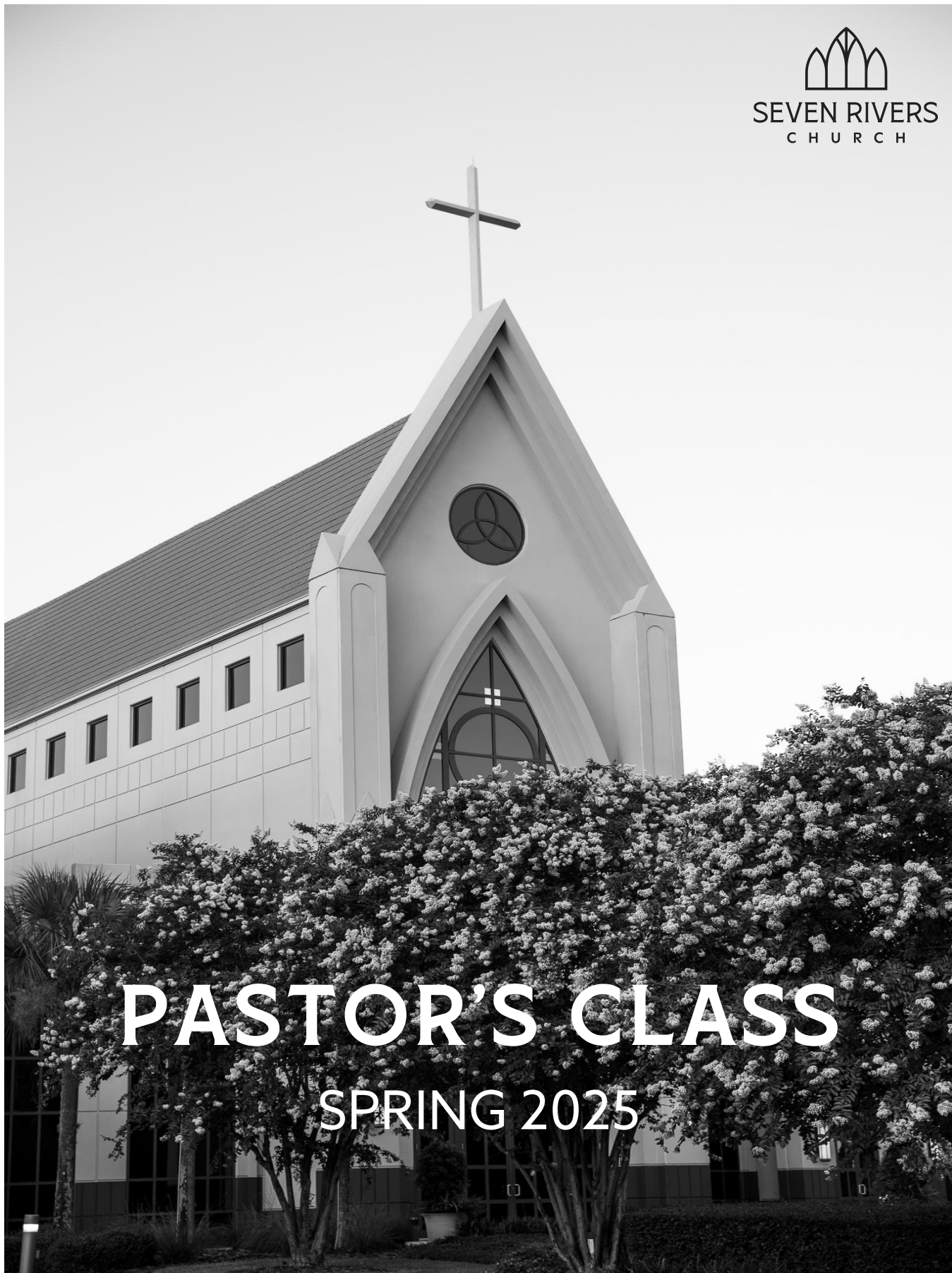




SEVEN RIVERS
CHURCH



PASTOR'S CLASS

SPRING 2025

— SESSION ONE —

First Things First

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

A. OVERVIEW

The Pastor's Class is a must for every person who considers Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church a potential church home. Though completion of the Pastor's Class is a requirement for joining Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church, it is designed with a "no pressure" atmosphere, giving the inquirer an opportunity to look without being asked to "buy." It is very likely that throughout the class some of your specific questions may remain unanswered. If that is the case, we encourage you to feel free to ask any question after the class or contact any of the church staff to find the answers. We believe that God has brought you here for a purpose, and we are dedicated to helping you discover and fulfill that purpose.

