

NEW MEMBERS HANDBOOK



PARK STREET CHURCH
Evangelical. Congregational. International.

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Welcome to

PARK STREET CHURCH

The Ministerial Staff, Membership Committee, and members of Park Street Church welcome you to the membership class. Our hope is that this class will help you to study the teachings of the church and to find your place in it.

Each lesson describes what the church believes and how we try to live out these convictions. As you learn more about the church, please be praying about how you can become more connected here.

The salvation that is ours in Christ introduces the Christian to an interpersonal reality, the church. In the New Testament, to be a Christian is to belong to the people of God. In Scripture, there is no such thing as an independent or unaffiliated Christian. We see church membership as an organizational expression of a Biblical truth: “in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:5).

Based upon the description of the early church in Acts 2:42–47, we see church membership at Park Street encompassing at least four interconnected commitments:

We hold to a common confession in Jesus Christ

Jesus is our Lord and head of the Church. We learn about and proclaim our faith in Sunday worship services, and in Christian Formation classes.

We participate in community life

We seek to love and be loved in our small groups, campus ministries, Family Ministry, and pastoral care and counseling.

We covenant ourselves, including time and resources

New members classes are the starting point of formalizing our commitment to one another. We reaffirm our unity in communion and via the stewardship ministry.

We live out a calling to serve the Lord in the church and in the world

God has given us the privilege to be involved in His activity, through various church committees and teams, including the Missions Program, with student ministries, full-support missionaries and more.

The church is more than shared values and resources; it is the living body of Christ, and “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). The church is a place for giving as well as receiving. Each person in the church is important. We thank you for the gift of your life and your ministry among us. To God be the glory.

Qualifications

FOR MEMBERSHIP

At Park Street Church, the primary qualification for membership is a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. While none of us can fully examine another to know the deepest thoughts of the mind and soul, still there is evidence in word and deed to the necessary faith. To that end, the Ministerial Staff members and members of the Membership Committee who are leading your New Members Class will hear from each candidate for membership a statement of his or her faith in Jesus Christ. “Testimonies” from candidates for membership will be heard at each class, starting the second week. You will also be asked to sign the confession of faith adopted by this church and printed on the following page.

In preparation for the testimony, each candidate for membership should prepare to present a short (3–4 minute) statement regarding his or her relationship with Jesus Christ. To aid in that preparation, the following outlines are suggested:

For those who became Christians (believers) at an early age or over a period of time so that an exact chronology is difficult:

- An opening phrase identifying yourself
- An indication of your early church experience
- How is it that you know you are a Christian?
- How has being a Christian changed your life?
- Where do you see continued need for change?
- An appropriate Bible verse summing up your testimony

For those who became Christians (believers) as an adult in a clearly defined chronology (as the Apostle Paul does in Acts 26):

- An opening phrase identifying yourself
- An indication of your life before receiving Christ
- An indication of how Christ has changed your life since
- An indication of areas for continued change
- An appropriate Bible verse summing up your testimony

It is perfectly fine for you to refer to written notes when you speak before the class. In addition you may request an opportunity to speak to the Ministerial Staff member leading your class beforehand in order to review your testimony.

In addition to subscribing to the personal confession of faith on page 4, members must also commit to the church’s Covenant of Faith and Government, found on page 25. This statement is distinct from the personal confession of faith and has to do with your pledge to uphold the beliefs and organization of this church while you are among us.

The bylaws also require that members be baptized. If you have not been baptized, please speak with your minister about scheduling your baptism, which can be done on the same day you join.

The other requirements are attending six of seven classes, completing a formal application, and being presented to the congregation.

Confession of

FAITH

I BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; and in the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God.

I REVERENTLY RECEIVE the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and believe them to be the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

I BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the beginning “was with God,” and “was God,” and who “himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24 NIV).

I BELIEVE the Holy Spirit has led me to repent of all my sins, and to turn from them, and to obey Christ where He says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34 NIV).

I BELIEVE in the resurrection of the dead, and in the final judgment of all people. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36 NIV)

I BELIEVE that we are saved “by grace through faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. I therefore offer myself for Christian service as a means of expressing my gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause.

I CHEERFULLY SUBMIT myself to the instruction and government of this church, and I promise to promote its purity, peace, and welfare by all means within my power, so long as I shall continue to be a member.

Class One

THE BIBLE

WHY DO WE NEED THE BIBLE AT ALL?

Psalm 19 tells us about two kinds of revelation, general revelation and special revelation, that stand together in complementary relationship. General revelation tells us that there is a God (Romans 1:18–20), while special revelation tells us how to make peace with God (Romans 3:21–26). Special revelation is necessary (2 Timothy 3:14–17). God has written some laws in nature, but not all; some things we cannot know on our own. The witness in creation is non-verbal and leaves us to try to figure out things from the outside. If we want to know a person, we will be limited if we only observe his behavior and appearance. We need the person to talk and open up to us to really know him. God speaks to us so that we can know him, giving verbal communication. He gives that verbal communication in writing, rather than orally, in order to give us a public standard so we do not delude ourselves. I need to know what God says to you, and you need to know what God says to me: the written Word makes God's truth universal and objective.

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WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE AT PARK STREET

Park Street Church, since its founding in 1809, has held to a “high view” of Scripture. That is, we hold it to be God's inspired, inerrant word that is sufficient for all matters of faith and Christian living. A person who takes his or her Christian faith seriously will want to give serious attention to the Bible in its entirety. It becomes a matter of life commitment to understand properly what God has said to us as a church and to us as individuals.

In addition to hearing the Bible preached weekly, we must spend time daily feasting upon the Word of God. Our high view of Scripture must translate into a deep dedication to know God's Word and to live it out.

The Bible is inspired by God

We believe the Bible is inspired by God. The 10 commandments are the first “Bible,” and set the pattern for all the rest of Scripture (**Exodus 20:1ff; 31:18; 34:27**). First, the moment the commandments were written, they were authoritative; in the same way, the rest of Scripture was authoritative the moment it was written (and not authoritative just because the Church later decided it to be: it is not the Church that forms the Word, but the Word that forms the Church). Second, God commissioned Moses to write and considered Moses' words to have the

same authority as his own. The first stone tablets were “written by the finger of God” (**Exodus 31:18**). After this the people begged for Moses, rather than God, to communicate with them because they were too full of fear. So after the golden calf incident, God told Moses to cut two new stones like the first and that he would write on them as before (**34:1**); however, this time he tells Moses to write what he says (**34:27**). The implication is that there is no difference in the authority of what God commanded Moses to write, and what God had formerly written himself. In the same way, God “commissioned” the authors of the rest of Scripture and considers their words to have the same authority as if he had written with his own finger.

We know that the Bible is the Word of God from the testimony of Scripture itself. Jesus considered the Old Testament, his Bible, to be God’s Word (**Matthew 4:4**; **Matthew 22:41–44**). If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then we must believe his witness concerning Scripture. The writers of the New Testament also considered the Old Testament and their own writings to be authoritative (**1 Corinthians 2:12–13**; **Romans 3:1–2**; **2 Peter 1:20–21**; **3:15–16**). Considering the testimony of Scripture to support that the Bible is the Word of God may seem circular. We must also have the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to know that the Bible is God’s Word (**John 16:12–15**; **Ephesians 6:17** with **Hebrews 4:12**). The inward witness of the Holy Spirit is just as necessary to recognize the Bible as the Word of God, as it is to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. This is not a matter of imparting new information, but of enlightening darkened minds.

The Bible is inerrant

We believe that the Bible is without error (inerrant). The very words of the original texts of the 66 books of the Bible are free from error, not just in matters of faith and practice, but also in all aspects (**Galatians 3:16**, **Matthew 22:32**). The character of God informs the way we approach his Word: it is the product of an all-powerful, all-knowing God who is free from error (**Psalms 12:6**; **18:30**; **19:7**; **Proverbs 30:5–6**; **John 17:17**).

The Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice

We believe that the Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice, or Christian living (**2 Timothy 3:16–17**; **2 Peter 1:3**). Experience is severely limited as a basis for determining truth because it is changeable, ambiguous (it does not interpret itself), and is subject to self-deception. Thus, we should seek to interpret our experience in the light of God’s Word, rather than interpreting God’s Word in light of our experience.

THE BIBLE IS A COVENANT DOCUMENT

Finally, it is instructive to understand that the Bible is a “covenant document.” God made a covenant with Israel that resembled covenants made in the surrounding culture, using what was familiar to the people to teach spiritual truth (like Jesus did with parables). “Covenant” describes the relationship between the King and his people: it bound together two unrelated parties in a new family relationship, a relationship that required certain duties and was guarded by a witness.

A covenant is a three-way agreement (two parties and a witness to enforce it), as opposed to a contract, which is a two-way agreement (two parties, but no witness). In God’s covenant with his people, he is both one of the parties and the witness. All covenants would have a document that described the parties involved and the terms of the arrangement. The Bible,

encompassing the Old and New Covenants, is the “covenant document” that governs our covenant relationship with God. In it, he tells us who he is, who we are, and how we are to live in relationship with him and inherit his promises. All covenants also included a stipulation about how often to read them. In Deuteronomy 31:9–13, we read that Moses commands the law to be read to the people of God every seven years. We have much more than just the law (the first five books of the OT) in our Bible now, but if we were to follow the seven-year plan, we would read about three chapters a week to read through the Bible in seven years. No matter what our reading plan, we are to meditate on God’s Word every day (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

Questions for **REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION**

1. What would be the implication for Christianity and for your own life if the Bible were simply an ordinary book and not inspired by God?
2. If someone were to say to you that the Bible can’t be trusted, because it is full of errors and outdated information, how would you respond?
3. What opportunities do you have to hear the Word of God? What can you do to be more intentional about applying the Bible to your life after you hear it preached or taught? Are you currently involved in a small group? Why or why not?
4. Do you have a personal “reading plan” for the Bible? If so, what is it? If not, what can you do to implement one?
5. Read the “Window Into Park Street: Education” on the next page. Have you ever been involved in any of the Christian Formation, international ministry, or Enable Boston activities? If yes, it would be great if you would share your experience with the class.

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Education

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

We are called to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds (cf. **Matt 22:37**). Especially given the university-rich environment we find ourselves in, Park Street Church is committed to enabling people to build a vibrant love for God that is academically rigorous and attractive.

WAYS TO BE INVOLVED

- *Attend a class!*
- *Help teach English as a Second Language on Tue/Thu mornings, or Friday nights. Scientific and Legal English is also offered*
- *Teach a children's or adults' Christian Formation class*
- *Serve with Christianity Explored for seekers*
- *Serve as a class facilitator for a Christian Formation class*
- *Lead or assist in a Park Street International Fellowship group*
- *Help a child or adult with a disability on Sundays or Friday nights*

Our Sunday **Christian Formation** classes for adults, youth and children seek to help people to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (**Rom 12:2**). By grappling with biblical themes and real-life issues, our classes seek the transformation of the character and heart of God’s people by God’s word. Some classes and seminars focus on theological topics, spiritual disciplines, or a book of the Bible, while other classes address issues of a certain life stage, e.g., a class for honeymooners or on parenting. The classes for youth and children tackle serious theology and honest life issues.

Christianity Explored provides a safe environment for people to explore the Christian faith, as they share a meal, watch a video, and ask questions. We have a vibrant ministry to international students, scholars, and their families, which has many opportunities for learning and teaching, often with current and future leaders in various fields. **Park Street International Fellowship (PSIF)** has small group Bible studies on

Sunday afternoons. **English as a Second Language** classes are a way to reach out to scholars and their spouses.

Enable Boston, our disability ministry, helps children and adults with disabilities to be active in the life of the church.

Class Two

THE TRIUNE GOD

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “TRINITY”?

God as “three Persons in One” expresses the distinctive Christian understanding of God, and reflects our view at Park Street Church. The Bible speaks of one God, but attributes the characteristics of God to three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father created

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all things and planned the redemption of his people from all eternity (**Genesis 3:14–15; Ephesians 1:3–12**); God the Son accomplished that redemption on the cross (**Romans 3:21–24; Galatians 3:13–14**); and God the Spirit applies the benefits of that eternal redemption to all believers (**John 3:5–8; Titus 3:4–7**). The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of describing this biblical revelation of the nature of God. It states that God is one in essence, but that he exists in three Persons who are equal, eternal, inseparable and interdependent. We must note that our English word, “Persons,” falls short as a way to describe God because it can give the impression of three separate individuals; rather, a more accurate view is that God is one being with three personal self-distinctions.

WHY SHOULD WE USE THE WORD “TRINITY”?

We might wonder why we should accept the word “Trinity” as a way to describe God when it isn’t in the Bible. Heretical groups came on the early Church scene and denied either the deity of Christ or that of the Holy Spirit. This drove Christians to search the Scriptures to come up with a formal way to describe the Bible’s teaching on the nature of God, and the doctrine of the “Tri-unity” was the result. Tertullian, an early Church

father, was the first to use the term “Trinity” in 215 AD. Like the word “Trinity,” there are many words such as “omniscient,” “ineffable,” “omnipresent,” “self-existent” and “uncreated,” none of which is found in the Bible, but nevertheless, each of which can be extremely helpful for us in summarizing what the Bible clearly teaches about the character of our amazing God. We often act as if the concept of the Trinity is something negative since it is difficult for us to grasp; rather, we should view it as something wonderful because it means not only that we have a God who is greater and more mysterious than our imaginings, but also that we have a God who seeks a personal relationship with us through the redemption of the Son and the presence of the Spirit. If God were not a Trinity, he would be the God of Deism or Islam, both impersonal and unknowable.

Because he is a trinity, God himself exists in community: three persons of one essence, who love each other with a perfect love and whose love overflowed in the creation and redemption of humanity. When God created humanity in his image, he created us as relational beings, created to love each other and our Creator.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR CONCEIVING OF GOD AS A TRINITY

The Bible teaches that we have One God (**Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Ephesians 4:4–6**). At the same time, that One God is revealed progressively throughout Scripture as three Persons:

- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are active in Creation (*Genesis 1:1–2; Colossians 1:16–17*)
- Isaiah prophesies that the one born of the virgin would also be Immanuel, God with us (*Isaiah 7:14*) and later calls the Messiah “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father” (*Isaiah 9:6*)
- The NT calls the Father God (*John 6:27; 20:17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 4:6; Philippians 2:11; 1 Peter 1:2*)
- The NT explicitly declares Jesus Christ to be God (*John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8*); they also apply the name Yahweh, the Lord God who created the universe, to Jesus (*Philippians 2:8–11; Hebrews 1:10*)
- The NT writers recognize the Holy Spirit as God (*Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; John 3:5–6, 8; Titus 3:5*)
- The NT writers speak of the presence and work of the Father, Son and Spirit in one breath (*Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:10–11; Luke 10:21, 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2*)

HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS GOD IN PRAYER?

