hard one to face because we are all wrestling with “something,” and none of us has reached sinlessness. But there may come a time for some of us when we just quit trying. Either through discouragement, or maybe a hardened will, we just stop trying to grow and give up the fight. Christ’s reputation is far more likely to be marred when His followers engage in willful sin with no thought of repentance than when a sincere believer falls to a temptation he or she desperately wants to overcome.***

***Those Christ-followers with yielded hearts who honestly confront areas of personal sin with the help of the Holy Spirit please God – what more could anyone do? If you are not open to change, not ready to have at least one other person help and offer accountability or other support, or if you’re only at the early stages of confronting a sin-pattern, then it may be best to defer participating membership until time shows growth has occurred.***

- Do you desire to extend Christ’s saving grace to others in your circle of influence, and, as participating members of Island Community, use our services, seeker events, and other evangelistic efforts for that purpose?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, why not? In what ways have you actually done that recently?

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**GROUP**

- Consistent with God's call to commitment and community within a local church body, do you regularly participate in the corporate gatherings of Island Community Church?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not is there a specific reason?

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***Note: We are not establishing a set number of services one could miss in a year before you would fail to qualify as a participating member. Seasons of life sometimes require extraordinary responses that preclude church attendance, as do health concerns, family problems, being out of town or other unavoidable circumstances. Having said that, it is important that participating members value the distinctive ministries provided by ICC, and that they come to church even if they do not particularly feel like it or even if the speaker for the week isn't their favorite. Mature believers come to meet God as well as each other, and He always shows up!***

- Do you affirm the specific mission and objectives of Island Community Church?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, what aspects are you unable to affirm and embrace?

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- Do you pledge your cooperation to the elders of the church and those in leadership positions?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, why not?

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***Note: Hebrews 13:17 instructs church members to “obey your leaders, and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” At the same time, Scripture does not suggest blind submission – we are all under the authority of God and His Word.***

***Participating members must be willing to go directly to the appropriate leader when issues of concern arise, with the desire to engage in honest, respectful dialogue. Complaints should never be taken to uninvolved members of the body in ways that promote rumor or divisiveness.***

- The Island Community Church Statement of Faith summarizes the basic truths of Scripture. Do you wholeheartedly affirm that statement?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, what are your specific reservations?

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- Will you refrain from promoting doctrines not found in our statement of faith in ways that cause dissension?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- Are you connected to a small group of believers here at Island Community for the purpose of growth, loving support, and accountability?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, please explain why.

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

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***Note: It is easy to come to large group gatherings and get a false sense of our spiritual or personal condition. Furthermore, large meetings where anonymity is honored give us no opportunity to enter into someone else's needs and be God's agent of help to them. The value of "group" is that somewhere, on a regular basis with a few other believers, all participating members have face-to-face meetings that help shape them – places they give and receive care.***

***We believe that an ICC small group is an optimal place for that to happen. But we realize that some individuals may be committed to the value of significant relationships without, for various reasons, being in a formal group at a particular time. So we give a lot of latitude as to what kind of group this might be. At a minimum it must be with other believers where you get to know them and they get to know you and Christ is central to the group.***

- Do you have any relationships anywhere, such as within the church, at work, or at home, that are dishonoring to God (i.e., broken or impure relationships)?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If so, please describe the problem.

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- As far as it is up to you, are you committed to pursuing the biblical pattern of conflict resolution to rectify those or any future relational conflicts?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

- If not, please explain.

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***Note: Relational breakdowns are usually complex matters. We recognize and respect that. At the same***

***time, participating members should be willing to engage in the strenuous process of conflict resolution. They should display entreatable hearts, a willingness to examine and address personal issues that may have contributed to the conflict, and openness to receive counsel where appropriate.***

## **GIFTS**

- Do you feel that you have a good understanding of your spiritual gifts and the S.H.A.P.E. (see earlier discussion) God has given you?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No
- If yes, please complete the following information.

**S. My primary SPIRITUAL GIFTS are**

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**H. I have a real HEART for**

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**A. The following APTITUDES and ABILITIES that I can use in ministry are**

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**P. My personality type is best described by**

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**E. My life EXPERIENCES and EDUCATION which might be used in ministry are**

- Are you responsibly using your spiritual gifts in a place of service within the Island Community Church?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No
- If yes, 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?

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**Note: One of the core values of the New Testament and of ICC is that the members of the body of Christ are all ministers. Practically speaking, the church cannot grow in a healthy fashion unless all of its core believers are sharing the ministry load. So, we ask all participating members to contribute to the body by using their S.H.A.P.E. in some place of service. At the same time, we recognize that demanding seasons of life or other unusual circumstances may require reducing the amount of involvement or taking a “break” for a period of time. But, in any case, it should be their desire and intention to reengage in some level of service – even if only on a periodic basis (e.g. summer help in Sunday School, Super Church worker, or special service projects).**

## **GOOD STEWARDSHIP**

- Do you believe the way you use your material wealth is God-honoring in all aspects?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No  
\_\_\_ Mostly
- If no, in what areas? What action are you taking to make changes?

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- In light of the tithe as a biblical precedent for giving, do you regularly support this body using 10% as a goal to reach (or surpass as God prospers)?

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

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

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- If sacrificial giving becomes possible for you (that is, giving beyond 10% of your income), what dreams do you have for using your resources so the Kingdom can expand locally and around the world?