SESSION I

"First Things First" The first class includes an introduction and overview of the Pastor's Class. The highlight of this class is discovering together, the stunning Father-love of our God and His pursuit of us, his lost children.

SESSIONS II & III

"The Core Values of SRC" In classes 2 and 3, we will discuss what makes Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church alive and unique. We will begin with the SRC story, a retelling of our unusual founding and growth. We will cover the core values of our church and illustrate how God has built this ministry in a powerful way. These classes should give new hope to everyone, but especially to those who have had disappointing and disillusioning experiences in former churches.

When Section II is complete, you will have gained insight into what makes a church organization healthy and fruitful for God's kingdom.

SESSION IV

"What SRC Believes" If previous classes have revealed why SRC is special, this class will underscore why we are solid. In a survey fashion we will be introduced to the doctrinal beliefs of SRC. It's typical that after this section you will feel very secure in the biblical and historical doctrines which make up the foundation of our ministry. I think you'll be pleased to see the firm conviction with which we hold to biblical essentials and the charity we extend where minor doctrinal differences are held.

SESSION V

"SRC Membership" The last class covers the ministries provided to move each member toward spiritual maturity. The commitment to Christ and His church, expected of every member, is covered in detail. At this point you will not only have made new friends but will find yourself able to make an informed decision about whether SRC is the church to call "home." We hope it will be!

B. SCHEDULE

Apr 23	Session 1	First Things First
Apr 30	Session 2	Core Values - Part I
May 7	Session 3	Core Values - Part II
May 14	Session 4	What SRC Believes
May 21	Session 5	SRC Membership
May 28	Session 6	Next Steps

Other dates for you to note:

June 1	5:00 pm—Meet with interview teams in the Florida Room
June 8	New members join the church publicly
June 15	Baptisms

C. STANDARDS FOR PASTOR'S CLASS COMPLETION

1. Attend all of the Pastor's Class sessions, though it is permitted to **make up two sessions online** ([HTTPS://WWW.SEVENRIVERS.ORG/CLASSES](https://www.sevenrivers.org/classes)). If you will miss more than that, arrangements should be made to complete the sessions during the next Pastor's Class.
2. Do your homework! The following book (available in the back of the classroom tonight) is assigned reading: *Don't Swear In Church (Unless You Mean It)*, by John F. Larroux.
3. Attend worship each weekend during the class. Attending weekend worship is the best way to get to know the people and philosophy of SRC.

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Luke 15:1-3,11-32 Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. And He told them this parable, saying,... A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed

him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found." And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound." But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. But he answered and said to his father, "Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him." And he said to him, "My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is a person who has been restored to the proper relationship with the _____ by the work of our _____ . Becoming a Christian involves the following steps:

STEP 1

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____ .

Christians are people who admit that they are broken. Thus, we are separated from our Father—and the result is a God-shaped vacuum in our souls. We try to fill this vacuum without God...we all run from God.

- 1) **We run by being morally licentious (irreligious)**—we avoid Jesus by attempting to find life on our own.
- 2) **We run by being religious**—we avoid Jesus by producing a righteous life on our own.

Which way has a harder time—admitting separation from the Father. The older brother is more lost because he cannot see his lostness, his hard work and morality have blinded him. It is commonly thought that the Xian message is "become religious and virtuous instead of irreligious and immoral." The Pharisees were deeply religious, but enemies of God. The gospel calls the irreligious and religious to stop "self-salvation" and discover grace. The humble are in; the proud are out.

STEP 2

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____ .

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. *Titus 3:5* He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

- A) There is a way home.** You have a father and you can go home and know his embrace and his smile. You can be right with him. You can know His kiss. How many believe God is angry? How many have never known a father's love?
- B) You can be welcomed home but not by religion,** not by providing your own righteousness, but by grace.

C) Righteousness is not something we give to God, but something he gives to us. Who produced the righteousness we need? The prodigal doesn't pay back his debt. The Father gives him the robe, an unmistakable sign of his restored standing in the family. The Christian stakes his whole eternity not on his life, but upon the life and death of Christ. Through Christ's work, we can be more loved, valued and accepted by God than we would have ever dared to imagine.

STEP 3

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____.

A Christian is a person who has stopped running from God (which the Bible calls repentance) and now runs to him for grace (which the Bible calls faith). They have stopped trying to earn the favor of God and are trusting in Jesus' work for them as their sure ground for acceptance with God.

Yesterday, we met at a huge Starbucks in the University district. As I sat and listened to her story, I fought tears. Basically, she'd been raised an atheist and while in college, decided that there must be a God. At that point, she began to search for Him—literally all over the world. As I listened to her, it was obvious that, although she thought she had been pursuing God, He had been pursuing her.