Since God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are “Persons,” we should speak of them as such (e.g., the Holy Spirit is “He” and not “It”). Though we may certainly address any member of the Trinity in prayer, it may be helpful to follow the guidance of Scripture. Jesus addressed God as “Father” in his model prayer for his disciples (**Matthew 6:9–13**), and he told them to pray to the Father in his name once he was no longer on this earth (**John 16:22–24**). Since we have God’s Spirit dwelling in us, it is by his power that we cry out to God in prayer and seek his will (**Romans 8:15–16; 26–27**). Thus, in addressing God in prayer it can be helpful to think of praying to God the Father in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS: FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN

Crucial to our understanding of the Trinity is the Bible’s presentation of Jesus Christ as fully man (**Matthew 8:23–24; 21:18; John 11:32–36**) and fully God (**John 1:1–3; John 10:30; 17:4–5; Titus 2:13**), in possession of both divine and human natures, unified in one person. The two natures coexisted in union without confusion or change, separation or division. Jesus Christ had to possess both natures in order to be our Lord and Savior. Because he was fully divine, Jesus is able to be the perfect and eternal sacrifice for the complete atonement of our sins, as well as our permanent high priest, allowing us to be eternally reconciled to God (**Hebrews 7:23–28**). Because he was fully human, Jesus was able to be our proper substitute on the cross to experience the wrath of God, and he is able to be a comfort and example for our daily living (**Hebrews 2:14–18**).

Being divine, Jesus could not sin, because God can't change his nature (John 5:19, 30). We might wonder, then, how he can truly identify with us in our struggles and temptations as Hebrews 2:18 promises. Because he was human, Jesus couldn't conquer temptation without a struggle. We struggle with temptation, and when the struggle overcomes us we eventually give in. Unlike us, Jesus had to keep resisting temptation until he had overcome it, and so his temptations were more terrible than we can ever experience. The promise of Hebrews 2:18 should then bring us comfort: "because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Questions for **REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION**

1. What would be the implication for Christianity if Jesus had only been an ordinary human being? What would be the implication if Jesus had not really been human, but only God in disguise?
2. Why is the concept of God as Trinity so important to our faith? What would we lose if we deny that God is both one and three? Compare our Trinitarian faith with other religions or systems of beliefs with which you are familiar.
3. In what ways can your understanding of the Trinity instruct and enhance and your devotional life? With which person of the Trinity do you most often interact? Why?
4. In what ways do you live out Christian community? Read the "Window Into Park Street" on Affinity Groups on the next page. After this class is over, is there an affinity group or other ministry in which you can more fully love God and his people?

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Affinity Groups

Our worship services and most programs are intergenerational, but affinity groups also provide a natural place for friendships to form and develop.

Real Life Boston is the undergraduate college ministry of Park Street Church, working in partnership with Cru on many campuses across the city. They have small groups and outreaches on campuses and gather at Park Street every Friday night for large group worship. For **Graduate**

Students, we partner with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's Graduate and Faculty Ministries for fellowship and on various campuses. Our international ministry offers friendship and faith-based service and opportunities to international students, scholars, and their families.

Our Young Adults ministry, called **Park Street Café**, is a grassroots ministry for singles and married people in their twenties and thirties, connecting them to God, the Church, the community and each other. They offer small and large groups.

Park Street Women hosts events and offers various ministries for the women of the church. There is also a Men's ministry.

Believing that God has created the institution of the family as a means to help us understand the intimate relationship that exists between our heavenly Father and his children and between brothers and sisters in Christ, the **Family Ministry** offers a vibrant ministry to children, youth and parents, including Sunday

classes and programs, Friday Family Night, **Park Street Union** for young married couples, Home School Fellowship, and Family Camp.

DON'T FIT IN THESE GROUPS?

One of the greatest needs we hear expressed at Park Street Church is the desire to be mentored. People are thirsty for older role models who will listen to them, help guide them with Godly wisdom, and pray for and with them. Whatever age you are, there are younger folks who would greatly benefit from the experience you have from walking with Christ. Consider mentoring a student or young professional in your field of expertise, or helping a parent of infants or teenagers. Take time on Sundays or Friday nights to care for an infant, child, or teenager.

Class Three

SALVATION

WHAT IS “SALVATION”?

Salvation is a broad term that expresses God’s provision for the predicament of his people. In the Old Testament this word is used to describe God’s deliverance of his people from their enemies so that they might experience his blessings. This temporal salvation proves to be a

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visual aid for the spiritual and eternal salvation God’s people are truly in need of. Our biggest need is to be reconciled to God because our sin makes us worthy only to receive his wrath (**Romans 6:23**). God’s deliverance of Israel out of slavery at the Exodus foreshadows the Second Exodus by which Jesus would defeat the Enemy of our souls and lead his people out of slavery to sin and death and into the inheritance of eternal life with God. The gospel, or “good news,” is that God has finally accomplished salvation for his people through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

JESUS IS THE FOCAL POINT OF SALVATION HISTORY

The truth of salvation is revealed progressively throughout the Bible. God created us to be in relationship with him, but from very early on that relationship was broken by sin. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin by sending them out of the Garden of Eden to toil in labor, but he did not punish them eternally as they deserved. Rather, he promised that a seed of the woman would render a deathblow to Satan and therefore to sin and death, though not before receiving mortal wounds (**Genesis 3:15**). Furthermore, God clothed them with the skin of a slain animal, which foreshadowed the sacrifice for sin that would be made on their account. The seed of the woman is, of course, Jesus Christ. God’s forgiveness of Adam and Eve, and of every Old Testament believer after that, signed the death warrant of Christ. The only way God could forgive sin yet remain true to his holy character was to send Jesus to pay the punishment that all his people from the beginning to the end of time deserve for their sin (**Romans 3:25-26**). The redemptive work of Christ, then, is the center of history. God’s people of all time (both OT and NT) have their salvation secured in the same way, by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Old Testament believers looked ahead through shadows to that sacrifice while we look back on it with clarity.

HOW IS SALVATION APPLIED TO THE BELIEVER?

The Bible speaks of our salvation as something that is past, present and future: we have been saved (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5, 8); we are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Philippians 2:12–13); we will be saved (Romans 5:10; 13:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Hebrews 1:14). It is helpful to think of salvation as encompassing regeneration and justification (past and present), sanctification (present) and glorification (future). The salvation of our souls includes each of these works of God and more. We must not think of “salvation” simply as the moment that we profess faith in Christ.

Regeneration

Salvation is dependent upon the work of God who must give us new life before we can repent from our sin and exercise faith in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5–6). Jesus describes the kind of change that must happen to a person in order for him or her to enter the kingdom of God, a change that is effected by the Holy Spirit. Because we are in bondage to sin and Satan, we can no more will to be saved than a dead person can will to rise to life or a blind person can will to see (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:5–6; 6:44; Romans 3:10–12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3). We need the work of the Spirit to restore our hearts from the pollution of sin and to give us new inclinations towards God. We then respond to the Spirit’s working in our hearts by exercising faith in Christ. In this way, we receive salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6–14; Ephesians 2:4–10).

Justification

When we are given new hearts and freely respond to the truth of the gospel in faith, God justifies us. Justification is a judicial act by which God pronounces the sinner righteous, putting him or her in a permanently right relationship with himself (Romans 3:23–24). God declares us “not guilty” by crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to our account (Romans 4:5), so that when we identify with Christ the law is fulfilled perfectly in us (Romans 8:3–4). With justification

an exchange takes place: whereas Jesus took our sin and its punishment upon himself at the cross, we are clothed with his righteousness. We believe that Jesus will return one day to bring final judgment and that God will judge those who have believed in him on the merits of Christ rather than on their own merits. Those who are judged on the merits of Christ will enter into everlasting life, while those who are judged on their own merits will enter into everlasting hell.

We believe that we are saved “by grace through faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. We therefore offer ourselves for Christian service as a means of expressing our gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause.