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***Note: People can fall prey to a variety of errors in the area of giving. One extreme is to become compelled by guilt or legalistic “obedience.” Paul said that God loves a cheerful giver. Reluctant, joyless giving evidences an issue that needs to be addressed. Paul also warned against unbalanced, irresponsible giving that ignores personal needs and can actually create financial dependence (II Corinthians 8:12-15; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; II Thessalonians 3:7-12; I Timothy 5:8). Yet another extreme is unplanned and***

***haphazard giving that reflects neither faithfulness nor generosity.***

What has shaped Island Community's position concerning giving? The Old Testament provides the basis – instructing God's people to give the first fruits (first 10%) of their income back to Him – and as such, it ought to move us all toward adopting at least that percentage. In response to Christ's lavish grace, the New Testament goes on to teach proportional giving, and spurs us to doing even more to advance the kingdom locally – and beyond - as God individually prospers and leads.

On a practical level, church finances become harder to manage when the core gives sporadically or unpredictably. Island Community's ministries benefit many people (hopefully including you!). We want to continue to offer diverse ministry opportunities, but we do not want to burden seekers or the less fortunate. And we certainly do not want to resort to alternative means of generating income: bake-sales, raffles, high pressured fund-raisers, etc. That leaves it up to us, the “participating core” of the church, to pool our resources in a committed fashion so that our own needs can be met and ministry extended to those beyond our four walls.

It is in this spirit that we ask participating members to support this church with their tithes. We realize for some this will be a goal to attain over time; for others, it is already a mark they can surpass as God leads. In any case, we believe that God will bless and empower us as we joyfully band together to advance His cause.

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope this opportunity to take “spiritual inventory” has been enriching 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.

## ***THE PARTICIPATING MEMBERSHIP INTERVIEW***

Most people tend to process information at a much deeper level when they discuss an issue rather than simply think or read about it. That is why an honest and confidential conversation about your affirmations with a leader comes after you have completed your written responses. The purpose of the confirmation interview is to affirm your commitments, accurately assess the condition of your spiritual life, and plan where you would like to go next. This step of participating membership may seem a little scary because of its emphasis on vulnerability, but it is highly beneficial because it offers both clarification of what is going on and accountability to effect changes for the better. Perhaps at this stage more than any other, we stop “playing church” and get about the business of seeing ourselves in the holy light of Christ’s love with the caring support of a member of His body. This is loving, honest, Holy Spirit-infused fellowship at its best.

The pastoral staff member or small group leader who walks with you through this process is trained to facilitate your meeting. He or she takes this appointment seriously, and wants to make sure you get the maximum benefit. This leader is instructed to listen attentively, ask meaningful questions about your responses, and most importantly, support you in whatever way seems appropriate as you take this next step in your spiritual journey. As you talk, you will both decide whether you should become a participating member. Typically, if you think you are ready, so will the person working with you. If you sense there are problems, the interviewer is there to help. In some rare cases, the interviewer may want to “press the pause button” and wait on your participating membership until some issue is addressed. It is important for you to know that your interviewer cannot stop your

membership process without discussing it with the elders. If a problem does arise – especially if the two of you disagree about anything you have discussed related to whether or not you should become a participating member – an elder must be called in for a follow-up meeting. Again, the whole purpose is to address issues and move forward – not embarrass you or hold you back in your spiritual progress.

To set up an interview, simply call the church office, or let your small group leader, or a member of the pastoral staff know that you are ready to meet. You should allow about an hour to an hour-and-a-half for the interview. You should bring the following items to the interview:

- The “Five G” study filled out (note any questions you would like to discuss.)
- The “Affirmation” pages filled out (also noting any questions or qualifications you would like to discuss.)
- The “Participating Member Confirmation Form” filled out (see next page). The interview may take place wherever the two of you decide. A, noisy, public place would not be suitable; choose a location where quiet, meaningful conversation can take place uninterrupted.

At the conclusion of your interview, one of two things will happen. Your interviewer will either confirm you or sign your new member confirmation, or else you will agree to another meeting to discuss whatever issue is of concern. Realize that both of these steps are moves forward. They both have your spiritual well-being as top priority. They both result in personal growth and progress. They both carry the assurance that God’s plan for you is unfolding right on schedule: “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). If you decide to call another meeting, that will be your next step. After you are confirmed, you will need to mail or drop off your Participating Membership Confirmation Form at the church office.

You will be notified when the next new participating membership celebration will take place so you can plan to attend.

### **Participating Membership**

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT:** I hereby affirm that I have completed the personal study materials and filled out the Personal Response and affirmations. I commit myself to the vision and values of Island Community Church, specifically, to live in grace, grow as a believer, share in group life, serve with my gifts, and be a good steward of the resources and talents the Lord has given me. I now desire to be a participating member.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of New Member**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, after interviewing the above applicant do here submit him/her as a participating member of Island Community Church and confer all the rights and responsibilities that come with full membership in the local church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Interviewer**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

***“Rejoice with those who rejoice”  
Romans 12:15***

**Church love is community life; therefore, significant events in the life of the church happen in community. Acknowledging that we have a new participating member among us is almost as significant as rejoicing over someone’s salvation. They are both celebrations tied to someone joining Christ: a new believer is connecting with Christ’s invisible body- a new member is joining His visible one.**

**Once you turn in your form to the church office, your name will be forwarded to be introduced in the weekend service you normally attend. We will let you know when that is going to happen. We will ask you to stand and be introduced so the church body can welcome you corporately. We will then contact you to let you know when our next new participating member’s celebration will be taking place.**

**We do not wish this experience to be frightening, so we will not call you up on stage or do anything that will make you feel uncomfortable. But we would be remiss if we did not have some way to let everyone know who the new members are among us. The focal point of the celebration includes not only the larger corporate gathering, but the church in its smallest form the small group.**

***“What you did... even to the least of them,  
you did it to Me,” said Jesus (Matthew 25:40).***