After her story, I said, "So, why aren't you a Christian?" To which she replied, "Well, I guess I don't have what it takes. I'm afraid I'm not good enough and would not be faithful enough." At that point, I took the liberty of saying, "Jeanie, have you not heard anything I've been saying?"

Her turn to cry.

It literally seemed like a light went on in her eyes, "THAT'S THE POINT, ISN'T IT— I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES AND NEVER WILL—THAT'S WHY I NEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST."

My reply, "Bingo." Although I don't usually ask people to pray in the middle of bustling coffeehouses, I said, "Do you think you ought to tell God that you don't have what it takes and you need the righteousness of Jesus?"

Pregnant silence.

"Right now?" she asked. "It's up to you," I replied. That was it. Right there in Starbucks, Jeanie confessed her brokenness and asked God to give her the righteousness of Christ.

Faith and repentance can be expressed at any time by surrendering your will to Christ. It may be helpful to pray like this:

"Lord Jesus, I am blown away by the notion that you could love me. I admit that I have tried to do life apart from you. I do believe you lived the life of obedience I haven't, and you died as a substitute for me. So now I humbly ask you to forgive my foolishness and love me as your son or daughter. I trust that the righteousness of Christ and not my good works is what makes me delightful to you. I surrender my life to you as my Lord. Thank you for seeking me, finding me and bringing me home to you."

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Purchase *Don't Swear in Church*, by Jean F. Larroux III and read the Preface through page 10.
2. See you in worship this weekend!

Core Values, Part 1

THE SRC STORY

FOUNDATIONAL VALUE

Soli Deo Gloria: A Theocentric Church

Isaiah 6:1-4 “In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’”

The passion of the church is to honor and exalt God and not to please people. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

A. WE ARE COMMITTED TO GOD-CENTERED _____.

Psalm 67:3-4 “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth.”

- Worship is something you attend not principally to get something out of it – instruction, inspiration, hope, etc. Worship is first and foremost for God’s glory, not our good, though nothing does us good like putting our affections on the only one worthy of them. In worship, we are not the audience, God is.
- “Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of the imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose - and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable, and therefore the chief remedy of that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.” *William Temple*
- “I was very thankful that I walked into a church that was different—a church where the otherness of God was sensed immediately. In the music, in the message, and in the mingling afterward, it was clear that God was the guest of honor there, not I. I had suffered the consequences of the modern world’s emphasis on the individual, and I was unbelievably refreshed to discover a place that took the focus off me and put it on Him. He was the one being ‘lifted up for all men to see,’ not the pastor or the ‘praise team.’ He was the difference I longed for, not some carefully orchestrated performance that, believe me, I would have been able to see right through. And I am glad He was not communicated in the distasteful ways, whether musically or otherwise, that I had grown weary of. Whether or not I understood everything the preacher said that morning didn’t matter. I was the recipient of something more powerful than a ‘user-friendly’ service with its ‘seeker-sensitive’ sermon. I was observing the people of God honoring God not as a man-centered show, but by a God-centered atmosphere. It was, quite literally, out of this world!” *Tullian Tchividjian*

B. WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S _____.

2 Tim. 3:16-17 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

C. WE ARE COMMITTED TO A DEVOTED _____.

Deuteronomy 6:5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
Matthew 10:37-38 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."

CORE VALUE #1

Renewing Grace

In a world of brokenness, Seven Rivers seeks to be a place where hearts and homes are healed by the love of God.

HOW DOES GRACE RENEW?

- **WE BELIEVE IN SALVATION BY _____ ALONE.**

Eph. 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

To be a Christian is to confess you have no merit of your own. Grace is unmerited favor. Our reconciliation with God is the work of Christ alone. There are no "good Christian people." *Phil 3:8-9* "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith"

- **WE BELIEVE THAT TO "GET THE GOSPEL" IS TO LIVE IN RELIANCE ON JESUS' _____ FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

Romans 1:16-17 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it a righteousness from God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'but the righteous man shall live by faith.'" *2 Corinthians 5:21* "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

From the Heidelberg Catechism: *How are you righteous before God?*

Answer: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them, and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me, if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.

- **WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOSPEL WILL RESULT IN A REFRESHING PURGING OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND AN HONEST _____ IN THE CHURCH.**

Why are church-goers often the most offensive people? "Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons – much less secure than non-Christians. Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others. When people do not build their lives on their standing in the gospel, they are insecure, guilt-ridden, defensive, quarreling, selfish, inward looking, and afraid."