Sanctification

Although we have been saved (justification) and already experience many of God’s blessings, we still struggle with sin and live in a world where Satan rules. In a sense, we have one foot in heaven and one on earth. Sanctification is the process by which we *are being saved* as the Holy Spirit works in us to progressively free us from sin and make us more like Christ. Thus,

our salvation not only includes Christ dying for us, but also Christ living in us. Christ lives in us through his Holy Spirit whom he sends to indwell every Christian (**Romans 8:3–14**). While obedience merits nothing towards our salvation, it is the necessary result of the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers (**Romans 6:1–7; James 2:24–26**). The miracle of the New Covenant promised by the OT prophets is not that God would one day lower his holy standards for our lives, but that at last his Spirit would write his law upon our hearts, rather than upon tablets of stone, so that we would love and obey him (**Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Deuteronomy 30:6–8; Ezekiel 36:26f.**). As we examine our lives to see the fruit of obedience (**Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Peter 1:2–11**) we must keep in mind two things. First, obedience is not something we muster up, but something the Spirit produces in us; second, the Christian is not someone who is better than everyone else, but someone who is better than he or she once was.

Glorification

We look forward to the time *we will be saved*. When Christ comes again our salvation will reach its culmination and we will be glorified with him. This hope is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the fact that the same Spirit who raised him from the dead now dwells in us. The presence of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will follow Jesus, the first-born from the dead, in the resurrection of our own bodies to glory and immortality (**Romans 8:11–25; 1 Corinthians 15:40–44; 51–57**). In **Romans 8:28–30**, Paul describes the progressive parts of our salvation, ending by saying, “those whom he justified he also glorified” (v. 30). Glorification for those in Paul's day and for us is a future event, yet Paul uses the past tense. He does so to stress the surety of our hope, speaking as if it has already happened because it is guaranteed to come about according to God's sovereign plan and work in our lives. As Paul says elsewhere, “I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 1:6**).

Questions for

REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. Define “Salvation” in your own words. Why do we hold to the exclusivity of Christ (i.e., that Jesus is the only way of salvation)?
2. If someone were to ask you to explain the gospel, what would you say?
3. What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work can you see in your life since you became a Christian?
4. In what ways can the past, present and future aspects of your salvation encourage you in your daily living?
5. For whose salvation are you currently praying? In what ways are you enabling others to hear about God’s salvation? Read the “Window Into Park Street: Missions” on the next page. Pray for God to guide you in your involvement in missions.

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Missions

World missions has been a notable characteristic of Park Street Church since it was founded in 1809. In the last sixty years alone, we have sent out over 300 full-time missionaries. Approximately 40% of our budget goes toward Missions. (Please note: donations to Missions must be so designated on your envelope; otherwise, they default to the Ministry and Operations budget.)

In 1997, we instituted a **Full Support Policy** for our **Career Missionaries**. Our desire is for our missionaries to be fully connected to the church, so that their furloughs can be spent building relationships with us and receiving the encouragement and rest they need for long-term service.

Our missionaries also include **Mid-Term Missionaries** (~5 years of service), **Global Professionals** (doing workplace ministry in different parts of the world), as well as folks who serve on **Short-Term Missions**.

Barnabas Groups are prayer and support teams for our career missionaries. They connect our missionaries to the congregation and help care for those we send.

MISSIONS QUIZ

- *How many full-support missionaries can you name?*
- *Can you name any of the children of the missionaries we support? (For answers, ask your teacher.)*
- *Consider “adopting” one PSC missionary and committing to get to know and pray for him/her.*

The **Woman’s Benevolent Society (WBS)** is the church’s longest running ministry. Primarily a missionary support fellowship, WBS has been helping the poor, supporting the church and raising funds for missions since 1809.

Missions also happens locally. The **Thursday Night Outreach** team brings food and Christ-centered hope and love to those who spend most of their time on the Boston Common.

Other church-based, local missions opportunities include friendship ministry to international students, outreach ministries to undergraduates, graduate students, medical students or professionals, and serving on a missions committee. The most important ministry, of course, is done through **PRAYER**. The **Philippian Prayer Ministry** meets monthly on Sundays to partner in prayer with our missionaries.

Class Four

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we saw with the Trinity, God reveals the person of the Holy Spirit progressively throughout Scripture. Wherever he appears, *the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God*. The temple is the place where God dwells and shows forth his glory. The very first “temple” created was the universe, and so the Holy Spirit first appeared at Creation. When the Spirit hovered over the waters (**Genesis 1:2**), he was creating a natural revelation of the supernatural glory of heaven. Heaven and earth were established as a holy palace, or a macrocosmic royal residence, of the Creator King. This is why the Psalmist tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God (**Psalms 19**), and God says, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool” (**Isaiah 66:1**). After creating the universe as his macrocosmic “temple,” God created the Garden of Eden as a microcosmic “temple,” and it was the focal point of God’s presence among people until the Fall.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

During the ministry of Moses the people of God built the tabernacle and the Holy Spirit came and filled this temple of God (**Exodus 40:34–35**), showing that this was the place where God

We believe the Holy Spirit has led us to repent of all our sins, and to turn from them, and to obey Christ where He says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

dwelled and showed forth his glory. During the reign of Solomon a stationary temple was built, and the Spirit of God came and filled the temple in the same way (**2 Chronicles 5:11–6:2; 7:1–3**). When Israel was exiled for continually breaking God’s law, Solomon’s temple was destroyed. The prophets looked forward to the restoration of God’s people along with a promise of a magnificent temple where the Spirit would come to dwell in an unprecedented way (**Ezekiel 39:27–29; 43:1–9**), and would be poured into the hearts of all God’s people (**Ezekiel 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29**). But when some exiles finally returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt

the temple, the Spirit did not inhabit it as before.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The incarnation brought the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope. At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended to earth for the first time since before the exile, because Jesus was the temple of God *par excellence* (**Mark 1:9–11**). The gospel of John tells us that Jesus dwelled, or literally “tabernacled” among us and embodied the glory of God (**John 1:14; see also 2:19**). Jesus was the “place” where God dwelled and showed forth his glory; the One in whom God dwelled among his people in a new way. After his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus poured out the Spirit upon his followers, fulfilling the promise of the prophets that God

would pour out his Spirit in an unprecedented way upon his people (**Acts 2:1–21**). Just as the Holy Spirit inhabited the temple of God in the Old Testament, he now inhabits the people of God to show that this is the place he dwells and shows forth his glory. This is the creation of the Church: we, both individually and corporately, are the temple of God and the dwelling place of his Spirit (**Ephesians 2:19–22**; **1 Corinthians 6:19–20**).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION

Since the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God, and since we are that temple, the Spirit is the primary mover throughout the process of our salvation. The Holy Spirit regenerates believers so that we may turn from our sin, exercise faith in Christ and receive the gift of salvation (**John 3:5–8**; **Titus 3:5–7**). Because the temple of God is a holy place, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us throughout our lives, making us holy (**2 Corinthians 3:18**; **2 Thesalonians 2:13**). In order to do this, he leads us into truth, illuminating our minds and hearts to understand God’s Word (**John 14:26**; **1 John 2:20, 27**; **Ephesians 1:17–18**); and he produces obedience in us (**1 Peter 1:1–2**).

The Holy Spirit is also the primary mover in creating, inhabiting and building up the corporate temple of God, the Church (**Ephesians 2:21–22**). He works to bring about unity in the Church among the individual “pillars” of the “temple” through the manifestation of fruit and gifts.

The fruit of the Spirit

Since all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (**Romans 8:9–10**), all Christians will inevitably bear his fruit. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in the context of the freedom we have in Christ, freedom that is meant for serving one another in love rather than indulging in sin (**Galatians 5:13–18**). The acts of the sinful nature have to do with broken relationships and disunity in the body of Christ (vv. 19–22), and these acts are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. This means that the fruit of the Spirit does not refer to subjective characteristics (like “inner peace”), but to attitudes and actions that build relationships and unity in the Church (like “peace with my neighbor”), vv. 23–26. The extent of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will be most evident in the way we treat our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

The gifts of the Spirit

All Christians will also manifest the gifts of the Spirit, though in varying ways. The Greek word *charisma*, “gift,” is related to the word *charis*, grace. The gifts of the Spirit are concrete expressions of the grace of God to the Church. Paul speaks of the “gifts” synonymously with “service/ministries” and “effects/working” (**1 Corinthians 12:4–11**). Thus, it seems that a “gift” of the Spirit does not have to do as much with a personal ability, as with the outworking of a ministry, or an expression of grace. In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are something we *manifest*, not something we *possess*. We manifest the gifts of the Spirit as we carry out ministry and service within the body of Christ. For instance, a person practices the gift of hospitality whenever he welcomes someone into his home, whether or not he has a natural ability or inclination to be a host.

