

NEW COMMUNITY COVENANT CREATION WEEK #1

Welcome!

Welcome to New Community! Our desire is to see Jesus' grace overflow into a life of faith *together*. Moreover, we desire to see his grace not stop with us but to extend further into our surrounding communities.

To begin our life together, we will spend the first month prayerfully designing and chiseling a covenant. Our God is a covenantal God. And the church is his covenantal community. There is goodness to living out God's covenantal nature in our various relationships—at home, in our marriages, even friendships (David and Jonathan are a beautiful example!), and within the church.

Every New Community will work through a month long study that will guide the covenant defining process. The study will delve into the seven core rhythms and values that define our New Communities.

The covenant defining process will draw on the unique passions, spiritual gifts, and geographic locale of all the members in your New Community. Naturally, therefore, every New Community will have its own unique covenant. For example, the Yonge/Davisville group's New Community covenant will look very different from the Victoria Park/Ellesmere's covenant.

Our Seven New Community Rhythms

In the healthy life of any organization, the organization is driven by a vision, which overflows into values, which overflow into disciplines or rhythms. These rhythmic disciplines help us walk step by step in mission toward the vision becoming reality.

As a review **our church's vision is:**

Overflowing Jesus and his gospel of grace in all its beauty
into a **New Culture**, a **New Community**, a **New City**, and a **New Custodianship**.

By a **New Culture**, we mean that our worldviews—our view of self, others, relationships, work, rest, play, and resources—are all radically shaped anew by Jesus and his gospel.

By a **New Community**, we mean a gathering of like-minded, Spirit-filled souls who pursue living in the gospel's New Culture.

By a **New City**, we mean the overflowing of God's grace from our New Community into our neighbourhoods and beyond in the form of mercy and justice.

A "New Custodianship" might sound new to most of you because we have not published this term ever. But this aspect of our vision has been there "under the hood" from the beginning of our church, especially amongst our leadership. By a **New Custodianship**,

we mean a faithful stewardship of every blessing God has given us—material and spiritual—for the sake of building Jesus’ Kingdom.

Four core values overflow from our church’s vision:

Be Glad. Belong. Be a Blessing. And Be Faithful.

Be Glad! The gospel of grace and our New Culture make us glad! If it doesn’t, then something is off. We have misunderstood the gospel or we have not truly received it.

Belong! The gospel of grace enfolds us into God’s family and we have the deepest sense of belonging in this New Community. Our joy as Christ followers is to extend this sense of belonging to one another. Jesus’ grace based acceptance and camaraderie go a long way to make us whole.

Be a Blessing! The gospel of grace causes us to not sit still. Jesus didn’t just save us “from” something, i.e. our sins. No, he also saved us “for” something—to continue his mission and be his blessing. As we seek to be his blessing, we will see his grace build a New City that manifests his kingdom in the midst of our earthly, beautiful, yet broken city of Toronto.

Be Faithful! As we live out a New Custodianship, we’re reminded that the gospel of grace gifts us to equip us for Christ’s service. Again, Jesus didn’t just save us “from” something. No, he also saved us “for” something—to continue his mission. He will call everyone of us to account about how we used and multiplied what he gave us for his mission.

Seven rhythms and disciplines help us express our values and move toward our vision (notice that each one is an expression of one our core values, which in turn are connected to our church’s vision):

1. Be Faithful and **Covenant**—Each September, each New Community will think through a covenant for the new ministry year.
2. Be Glad and **Eat**—How often will a New Community eat or snack together? How often will a New Community invite and show hospitality to those outside the family?
3. Be Glad and **Enter God’s Story**—How will a New Community deepen in knowledge of Scripture and God’s great gospel story in Scripture? How will a New Community stay sharp in sharing the gospel story? How will a New Community stay connected to each other’s stories of God at work in each other’s lives?
4. Belong and **Listen and Pray**—How will a New Community listen to God and stay attuned to Spirit led and Scripture guided prayer? How will a New Community listen

to one another, stay attuned to needs in each other’s lives, and pray for one another?

5. **Belong and Celebrate**—New Communities will intentionally celebrate each other through the year and communion together on Sundays. How often will your New Community intentionally sit and worship together on a Sunday, especially to receive communion together (don’t worry—we won’t make you create team flags and customized colour coordinated t-shirts!)? How about birthdays? Holidays? Other days?
6. **Be Faithful and ReCreate**—How will a New Community keep each other accountable to sabbath in work, play, and rest? How will a New Community sabbath together (outings, picnics, cottage, retreat, sports)?
7. **Be a Blessing and Be a Blessing** (that’s not a typo!)—How will a New Community identify and serve mercy and justice needs in their community, city, and/or beyond?