SRC should be a safe place to fail and a safe place for failures to belong. Staff and officers should be the lead repenters, truly seeing themselves as the “big sinners” in their families and in the church. SRC should reflect a startling authenticity causing even visitors to remark on how “real” we are.

- **WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE BELIEF THAT WE STAND NOW HOLY IN GOD’S SIGHT AND THAT HE
IN US AS HIS OWN CHILDREN.**

Colossians 1:22 “He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”

ASSIGNMENT

1. Read pages 11-18 of *Don’t Swear In Church*.
2. Read Part 1 of the New City Catechism
3. If you haven’t already, read the brochure “How Can I Know God” and pray about your relationship with Christ. Consider making a decision to commit to Christ, if you haven’t already done so.
4. Be sure to be in worship this weekend

Core Values, Part 2

CORE VALUE #2

Redemptive Community

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In a world of disconnection, SRC seeks to be a place of unusual devotion to one another. The end of God’s saving work in Christ is not the rescuing of individuals who remain relatively unconnected. The purpose of His saving work is the formation of a people, a new family over which He presides as Father. Community is the goal of the gospel.

A. REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITY MEANS _____.

Acts 2:46-47 “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

God’s people don’t just worship together—they live, dance, play and eat together. A happy family does life together.

B. REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITY INVOLVES _____.

Acts 2:44-45 “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

We are those who “know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that through his poverty we might become rich.” The gospel will make us particularly giving of our money and our time.

CORE VALUE #3

Relentless Mission

Matthew 4:23 “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

In a world of self-absorption, SRC seeks to bless our world with deeds of compassion, mercy, and grace. What is Jesus’ mission? To usher in the kingdom of God. This is the total transformation of all things until creation is whole and well again. Rev. 21:5 says the One who sits on the throne declares, “I am making all things new.” The kingdom was inaugurated by Jesus in His first coming, but won’t come in all its fullness until His return. In the meantime, it is our mission to bring kingdom blessedness to our broken world. We do not merely have a missionary program—we are a mission.

A. MISSIONAL WITH OUR _____ AND OUR _____.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

We will be a church not just for ourselves, but for our friends who do not believe (a church where we value having friends who do not believe!). A church, which will present the beauty of Jesus in the vernacular. We will eschew “we–them” language—disdainful jokes that mock people of different political persuasions or religious beliefs. We will avoid dismissively talking as if non-believing people are

not present. We will be welcoming and respectful of those who do not share our beliefs and remember what it is like not to believe. We will preach and persuade reflecting a deep acquaintance with the literature, music, media, and culture of our day to show that only in Jesus can true life, hope and meaning be found. **B. MISSIONAL WITH OUR _____.**

Matthew 5:16 *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*

The new community demonstrates the transforming power of the gospel with deeds of compassion, kindness, mercy and grace. Care is shown to prisoners, poor, disabled, sick, unborn, orphaned, addicted and the unemployed. Whenever there is brokenness, we are called to pack the wound with kingdom compassion.

C. MISSIONAL WITH OUR _____.

Genesis 1:27-28 *"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"*

"It is not only prayer that gives God glory, but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, whitewashing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God glory if being in His grace you do it as your calling. To go to communion gives God great glory, but a man with a dung fork in his hand, a woman with a slop pail, give Him glory, too." *Martin Luther*

The primary way we are called to bring the blessing of the kingdom to our community is through our vocation. So whether we are pilots or dancers, real estate agents or engineers, computer programmers or moms, our calling is to press the righteousness of God into our sphere of influence.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Read pages 19-25 in *Don't Swear In Church*.
2. Read Part 2 of the New City Catechism
3. Come enjoy your Father in worship this weekend.



What SRC Believes

Three Key Terms Describe The Belief System OF SRC

I. AT SRC, OUR BELIEFS ARE _____.

We hold to those basic teachings which have been believed by all those churches throughout history that have proclaimed historic Christianity. These teachings have been confessed in the creeds of the church particularly the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.*

Apostles Creed

Three basic teachings of the Christian church:

- 1. The _____ : there is one God, who eternally exists in a communion of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**
- 2. The _____ : the 2nd person of the Holy Trinity—God the Son— became man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human.**
- 3. The _____ : Jesus Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead for the salvation of sinners.**

We are a part of the holy “catholic” church. "Catholic" is a term that recognizes our fundamental unity with all true Christians, and of expressing our longing to see greater unity within the body of Christ.