Our position at Park Street Church is that any debate about charismatic gifts is not an issue to divide over, and so diverse views are represented in our congregation. However, the teaching staff at PSC disagrees somewhat with the Charismatic understanding of certain gifts

(particularly tongues and prophecy), and rejects the frequent implication that tongues are a necessary or expected initial evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” It is easy to feel in a large church that your presence and participation are irrelevant, but Scripture teaches that each believer has been given a spiritual gift to be used for the common good. Your presence and ministry in and through the church is therefore vital to our ability to be the living temple of God.

Questions for **REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION**

1. How is your understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit enhanced as you consider the progressive revelation of him through the Old and New Testaments?
2. How does the Holy Spirit’s work to convict us of sin and draw us to Christ relate to his primary work of creating and inhabiting God’s temple?
3. As you consider your relationships with others in the body of Christ, where do you see the most room for growth in your bearing the fruit of the Spirit?
4. How have you seen the Holy Spirit manifested in your life?
5. How can you develop your spiritual gifts at Park Street Church? Read the “Window Into Park Street: Worship, Arts, Prayer & Care” on the next page for some additional ideas.

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Worship, Arts, Prayer & Care

WORSHIP AND ARTS

We have the command and privilege to “Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs” (Psa 100:2). If you enjoy singing, the **Sanctuary choir** and the **Sunday night band** are always looking for new members, as are the **Cherub choir** (3-6 year olds) and **Children’s choir** (1st-5th graders).

If you prefer to be more behind the scenes, the **Media Ministry** participates in the worship services by controlling sound, recording radio broadcasts and showing videos. They also sell CDs after services, upload mp3 files, and create podcasts. The Video Ministry videos to proclaim the gospel in a powerful, multi-sensory format.

The Bible opens with an account of God creating. One of the ways God created us in his image is by making us creative. **Park Street Arts** aspires to make Park Street Church a quality center for artistic activities that engage, awaken and challenge the church and society to a higher calling in God. Artists can connect with other creative writers, dancers, or theatre enthusiasts through various groups.

PRAYER AND CARE

We are the body of Christ, and “its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Cor 12:25-26). We are called to carry each other’s burdens (cf. Gal 6:2), and we strive to do this through many venues, including small groups. Prayer is always available after every worship service, and various groups meet regularly to pray for known needs. The pastoral staff also offers short-term counseling from a Christian worldview for individuals, premarital and couples. The lay-led **Stewardship Ministry** counsels for financial decisions, situations or budgets through classes and workshops. Additionally, **Deacons Funds** are available for members who face a financial emergency.

Wings provides prayer and practical help to those in need. Volunteer as an individual or small group to be part of a team to respond to specific needs during a crisis, to visit someone chronically ill or homebound, or join the **Prayer Team**.

Enable Boston is the church’s ministry to and with children and adults with disabilities. Volunteer once a month to enable individuals with disabilities to more fully participate in the life of the church.

Class Five

THE CHURCH

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

As we observed in our study of the Holy Spirit, God creates his Church by pouring out his Spirit to inhabit his people, both individually and corporately (Acts 2). By the working of the Spirit,

We cheerfully submit ourselves to the instruction and government of this church, and we promise to promote its purity, peace, and welfare by all means within our power, so long as we shall continue to be members.

the Church is the body of Christ, made up of individuals who serve one another through diverse gifts and ministries with a view to being built up in unity & love (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:11–16). Therefore, to be a Christian is to be in an interdependent relationship with other Christians, reflecting the interdependent relationship of the members of the Trinity. We might say that there are two things that one cannot be alone: married, or a Christian. God has designed it so that we need one another in order to hold unswervingly to our faith, to be encouraged in bearing the fruit and gifts of the Spirit and to have our needs provided for. Because

Christians need other Christians to be the Church that God intends, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers not to give up their habit of regularly meeting together (Hebrews 10:23–25).

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament teaches that the Church is made up of all who profess faith in Christ, no matter what nationality, gender, or station in life, for the only boundary-marker of the people of God in the New Covenant is the presence of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11–22; Galatians 3:26–29). We reflect this truth when we say in the Apostle’s Creed on communion Sundays: “I believe in...the holy catholic church.” The word “catholic” (lower-case “c”) does not refer to the Roman Catholic (capital “C”) Church, but means “universal.” So, when we say that “we believe in the holy catholic church,” we affirm that we believe in the universal community of believers; that is, we believe that the church is not something man-made or bound by artificial barriers, or that can be solely claimed by one certain group or type of people. We also affirm that those who are part of the “catholic” church believe the same truth and share the same mission in the world.

PARK STREET CHURCH IS *PROTESTANT*

Even though all Christians are part of one universal church, the church has divided into different groups and denominations according to particular theological and organizational beliefs over the centuries. One major division took place in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation. We get the word “Protestant” from the *Protestio* of the reformers at the Diet of Speier in 1529 regarding the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The word means “to witness forth”

(*pro* = “forth”, *testio* = “witness”), not “protest”. The first Protestants viewed themselves as those who “witnessed forth” to the truth of Scripture and the beliefs of the early church. The Reformers declared the following five principles to recover the gospel:

- (1) ***Sola Scriptura***: *Scripture alone* is the inerrant and sufficient authority for the Christian and the Church (as opposed to tradition)
- (2) ***Sola Gratia***: God bestows salvation to us by his *grace alone* (as opposed to the idea that we have some abilities or natural endowments to work out our salvation)
- (3) ***Sola Fide***: We receive salvation through *faith alone* (as opposed to works)
- (4) ***Solus Christus***: *Christ alone* accomplishes salvation for the people of God through his substitutionary atonement (as opposed to the mediation of the Church)
- (5) ***Soli Deo Gloria***: *To God alone be the glory*: Salvation is from God alone and has been accomplished for us solely by God.

Park Street Church is a Protestant church identifying with these five reformation principles.

PARK STREET CHURCH IS EVANGELICAL

As early as the 17th c. and up to this day, liberalism and modernism have affected the Protestant Church so that many congregations no longer adhere to the principles set forth by the leaders of the Reformation. In our day, Fundamentalism was born out of a desire to recover biblical truth and was a major emphasis between World War I and World War II. The movement got its name from 12 booklets published from 1910–1915 called *The Fundamentals*, defending the fundamental Christian truths against liberalism and modernism. Media and culture watchers assume that we are all Fundamentalists, but this is not the case. After WWII, many conservative Christians were dissatisfied with Fundamentalism because it had become reactionary, militant and anti-intellectual, and as a result modern Evangelicalism emerged (1940’s and 50’s). Billy Graham was the most prominent leader in the modern Evangelical movement. Among other things, he joined with others like Harold J. Ockenga (former minister of PSC) and Carl F. H. Henry to launch *Christianity Today*. Institutions that grew out of this movement include Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Lexington Christian Academy, the National Association of Evangelicals, and World Relief.

Beliefs essential to Evangelicalism are the centrality and exclusivity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. Fundamentalism holds these two beliefs as well; however, Evangelicalism may be distinguished from Fundamentalism by the following five concerns: (1) to do greater justice to the social implications of the Gospel without compromising the priority of the message of eternal salvation (**Micah 6:8; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 John 3:17**); (2) to avoid moralistic legalism (extra-biblical lists of do’s and don’ts), without neglecting to promote true holiness and Christ-like wholeness of character in the life of the believer (**Galatians 2:4; 5:1–26; Colossians 2:16–23**); (3) to avoid anti-intellectualism, which at times has characterized Fundamentalism (**Matthew 22:37; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 3:15**); (4) not to be literalistic with the biblical text, since the types of literature found in the Bible

indicate various reading strategies; and (5) to “major on majors” and so not isolate ourselves from fellow Christians with whom we may not entirely agree (1 John 4:19).