We will spend the next few weeks unpacking these rhythms and chiselling what our commitment to these rhythms will look like. But first here’s a summary table of our vision, values, and New Community rhythms:

Our Lifelong Mission	We exist to glorify God as we enjoy, follow, and share Jesus.			
Our Lifelong Vision	Overflowing Jesus’ gospel of grace in all its beauty into...			
Values	A New Culture <i>Be Glad</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture Guided • Christ Uplifting • Spirit Dependent • Grace saturated • Grace overflowing 	A New Community <i>Belong</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full of Grace in Relationships • Full of Truth in Relationships • Motivated to Mature 	A New City <i>Be a Blessing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating the Gospel through Mercy and Justice • Engaging Culture with the Gospel • Synergistic Kingdom Partnerships for a Gospel Movement locally and globally 	A New Custodianship <i>Be Faithful</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steadfastly overflowing God’s covenantal grace • Stewarding in View of Eternity • Vision Driven Budgeting • Transparency
New Community Rhythms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter God’s story • Eat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate • Listen and pray 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a Blessing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ReCreate • Covenant

So let’s dive into our first rhythm: 1. Be Faithful and Covenant.

Be Faithful and Covenant

The rhythm in a nutshell is:

1. Be Faithful and **Covenant**—Every Fall, each New Community will think through a covenant for the new ministry year.

The Biblical Basis for “Be Faithful and Covenant”

Throughout all Scripture, one of the greatest unifying themes is that God is covenantal. Simply put, God being covenantal means that he 1. makes a promise 2. with blessings and curses 3. with his people 4. sealed with a sign 5. and surely keeps the promise.

Let’s put together some puzzle pieces that describe God’s covenantal nature throughout Scripture.

Turn to Genesis 15:1-6, 17-21 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. What is beautiful about God saying to Abram in v. 1, “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield...”? Put differently, whose dependability is in the spotlight here—God’s or Abram’s?
- b. V. 4 says, “And behold, the word of the Lord came to him...” Put differently, the Lord’s promise came to Abram. Why does Scripture put such an emphasis on “the word of the Lord,” on God’s promises? How does God being covenantal depend on his word, his promise?
- c. Look at v. 6. What was Abram’s part in the covenant? How is Abram’s part no different from our part in covenant with God today?

Turn to Exodus 2:23-25 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. In this passage, we see that God “remembered his covenant with Abraham...” Why is this so beautiful, comforting, and reassuring to the child of God?

Turn to Exodus 24:1-11 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. We are still in the Old Testament at this point. In vv. 1-2, what restrictions do we see about God’s relationship with his people? How does this make you feel?
- b. In vv. 3-8, we see God’s attempt to bring his people close to him. What was necessary for God’s people to come close to him (hint: it involves a lot of obedience and blood)? And how was this scene a foreshadow of how God relates to us through Jesus?

- c. In vv. 9-11, we see a glorious and overwhelmingly happy result of God's covenant with his people and the ability for them to draw close to God. Describe what you see, and especially chew on the last phrase, "and ate and drank."

Turn to Psalm 89:20-29 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. Now we see God's covenant begin to come into focus, like a photographer adjusting his lens. This passage is looking forward to Jesus as *the* son of David. What characteristics of God's covenantal nature do you see? Share the strong, comforting, and reassuring words and phrases that you see here.

Turn to Psalm 103:15-19 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. Is this passage encouraging or discouraging for you? Consider this question especially in light of v. 18. Do you consider yourself someone who can keep God's covenant and remember to do all his commandments?

Turn to Jeremiah 31:31-34 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. Jeremiah speaks to the problem we just identified with our inability to keep God's covenant. How does this passage connect the dots of the passages we have looked at so far?
- b. And what hope does Jeremiah give us? What are we to look forward to?

Turn to Luke 22:14-36 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. Now we get to "the big reveal"—the anticipation of all the prophets, the law, and the Psalms. How does Jesus himself bring the theme of covenant full circle?

Turn to Galatians 3:15-29 and read it aloud together. Then discuss the following question(s).

- a. Summarize how Paul describes Jesus as the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham and as the final covenant of grace through faith.
- b. Finally, share how it comforts and gladdens you that you are saved by grace, not by your own righteousness or works.

What Will This Look Like Practically for Our New Community?

Answer the following questions to help paint a clear picture of how you will be faithful, reflect God's covenantal nature, and covenant with each other as a New Community.

- A. What will it look like for us to be covenantal with one another? Put differently, what will it look like to be committed to one another as a reflection of God's new covenant of grace with us in Christ? What does it look like for us to see our New Community as a little reflection of being God's covenantal people?
- B. How will we remember to see each other as broken people covered by Jesus' blood and righteousness? Put differently, what does extending grace to one another look like in our victories and failures, strengths and weaknesses?
- C. How will we graciously extend accountability to one another? Do we give each other permission to call each other out when we need to? To speak truth in love?
- D. What kind of "lead-in" sentences can we use to ensure that we are speaking truth in love to one another when we need to confront?
- E. How will we graciously receive accountability as people secure in Christ's furthest reaching love?
- F. How will we approach the matter of missed meetings? What are the steps we will take to reach out to one another? What steps can we take to ensure that we are doing our best to come alongside a straggler and do everything we can to build up that person, not tear them down?