II. AT SRC, OUR BELIEFS ARE _____.

- **WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS WITHOUT ERROR AND COMPLETELY _____.**

We believe in the historicity of the biblical miracles, of the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, and in the reality of Christ's second coming. We believe the Bible is our ultimate authority for our beliefs and lifestyle. We believe what the Bible says God said—through human agency and without error.

2 Peter 1:20-21 "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2

Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

- **WE BELIEVE GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE OUT OF NOTHING AND MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE.**

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." **Genesis 1:26** "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

(Believing that mankind bears the image of God leads us to believe in the sanctity of human life. Therefore, we oppose the practice of abortion and believe that there are no biblical grounds for abortion. Unborn children, as well as the newborn, the aged and the infirm, have a God-given right to life. We also believe that for those who have had an abortion in the past and are repentant, there is grace and forgiveness from God.)

III. AT SRC, OUR BELIEFS ARE _____.

Our church is part of the Presbyterian Church in America, a denomination which traces its roots to the Protestant Reformation, the ecclesial renewal that took place within the churches of Western Christendom in the Sixteenth Century. The Reformation emphasized the importance of preaching in worship, the sovereignty of God in creation and redemption, salvation by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the centrality of the gospel in the life of the church. As a Reformed Church, we believe that the sacraments of baptism and communion represent God's grace and apply that grace to our lives. As Reformed Christians, we are committed to living out the implications of God's radical grace in every area of our lives, and believe that ALL of life, at home, at work, at play, is to be lived to the glory of God.

A. SALVATION—BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE

1. The Human Condition: Total Inability

Because of the fall, we are more sinful than we could ever imagine (Jeremiah 17:9). In our sinful condition, and without God's saving help, we are spiritually unable to choose to love and obey God (Romans 3:9-20, 8:5-8). **Ephesians 2:1** "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." **Romans 3:23** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

2. The Initiative of the Father

Because of our spiritual deadness and sin, we need our God to pursue us, which he certainly does. Why does he do this? Because, while we are more sinful than we could ever imagine, we are also more loved than we had ever dreamed! By his grace, God takes the initiative in establishing relationship with us, reaches down, captures our heart, and invites us into a love relationship with himself (John 6:37-39, II Thessalonians 2:13-14). **1 John 4:19** "We love, because He first loved us."

3. The Work of the Son

The saving work of Jesus didn't serve to make salvation possible; it actually accomplished the salvation of those who belong to God. **John 15:16** "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

4. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

God sends his Holy Spirit to convince us of our sin and misery, open our eyes to the beauty of Jesus and to capture our hearts with the love and mercy of God. (Ezekiel 36:25-27). (John 6:44-45, Phil. 2:13).

5. The Assurance of the Gospel

He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it (Phil. 1:6). In other words, the One who has captured your heart will never leave you or forsake you. He will never let you go.

John 10:28-29 "And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

B. SACRAMENTS—ARE SIGNS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE

There are two sacraments in which God's people participate. In the Old Testament, they were circumcision and Passover—in the New Testament they are _____ and the _____.

- **We believe in the baptism of _____ and _____.**
Because in all of God's dealings with humanity the children of His followers have always been included in the people of God, Christians believe that their infant children are to be baptized. We do not believe that baptism saves anyone. **Acts 2:38-39** Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."
- **We believe in baptism by _____.**
Baptism in the Bible was done by sprinkling or pouring.
- **We believe in the _____ of Christ in the Lord's Supper.**
We believe that in the Lord's Supper, while no physical changes take place in the bread and wine, Christ is really present through the Spirit, and that those who come in faith are truly blessed and that they spiritually receive Christ's Body and Blood.

C. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- **TYPES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT:**
 1. HIERARCHICAL—CATHOLIC and Methodist
 2. CONGREGATIONAL—Baptist and Bible Churches
 3. REPRESENTATIVE—Reformed and Presbyterian

- **CHURCH OFFICERS**

1. Presbyterian churches are governed by elders, whose primary job is the spiritual oversight of the church
2. PCA churches also ordain _____, whose primary job is to oversee the ministry to the poor and needy, and who also assist the elders in various ways.

- **PCA HISTORY**

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was founded in 1973 by a group of evangelical churches leaving the existing Presbyterian denominations, out of concern that they were abandoning biblical orthodoxy.

D. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

One of the marks of a “true” church is discipline which has as its end the restoration of a sinner. In other words, if a member is involved in some habitual, grievous sin (for example: adultery) and *refuses to repent*, it is the responsibility of the church to intervene with “discipline.” This can take many forms ranging from a simple rebuke to dismissal. However, at any point, if the person repents and desires to be restored, they will be.