PARK STREET CHURCH IS CONGREGATIONAL

Besides being Protestant and Evangelical, Park Street is also Congregational. While Protestantism and Evangelicalism primarily reflect theological distinctions, Congregationalism primarily reflects organizational distinctions. The Congregational church in America has its roots in the time the Mayflower landed on the shores of this country, carrying those who desired to separate from the Church of England. A group of Puritan settlers in Salem, MA was defined as a denomination in 1646 with the drawing up of the Cambridge Platform. The convictions reflected in that document and that remain the bedrock of congregationalism today may be summarized in the words of Manfred Waldemar Kohl in *Congregationalism in America*:

Christ and Christ alone, was to be the power in the Church, the ruler of each congregation; the church was to be made up of the individual Christians in a given geographical place gathered together by Christ through their common love for Him; the Bible was the only authority needed for the testing of the faith of the church and for the common discipline of its life; the Covenant relationship — the relationship of men [and women] bound together not by law, but freely in the mutual agreement of love — was made the heart of the Congregational Way; ministers were to be elected, ordained, and installed by the members of the church themselves through the power vested in it by Christ... officers of the church were to be elected by its members, and each individual Christian was considered a member only of a local church and subject to censure and discipline only by that local church; Christians and their churches should regard it as their obligation to love, pray for, and fellowship with churches of Christ everywhere; the Lord’s Supper was to be freely offered to all Christians who love the Lord Jesus and are trying sincerely to live the life of Christian faith, even though they may be of a different persuasion.

Even though we hold to the autonomy of the local church, we do not believe that local congregations are to be independent of one another; rather, they are to maintain relationships with each other for strength and accountability. For this reason, Park Street Church is a member of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (www.cccusa.com), founded in 1949. The 4 C’s is a fellowship of congregational churches that are joined together for counsel, support and fellowship without imposing ecclesiastical authority.

COVENANT OF FAITH AND GOVERNMENT

Park Street Church definitely believes that congregationalism is not the only valid form of church government allowed by Scripture. Nevertheless, it is the organizational structure upon which we are founded. Therefore, in becoming a member of our church, you will be asked to commit to the church's covenant of faith and government. This commitment does not require that you be a congregationalist for the rest of your life; rather, it affirms that while you are here at Park Street Church, you will abide by its congregational structure.

ARTICLE II: COVENANT OF FAITH AND GOVERNMENT

WE PROFESS our decided attachment to that system of the Christian religion which is designated evangelical and includes the following professions:

WE BELIEVE that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

WE BELIEVE that there is one and but one living and true God, subsisting in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; that this triune God created all, upholds all, and governs all.

WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and that through His life, death, and resurrection an atonement was made for sin and redemption was provided for all people.

WE BELIEVE that repentance for sin and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior is the one and only way whereby sinners can inherit eternal life.

WE BELIEVE the Holy Spirit regenerates the soul of the believer and brings people into saved relations with God, and that He is the Comforter and Guide of all who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

WE BELIEVE in what is termed "The Apostles' Creed" as embodying fundamental facts of Christian faith.

WE COVENANT to continue the same ecclesiastical and legal entity created on February 27, 1809, incorporated by Chapter 252 of the Special Acts of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on April 13, 1916, as amended, and to continue in the congregational form of church government then adopted and provided in Bylaws duly adopted by the congregation.

THE STRUCTURE OF PARK STREET CHURCH

Congregationalism is based on the belief that Christ has vested the authority of the church in the members of the local body, rather than in a hierarchy of professionals or bishops (**Matthew 18:15–20**). God has given each local body a plurality of leaders to serve, teach, direct and be examples (**1 Timothy 3**; **2 Timothy 2:2**). Because of this, membership is very important. It is the members of Park Street Church who lead in ministry, who are responsible to elect elders to represent them, who exercise and receive church discipline and who even own the buildings. The overall structure of the church could be illustrated as follows:



The role of elders and deacons

Elders are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the church and its members, and have general oversight of all aspects of the church and its ministries. The *nominating committee* helps discern potential elders, and the members elect the elders to represent them. *Deacons* are responsible for leading the various ministries of the church and assist elders in providing care & connection for churchgoers.

WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Regarding the issue of whether women may serve as elders, three positions are represented at PSC: (1) complementarian (male headship in marriage & in church); (2) egalitarian (equality of roles for men & women in marriage & in church); (3) midpoint position (male headship in marriage; equality of roles for men & women in the church). The teaching staff of PSC holds the midpoint position (see “Women in Leadership: Notes on the Gender Question and Related Biblical Texts” by G. Hugenberger, on the PSC web site), while a diversity of positions is reflected on board of elders. We do not believe this is an issue to divide over, which is demonstrated by the fact that we have had men who hold the complementarian position serving on our board of elders alongside men and women who hold egalitarian and midpoint positions.

Questions for

REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. If someone were to approach you and say, “I can be a perfectly good Christian and not go to church,” how would you answer?
2. What does it mean to “be the Church”? How have you experienced this at PSC; or, in what ways would you hope to experience this at PSC?
3. In your own words, explain what it means to be Protestant? to be Evangelical? to be Congregational? Can you whole-heartedly identify yourself with each group? Why or why not?
4. How do we decide which issues are worth dividing over (i.e., breaking fellowship over) and which are not?
5. Have you met any of the elders of the church? You can find a list of them on www.parkstreet.org/leaders, and pray for them.
6. Make sure to read the “Window Into Park Street: For Members Only” on the next page and consider what ways God may have you serve now or in the future.”

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET
For Members Only

There are several service opportunities that are available only to members. These committees or positions require people who are committed to Christ and His church gathered at Park Street Church.

The **Board of Elders** consist of 12 individuals who are elected by and responsible to the congregation. They serve on three-year terms and oversee the spiritual welfare of the church and its members. They have general oversight of all aspects of the church and its ministries, are called to prayerfully seek and help implement God's will the church, to keep the church's vision before the congregation, and to deal with such church business as cannot be delegated.

Deacons are chosen by elders, ministers or other lay leaders to lead particular ministries of the church. Their appointment is confirmed by elders, and they are responsible both to the ministries they lead as well as to the Board of Elders.

The **Church Officers** include: **Moderator** (an elder), **Moderator-elect** (also an elder), **Clerk**, **Treasurer**, **Treasurer of Missions**, and **Assistant Treasurer**. All these are elected by the congregation and serve one-year terms that are renewable. **Elections take place annually.**

The **church by-laws** also describe four committees with by-law responsibilities. Their membership is open only to members:

- **Membership Committee** manages the New Members Classes. Members facilitate new members classes and listen to each candidate's testimony.
- **Missions Committee** oversees the missionary programs and budget of the church, including global, short-term, mid-term, and full-support missionaries.
- **Finance & Administration Committee** takes care of all the financial investments and expenditures for the ministry, operations, and facilities of the church.
- **Nominating Committee** of 12 members serving three-year terms has the important task of nominating members for the positions of elder and church offices. This entails prayerful discernment and meeting with potential candidates.

Additionally, only members are allowed to serve communion.

Finally, only active members of legal age are allowed to vote for the elders, officers, nominating committee, budgets, and other business items at the annual meeting in February.

Class Six

THE SACRAMENTS

WHAT IS A “SACRAMENT”?