The primary process for confronting sin and conducting church discipline is laid out by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17: *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (NASB)*

ASSIGNMENT

1. Read the article that follows on Baptism and Infant Baptism.
2. Read pages 26-41 in *Don’t Swear in Church*.
3. Read Part 3 of the New City Catechism
4. FILL OUT THE MEMBERSHIP PROFILE and bring it to Class 5 if you plan to sign up for a membership interview.
5. Worship this weekend is going to be great; after all, God will be there. Be sure you’re there too!

Baptism and Infant Baptism

Case 1: Biblical Theology

STEP 1: Circumcision was a sign of faith and the blessings of salvation

Romans 4:11 - “Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness he had by faith”. Just as we are sinners saved by grace through believing, Abraham was as well. Does circumcision *save* the individual? NO! It is a sign of faith and salvation. *What did the circumcision accomplish then?* It brought the recipient into a “covenant community”. Abraham believed savingly in Genesis 15, but in Genesis 17 God makes with him a “covenant” (v. 7). Salvation cannot be lost, but a covenant is something Abraham must “keep” (Gen. 19:9: “You must keep my covenant...every male in your house must be circumcised”). A covenant is a *legal accountability relationship*. To be in a covenant is to have God’s name placed on you. (“You shall be my people”. It binds you to a) obey the word of God and b) worship and work with the people of God, those also in covenant with God.

And it was a sign put not only on believers, but also on the children in their household. (Genesis 17:12; Gen. 19:11 - “every male in your house who is eight days old must be circumcised”). Why would the sign of faith and salvation be applied to an infant who had not yet believed? Because circumcision does not save, but it does accomplish this—it brings the children into the covenant. When Abraham placed it on his children, he was binding himself and them to have them brought up obeying God’s law and worshipping and working with God’s people. They had to someday be “circumcised in heart” as he was—they had to get saving faith as well. But the sign of faith and salvation upon them, bringing them into the covenant, was their continual prod and witness to them of their responsibility to grasp God by faith.

Summary of Step #1

What did circumcision signify? *It was the sign of faith and salvation.*

What did circumcision actually accomplish? *It brought the recipient into a covenant community.*

Who received circumcision? *Believers (who had faith and thus were brought into the covenant) and their children (who came into the covenant first and were led to the faith circumcision pointed to).*

STEP 2: Baptism is the sign of faith and salvation in the New Testament

Baptism is the outward sign of inward faith and the blessings of salvation (I Peter 3:21; I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:1-4). Does baptism save us? NO! In Romans 4 Paul refutes the idea that the sign of salvation can save us. It is a sign of faith and salvation. *What does baptism accomplish then?* It brings us into a covenant with God—for we are baptized “into the name” of Christ. Baptism binds us to the church, it is not merely a personal inward testimony, but a commitment to holy living and work with the church. See Acts 2:41 - to be “baptized” was to be “added to their number”. To be baptized is to commit to a holy life (Gal. 3:27). It brought into a legal accountability relationship. It bound you to a) obey the word and b) worship and work with God’s people. *And it was a sign put not only of believers, but also on the children in their household.* Acts 16:15; 33-34, I Cor. 1:16, we see that when a head of household believed in Christ, not only was he (or she) baptized, but also the “whole household”.

Now the word “household” in Greek included children. It would have been a bias bordering on prejudice to assume that every one of the households mentioned in the Bible as being baptized were childless households. Such would have been very abnormal. When a householder placed baptism on children, he was binding himself and them to have them brought up obeying God’s law and worshipping and working with God’s people. They had to someday be “baptized in the Spirit” as he was —they had to get saving faith as well. But the sign of faith and salvation upon them, bringing them into the covenant, was their continual prod and witness to them of their responsibility to grasp God by faith.

Summary of Step #2

What does baptism signify? *It is the sign of faith and salvation.*

What does baptism actually accomplish? *It brings the recipient into a covenant community.*

Who receives baptism? *Believers (who have faith and thus are brought into the covenant) and their children (who come into the covenant first and are led to the faith baptism signifies).*

STEP 3: Circumcision is fulfilled by baptism

That circumcision and baptism both represented the same thing is clear from Col. 2:10-12. There we see that just as baptism represents the death of Christ, which brings us our salvation, circumcision also represented the death of Christ, which brings us our salvation. *Circumcision is fulfilled by baptism.*

Case 2: Principles of Interpretation

1. All Christians admit to the “unique position” of the children of believers.

We hold them accountable to pray and obey the Word and worship in ways we would not hold unbelievers, yet we urge them to believe and may know they are not yet born again. Presbyterians have no trouble understanding their position. They are “covenant children”, accountable by being brought into the covenant, with the covenant sign upon them. We have the Old Testament people of God as an example of this approach. Baptists essentially do the same thing, but without any Biblical or theological framework to account for it.

2. Old Testament principles are binding on the New Testament, unless repealed.

Example: the tithe. The NT does not explicitly command the tithe, yet there are places it appears to assume it (Luke 11:42). Many Christians will argue that, since the tithe is not commanded in the NT, we are not bound to it. Others will argue that, since it is not repealed, we are still bound to it. Every NT teaching has its roots in the OT. This is a difficult issue of Biblical interpretation, and where you “come down” on it will determine your approach to infant baptism. If God would have us cease applying the sign of salvation to our children, as a way of expressing their unique place in the covenant community, why did he not plainly command us in the NT to stop it? After all, it is no small matter—if the fundamental pattern of 1700 years was to be laid aside we would expect a word from him. However, there is no such word. Indeed, we see in Acts “households” baptized upon the profession of the head of the household, just as we saw in the OT.

Case 3: Historical Argument

We know that in the early church, infants were baptized. Irenaeus was a “Spiritual grandchild” of St. John the apostle. That is, Irenaeus was discipled by Polycarp, who was discipled by the apostle. Irenaeus baptized infants. Now it is unlikely that in such a short time period the church would have changed such an important practice in the apostolic church? And if there was a change from the earliest practice to the latter practice, why would there be no evidence of a dispute? Why no tracts or papers or letters? Clearly the ancient church assumed that baptism of infants was normal. It is virtually impossible to believe that the NT church did not baptize infants when the “grandchildren” of the apostles did!

THE SRC JOURNEY

(from Unaffiliated to Heaven)

Invited

You learn of SRC

Welcomed | Attracted

You positively experience SRC

Converted

You become a follower of Jesus

Assimilated

You are connected

Discipled

You are anchored in biblical truth

Employed

You are deployed in the mission

Cared For

You are shepherded all the way home to heaven

***The Mission of SRC is to bring the healing love of Jesus
to broken people and broken places.***



Joining the SRC Family

I. A _____ OF FAITH IN CHRIST

Membership Question #1

“Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?”

It is important to come to grips with the bad news of our own depravity, because without this truth, the good news of the gospel is insignificant. It is vital to admit that God’s displeasure is justly deserved, that we are naturally, deliberately, and slavishly sinful.

Membership Question #2

“Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?”

A key word in this membership vow is “alone.” It is vital to realize that justification comes through faith plus nothing. In no way do we contribute to our salvation. Also key is the word “resting,” conveying the idea that we have repented not only of our sins, but also of our righteousness—of attempting to earn our own salvation.

II. _____ IN SRC

Membership Question #3

“Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of my ability?”

A. ATTEND WEEKEND _____.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

B. JOIN A _____.

Relationships are at the center of the Christian life. Even God exists as Trinity, reminding us that relationships are intrinsic to the structure of reality and foundational to the universe. Likewise, the Christian life cannot and should not be lived in isolation, but in face-to-face relationships in which encouragement, accountability, and friendship are living realities. Each small group is led by a trained leader whose calling is to oversee the spiritual maturity of the group members. This is how members of SRC grow.

C. SERVE ON A _____.

At SRC the primary role of the church staff is to _____. It’s the _____ to do the ministry. ***Ephesians 4:11-12*** “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

D. PRACTICE _____.

What is tithing?

Setting apart _____ of your income each week for the work of the kingdom.

Malachi 3:7-12 "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?' 'Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house."

What is stewardship?

What makes us lavish givers?

- Getting the _____

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

- Passion for God's _____

Psalms 70:4 Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; and let those who love Thy salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified."

- _____

Luke 17:17 And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine-- where are they?"

- _____—It's just good investing!

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Giving at SRC

- One Fund
- Seven Rivers Christian School
- SRC's commitment to good stewardship and _____

III. THE _____ OF PURITY AND PEACE

Membership Question #4

"Do you resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?"

It is expected that every church member, no matter the depth of spiritual maturity, is _____ to live a life of obedience to Christ, free from immoral practices. In our culture there is a great deal of confusion about what it means to live the Christian life, especially in the area of sexuality. Therefore, we think it is important to let people know up front what we understand the Bible to teach in this area. We believe that sex is a gift from God by which we declare to a spouse that we are committed exclusively and completely to them. On that basis we believe that sex outside of heterosexual marriage is wrong. For married couples, we believe that the marriage covenant is permanent and that divorce is permissible only after desertion or a fundamental breaking of that covenant by one partner by adultery.

Membership Question #5

“Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, promising to study its purity and peace?”

What guidelines does the Bible give for working out interpersonal disputes?