The word *Sacramentum* was first used by Cicero and other 1st century Romans to represent the oath of allegiance soldiers would make to the emperor. Tertullian, a 2nd century Christian, adopted the term to signify the means by which Christians swear allegiance to God and Christ, the Captain of the army of God. A “sacrament” could be defined as a sign and seal of the righteousness we have by faith in our covenant relationship with God (**Romans 4:11**). We consider a sacrament to be a visible sign of an invisible grace; that is, it is a visual aid of the grace we have received through Christ. At Park Street Church, we recognize two sacraments (as do most Protestant churches): baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both sacraments were instituted by Jesus (**Matthew 28:18-20**; **Luke 22:14-20**), and are specifically for the covenant community of faith. This is why we do not consider rites like marriage to be a sacrament (as important as it is): marriage is a social institution created by God and is for those both within and without the covenant community.

OT PARALLELS TO BAPTISM AND THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Old Testament correspondence to the sacrament of baptism is circumcision (**Genesis 17:9-14**; **23-27**), and the correspondence to the Lord’s Supper is the Passover Meal (**Exodus 12:1-27**). Circumcision was given as the sign of initiation into the Old Covenant community, while the regular observance of the Passover Meal was to signify a continual renewal of the covenant. In the same way, baptism is the sign of initiation into the New Covenant community (**Matthew 28:19**; **Galatians 3:26-29**), while the Lord’s Supper signifies the regular remembrance and renewal of our covenant with God and each other (**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**). Thus, baptism and the Lord’s Supper go hand-in-hand: the former as a once-for-all initiation into the covenant community and the latter as the continual renewal of the covenant. Based upon this understanding, the PSC minister who administers the Lord’s Supper to the congregation invites only those who are baptized believers to participate.

THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM

It is important to understand the symbolism of baptism in order to grasp its significance. The New Testament tells us that the washing with water symbolizes the washing away of our sin (**Acts 22:16**; **2:38**). Being “under” the water (whether figuratively or literally) symbolizes being dead and buried with Christ (**Romans 6:3-7**; **Colossians 2:11-12**); only when we identify with Christ in his death and burial can we share in a spiritual resurrection to newness of life that will be followed one day with our physical resurrection.

Even more significant than this is the symbolism of the water itself. In the Old Testament, water often symbolized the judgment of God. For example, at the flood most of humankind was consumed by the waters of God's judgment while Noah and his family passed through; at the crossing of the Red Sea the Egyptians were consumed by the waters of God's judgment while the Israelites passed through. Neither Noah and his family nor the Israelites were any less sinful or deserving of God's judgment than those who were consumed by God's wrath; rather, God showed great mercy to them and saved them by his grace. In **1 Peter 3:20–22**, Peter calls the flood a baptism and compares it to the baptism we experience in the Christian community. The water poured out in baptism symbolizes the fact that a person is rightly under the judgment of God and only God by his mercy and grace can bring him through that judgment and save him. This salvation, of course, is through faith in Christ, who is our "ark."

VIEWS OF BAPTISM AT PARK STREET CHURCH

Two views regarding the proper recipients of baptism are represented within evangelicalism and at Park Street Church. Adherents of the Baptist position ("believer baptism") hold that initiation into the covenant community is only for those who profess faith. The main biblical support for this position is that throughout the New Testament confession of faith and baptism are closely associated (**Matthew 28:19–20**). The most common Reformed position ("infant baptism" + "believer baptism" of adults who come to faith who were not baptized as infants by believing parents) is that children of believing parents are to be initiated into the covenant community. The main biblical support for this position is the correspondence of baptism with circumcision. As circumcision was the sign and symbol of Israel's covenant relationship with God, baptism is the sign and symbol of the Church's covenant relationship with God. Just as believing parents of the Old Covenant applied the sign of circumcision to their sons, so believing parents of the New Covenant participate in the same responsibility and blessing as they apply the sign of baptism to their children. (**Genesis 17:11–12; Colossians 2:11–12**). The New Testament also teaches the principle of family solidarity, by which whole households were baptized upon the profession of faith of the parents (e.g., **Acts 11:13–14**; see also **1 Corinthians 7:14**). Like circumcision in the old covenant, baptism in the new covenant is not considered to be salvific. Through baptism infants are welcomed into the covenant community to receive all the benefits of being part of it: the faithful nurture of Christian parents, the prayers and influence of family, friends and teachers, the involvement in worship services and children's programs where they will hear God's truth. The belief is that God uses the benefits of this participation in the community of faith to bring little ones to know him so that they might make a profession of faith when they are older, and so fulfill the intent of their baptism.

Most of the teaching staff of PSC hold to infant baptism; however, we do not believe that baptism is an issue to divide over (i.e., break fellowship over), and so our practice at Park Street Church is to perform both infant baptisms and infant dedications depending on the convictions of the parents, as well as baptisms of those who profess faith as adults who had not been baptized as infants by believing parents. At the end of the day, those who choose to baptize their babies and those who choose to dedicate them would agree on the kind of spiritual nurture their children should be given.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an act of worship and a ceremonial meal in which we remember and renew our covenant relationship with God (vertical aspect) and with our brothers and sisters in Christ (horizontal aspect). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Feast of the Unleavened Bread on the day the Passover Lamb was to be sacrificed (**Matthew 26:17–30; Exodus 12:14–20**), signifying that he himself would be the true Passover lamb: as the Passover celebration was to remind Israelites of their redemption from Egypt, so the Lord's supper is to remind us of our redemption from death and forgiveness of sin (**1 Corinthians 11:23–26**).

This covenant meal is our regular renewal of faith, or our regular recommitment to the Lord, which is why we examine our hearts before partaking of it. We often hear people speak of “recommitting their lives to the Lord”; we should keep in mind that this is what we do every time we take the Lord's Supper. Regarding the renewal of our covenant relationship with each other, sharing together in the Lord's Supper signifies the commitment we have to one another in the body of Christ. We must admit that there is nothing in the Bible that speaks about becoming a “member” of a church, or going through a “membership” process. What the Bible does speak about is forming a committed bond with each other through sharing together in this covenant meal (**Acts 2:41–47**). Thus, when you become a member of Park Street Church you will be making “official” what you have already proclaimed by regularly participating at the communion table with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Questions for

REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. What is the symbolism of baptism and why is it important to know?
2. Why do we not divide over when and how to baptize?
3. What is the symbolism of the Lord's Supper and why is it important to know?
4. In what ways can you deepen your experience of the Lord's Supper as you reflect on its meaning and significance?
5. As this class nears its end, spend some time looking over the different ministries of the church. Read the "Window Into Park Street: Hospitality" on the next page. Pray about how you may want to get more involved in the church, if you are not already connected.

WINDOW INTO PARK STREET

Hospitality

The author of Hebrews enjoins us, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2). Because Park Street is such a large and ever-changing church, it is important that we intentionally focus on hospitality. It is too easy for someone to get lost at our church, and so it is our duty and privilege to actively seek to welcome people.

Sometimes it takes a little discipline to show hospitality. Commit once a month in these capacities to help you remember to reach out to strangers:

- **Greeters** before each service to welcome people with a friendly smile.
- **Ushers** at each service to hand out bulletins and collect the offering
- **PSC Connect volunteers** for each service to answer questions about how to get connected (training provided).
- **Prayer Team members** to pray for others after the worship service.
- **Coffee Hour volunteers** to help set up and serve coffee after the 8:30 AM or 4 PM services.
- **Friendship partners** to spend some time with an international student.

Think too about other ways to welcome folks: Host a small group in your home, or host a one-time neighborhood gathering, or prayer meal during missions conference. Serve as a host at a Women’s Ministry event or other large group event.