Go directly to those with whom you have a problem and go directly to those who have a problem with you. Proverbs 17:9 “He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.” Matthew 5:23,24 “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

What does the Bible say about those who sow discord in God’s family?

Proverbs 6:19 “He who sows discord among the brethren is an abomination to the Lord.” James 1:26 “If anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this own man’s religion is worthless.” Titus 3:10,11 “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”

IV. PROCEDURE FOR JOINING

- A. **Sign up to meet with the interviewing team if you want to be interviewed for membership. This sign-up takes place after class five. Should you miss the sign up, call the church office to set up an interview.**
- B. **Be sure you have completed all the Pastor’s Class requirements including:**
 1. **Attending all the Pastor’s Class sessions, making up no more than two by listening online.**
 2. **Completing all the assignments found in the Pastor’s Class manual.**
 3. **Attending weekend worship regularly (anyone who hasn’t attended worship for at least three months is strongly urged to do so before coming for a membership interview).**
 4. **Answer the membership questions in the affirmative.**
 - a. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?
 - b. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
 - c. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?
 - d. Do you promise to serve Christ in His Church by supporting and participating in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
 - e. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to further its purity and peace?
 5. **Be prepared to tell the story of your relationship with Christ.**

- C. If you are not ready to join SRC at this time, you do not have to take the Pastor's Class over when you are. At any future point, should you wish to join, simply call the church office and ask for an interview for membership.**
- D. If you have never been baptized, and are making your first public profession of faith, we would be honored to baptize you during the worship service. Let the elder know during your interview and we will schedule your baptism (or baptism of your child(ren)).**

ASSIGNMENT

1. Sign up to meet with an Interview Team if you wish to pursue membership.

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

HOME/PHONE	WORK PHONE	CELL PHONE	BIRTHPLACE (city, state)	TODAY'S DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished	<input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished	<input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished		

Check above if you wish any of these numbers to be unpublished in our online membership directory which is only viewable to our membership.

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MIDDLE NAME	DATE OF BIRTH (M/D/Y)

STREET ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP

HOME E-MAIL (please print clearly)	WORK EMAIL (please print clearly)	Do you live west of Hwy 19?
		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

MARITAL STATUS	DATE OF MARRIAGE	NAME OF SPOUSE
<input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> SEPARATED <input type="checkbox"/> DIVORCED <input type="checkbox"/> REMARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> WIDOWED	/ /	

OCCUPATION	RETIREES—previous occupation:
PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT	STUDENTS—school name & grade:

How long have you lived in Citrus County (or area)?	
Where did you live before coming here?	
How long have you attended Seven Rivers?	
How did you hear about Seven Rivers, who invited you?	
What is (are) your previous church background(s)?	

CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME

Full Name	Birth Date	City & State of Birth	Full Name	Birth Date	City & State of Birth
1)			4)		
2)			5)		
3)			6)		

II. PROCEDURE OF MEMBERSHIP

PREVIOUS CHURCH NAME	CITY, STATE

BAPTISM

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I have been baptized. What year? _____	Name of church: _____ Catholic church? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
<input type="checkbox"/> No, I've never been baptized.	<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to be baptized. <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to have my child(ren) baptized.
I would like to stand for membership at— (choose one service) <input type="checkbox"/> 9:00 Sunday <input type="checkbox"/> 11:00 Sunday	If applicable, I would like my children (and/or myself) baptized at the following service: <input type="checkbox"/> 9:00 Sunday <input type="checkbox"/> 11:00 Sunday

III. NEXT STEPS

<p>Have you found a small group where you feel connected in life-giving community with other believers? _____</p> <p>If not, would you like to be in one? _____</p>	<p>Would you like information about any of the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Life Groups (Men and women meeting in homes every other week)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Women's Bible Study</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Men's small group or short-term book group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dinner groups (get to know a few other families)</p>
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(please turn over and complete other side)

III. NEXT STEPS CON'T

I would like more information about serving on a Ministry Team.

Welcome Team Hospitality Team Care Ministry (Visitation, Widows, Meals, etc.) Betty Crocker Bakers Children's Ministry Student Ministry

IV. YOUR PROFESSION OF FAITH

When did you come to believe the gospel and commit to follow Christ? _____

Have you developed the habit of a daily time of Bible reading and prayer? _____

Would you like to meet with someone to help you know how to study the Bible and pray?

Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die tonight you would go to heaven?

YES NO NOT CERTAIN

Suppose you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, *Why should I let you into my heaven?*—What would you say?

What were the events that led up to you becoming a Christian?

Why do you want to join SRC?