Finally, remember that communion is the covenant meal we share with our church family. We encourage you to use Communion Sunday to invite folks to your home or out to lunch or dinner.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Want to love people, but don’t want to be up front? There are plenty of other ways to serve and build up the church. Here are a few ideas:

- Administrative help for the church office or a specific ministry, like small groups or Family Ministries.
- Planning Teams for Women’s Ministries Fall Brunch, Spring Retreats or other events; Family Camp, Kidsweek, Kid’s Art Festival; Small Group Retreat, etc.
- Set up or take down tables and chairs for Park Street International Fellowship or Sunday Night Band.
- Bake for Coffee Hour or provide a meal for someone in need.
- Run PowerPoint on Sunday nights or sound in any service.

Class Seven

VISION & MINISTRIES OF PARK STREET CHURCH

PSC VISION

Park Street Church wants to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, and we model ourselves after the early church described in the Book of Acts. In Acts 2:41–47, we read about the activities and commitments of the first Christians. First, these Christians were committed to the Apostles’ teaching as the foundation for their unity (v. 42). Second, they were committed to corporate worship as an expression of their unity, as they met together regularly to break bread (the Lord’s Supper), pray and praise God (vv. 42, 46). Third, they had a desire to be together in close fellowship, which is how their oneness and love was developed (vv. 44, 46–47). Fourth, they had a deep desire to meet each other’s needs, displaying their love for and interdependence upon one another (vs. 45). We can follow in the footsteps of these early Christians by being thoroughly grounded in God’s Word (where the Apostles’ teaching is preserved for us); being committed to corporate worship; longing to be together and gather regularly in one another’s homes; and becoming more interdependent upon one another and seeking to meet each other’s needs. As we practice and display this kind of unity and love, we hope that our story will be that of the early church: “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (vs. 47).

We are proud of the long history of our church and how we have faithfully proclaimed the gospel of grace for over two hundred years. However, we are always seeking to grow and improve. Currently, the church leadership has identified a list of five critical goals and one overarching methodological goal for our church during this season of our development.

Overarching Methodological Goal: To prepare God’s people for the work of ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up (**Ephesians 4**).

Critical goals

- (1) **Evangelism** is the individual and corporate sharing/witnessing of the good news of Jesus Christ under the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Opportunities for evangelism are provided through worship, friendship, service, acts of kindness, etc., but evangelism itself is the actual sharing of the good news (**Romans 10:12–15**).
- (2) **Corporate Worship** is basking in the presence of the triune God and praising/adoring Him for who He is, what He has done, and for what He has promised to do. Corporate worship is more than just singing songs; it is glorifying God with the best that our minds, arts and labors have to offer, and feeds a lifestyle of giving our very best to do all things to the glory of God (**Romans 12:1–2, 1 Corinthians 10:31**).

- (3) **Personal Devotion** is the private expression of worship through devotion and includes scripture reading/meditation/memory, journaling, spiritual disciplines, prayer, singing praise songs/hymns, etc. Personal devotion is essential for spiritual health and is necessary for equipping the Body of Christ in interpreting, appropriating and apply the Word of God, loving God and loving one another (**Psalm 1:2, 1 Timothy 4:6–8, Hebrews 5:11–14**).
- (4) **Community** in the biblical sense is the redeemed people of God coming together as the Body of Christ. It is people of all walks of life, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, genders, etc. seeking God together, loving one another, building each other up through the gifts of the Spirit, and displaying the goodness of God to the world (**John 13:34–35, 17, Acts 2:41–47**).
- (5) **Vocational Excellence** is the people of God doing everything to the glory of God where He has put them, whether in marriage, as parents, students, employees, or even in a particular geographic location. Vocational excellence is an act of worship as the people of God seek to honor God and to draw attention to Him as channels of His grace to others, in whatever situation He has chosen to place them (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

Additionally, one of the ways that we are expressing this vision is as a commitment to the whole gospel for the whole person, to impact the whole city and reach the whole world.

SMALL GROUPS MINISTRY

It is a challenge to strive for unity and love in a large church like ours, but if the early church could do it (they numbered over 3,000!), then so can we. They accomplished it by meeting together in smaller numbers in each other's homes. The **Small Groups Ministry** is crucial to our church, because we cannot hope to reflect the kind of unity and love we ought by simply coming and going to the worship services. Small Groups provide a context for people to care for and be cared for, to serve and be served, and to grow as disciples of Christ. The Small Groups Ministry seeks to connect all members to groups that meet either at the church or in homes for Bible study, sharing and prayer. If you are not already part of a small group, we urge you to become involved in one—even if it takes more than one try. Information is available online or through the Small Groups Ministry.

GIVING OF YOUR RESOURCES: TITHES AND OFFERINGS

One way you may give of your resources is through financial gifts. As is the case with all churches, Park Street Church depends upon the faithful giving of the people of God to sustain the work to which we believe Christ has called us. Tithing was established by God to help his people acknowledge his ownership and provision of everything they had (**1 Chronicles 29:14; Malachi 3:6–12**). A tithe was 10% of a person's yearly increase and was set aside as an offering holy to the Lord (**Leviticus 27:30–34; Deuteronomy 14:22–23, 28**). In the New Testament tithing is affirmed by Jesus (**Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42**). Paul speaks about giving in **2 Corinthians 8:1–15** as he describes the example of the Macedonian church. These Christians gave sacrificially even though they were poor because of their trust in God's continued provision for

them (vv. 1–6). Paul encouraged the Corinthian church to follow their example and “excel in the grace of giving” (v. 7). Giving is not to be done under compulsion, but out of the overflow of a thankful heart for all God has done for us, and according to our means (vv. 8–15). Our giving is to be the instrument through which God provides for each member in the body of Christ: “at the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need” (v. 14).

PSC budgets and funds

Park Street Church receives tithes and offerings through two separate budgets: The Church Ministries and Operations Budget (60% of the overall budget)—used for the church’s ministries and programs, facilities maintenance, church administration, and personnel. The Missions Budget (40% of the overall budget)—used for missions personnel and outreach programs in Boston—including students, internationals and urban outreach—and around the world.

We also have additional funds for specific needs, such as the building fund. An important fund to know about is the Deacons’ Benevolence Fund, which is used for those in our congregation experiencing financial crisis or emergency need. Keep your eyes and ears out for fellow members in need, and do not hesitate to bring your own financial needs to elders or ministers for access to the Deacons Funds.

Allocating your tithes and offerings

As a member, you will be given an envelope number and envelopes will be sent to your home on a quarterly basis. We encourage you to use these envelopes. PSC will track your giving by your envelope number and mail you a quarterly report. On your envelopes, we encourage you to allocate your gifts amongst the above budgets and funds, as you feel led. For example, a simple way to divide your gifts is per the approved budgets, 60% Ministry & Operations, 40% Missions. All gifts in envelopes that are not allocated, as well as all loose gifts (not in envelopes), automatically go into the Ministry and Operations fund. We recommend the following steps: 1) Pray; 2) Determine what percentage of your income you would like to give to PSC (the Bible does not require that all tithes and offerings go to the local church; and 3) Determine the breakdown of your gifts to the above budgets and funds.

You may also use our website to schedule online giving via electronic check (preferred) or credit card (church must pay fees), or to learn about other ways you can give to the church through stocks or estate planning.

GIVING OF YOUR TIME: OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY

Since we are all ministers to one another, we encourage you to give of your time to your brothers and sisters in Christ so that you may be a means by which the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to our church.

Reread the “Windows Into Park Street” and prayerfully consider what your next steps should be. Just as the wedding ceremony celebrates the beginning of the covenant of marriage, so the membership joining ceremony marks a new phase of unity and involvement in the church.

Questions for

REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. If someone new to PSC were to ask you what our Vision Statement is, what would you say?
2. Do you think we are living up to our Vision at PSC? Why or why not? What room do you see for improvement? How can you be a part of the solution?
3. Why is the Small Groups Ministry so crucial to our church? Are you part of a small group? Why or why not?
4. In what ways can you be a better steward of your time and resources as a member of PSC? If you are not serving in ministry already, in what area of ministry would you be interested in becoming involved?

