



SOVEREIGN HOPE CHURCH

Covenant Membership Packet

SOVEREIGN HOPE MEMBERSHIP

The Membership Process at a Glance

1. Affirm and understand the church's doctrine and membership covenant.
 - a. Attend a Church Essentials Membership Seminar
 - b. Read this packet, prayerfully consider and sign the final pages. You can turn this in at the info desk or to an elder*
2. Meet with an elder to share your story of conversion and ask any questions you may have about membership or the church.
 - a. Fill out the pre-interview form: sovhope.com/apply
 - b. Wait to be contacted to schedule your interview
 - c. Fill out the volunteer questionnaire: sovhope.com/serve
3. Upon confirmation of your conversion the elders will recommend you to the body at an upcoming Congregational Meeting. For those who need to be baptized you will be presented "pending baptism."

*The membership signature page will be handed out at the Church Essentials Seminar. It is not included in this packet

Membership Packet Table of Contents:

1. What is Membership?	4
2. Membership Responsibilities	8
3. Membership Covenant	10
4. Statement of Faith	13
5. About Sovereign Hope Church	16
6. Reading the Constitution and By-Laws	17
7. What is a Membership Interview?	28
8. Membership Affirmations and Application	29

WHAT IS MEMBERSHIP?

Jesus died for the church. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that the greatest love story ever told is between Jesus and his bride, the church. It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is being displayed (Ephesians 3:10). And it is in the church and in Christ Jesus where God will be glorified throughout all generations (Ephesians 3:21). Jesus cares about the church, so it is natural that those of us who are members of it would take serious joy in the position and privilege we have as Christ's bride.

Being a church member is being united not only to fellow believers, but being united in will, purpose and identity to Jesus himself. He is our beloved and we are his. And this marriage changes everything about our lives.

Being a member of a church is not what saves you, belonging to Jesus by grace through faith saves you. However, scripture makes it clear that those who are saved naturally are joined to Jesus' Church (Acts 2:41, 47). We like to think of church membership as the home in a marriage. The home is not the marriage but the home is where the marriage is designed to be lived out. A healthy couple may have times where they are apart, but the marriage still stands. But if a married couple refuses to live together, even though they might be married on paper, it would be reasonable to question the viability of the marriage.

So too is church membership and our salvation. God saves us into his people: "But you are...a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people..." (1 Peter 2:9-10). And it is in living life with this group of people that we experience the benefits of this reunion. Paul calls the assembly of the saints, "the glorious riches of [God's] inheritance" (Ephesians 1:19). The church is where we help each other encounter God, remind each other of his great love for us in Jesus, encourage one another in growth and for glory, and help one another when we are weak.

The church, like the home, is where we are deeply encouraged and cared for. It is where we participate together in upholding the vows we made to each other. It is where we might encounter disagreements about how to load the dishwasher and how loud the TV needs to be. But it is also where at the end of the day we must remember that our marriage is not about our own comfort or gratification, but about reflecting the self-giving and sacrificial love which Jesus loved us with.

Membership at a Glance

Local church membership is a church's way of identifying those who are part of the covenant community of faith, and joining together for growth, for mission and for the glory of God. It is the sphere in which we together live out the commitments of our faith. Meaning for Sovereign Hope, membership is where converted and baptized individuals join together for growth, for ministry in our city, and for mission across the globe. It is the members of Sovereign Hope which are given the unique privilege of protecting and shaping our church's ministry in Missoula.

Membership finds its roots and implications in scripture. Not only did the New Testament church keep lists and records of those who were being saved (Acts 2:41, 6:1-6, 16:5), and provide instructions for individuals to carry out towards other members in their church (Acts 6:1-6, Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, 2 Corinthians 2:6-9, 1 Timothy 5:22), but membership also provides essential opportunities for church life by providing shared belief and shared commitments.

We like to summarize these commitments (all of which form the basis of our church covenant) with the "Three B's": Members ***believe together, belong together, and become more Christlike together.***

Believe Together

One principle of the New Testament church is that belonging to a church comes not only by attending, or by having community with others, but by believing the gospel with others. For Paul, community comes most clearly through shared faith; "I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints" (Ephesians 1:15). This shared commitment to the biblical gospel (faith in Christ) and its implications (love for the saints) are the precedents for membership.

There are many things in scripture which require the church to have a unified membership in order to carry out what the church has been tasked to do.

Scripture provides for us specific places where the shared beliefs of local church members practically shape ministry and proclaim the gospel. For instance church members need to agree on the gospel so that it can reject false gospels (Galatians 1:6-9). We together agree on who leads us, teaches us and serves us (Acts 6:1-6, Hebrews 13:17). The church must agree on whom it baptizes and what baptism means (Acts 18:25). The church must agree on who can take the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27). And in hard times, elders and members must have a shared commitment when it comes to exercising church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17, 2 Corinthians 2:6).

When church members come together over a shared understanding of the biblical gospel, and its implications in our life, we are able to sync up the watches of our heart. It sets the tone for how we

expect each other, and ourselves, to act in light of the wonderful conversion we share in the gospel.

Belong Together

Across God's globe, we are united to his universal church through shared belief. But the places where the global and universal church shows up is the local church assembly. Therefore membership assumes that believers at Sovereign Hope belong to each other in a unique way by belonging locally to one another.

The New Testament authors use the phrase "one another" nearly a hundred times in scripture. The majority of the time they use this phrase it is in reference to believers and it is accompanied with a command of how we are to love/act/care/live/pray...etc. for one another. In belonging together as a local church we are being obedient to God by living out these "one another" commands in an observable and practical way.

Peter exhorts his elders to, "shepherd the flock of God that is among you..." (1 Peter 5:1) implying that the local pastors know which believers belong to them by nature of being "among them." Conversely the author of Hebrews calls Christians not to submit to all Christian leaders, but specifically to "your leaders...[who] are keeping watch over your soul, as those who will have to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17).

Confessing our belonging to each other through membership prevents us from easily drifting away from Jesus or from others when things get hard. It also holds us accountable to care for those who are of our own household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

Become More Christlike Together

If membership is where Christians confess the wonderful conversion of the gospel through faith, and if it is where believers belong together by the nature of that shared faith, then it is also the sphere in which that faith is lived out with the help of others.

Peter calls for the church to practice a slew of spiritual qualities so that they will not be "ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). Paul also says that the goal of redemption is not merely salvation from sin, but God Christians would be "conformed into the image of [Jesus]" (Romans 8:29).

The goal of Christian community is that we help each other follow Jesus in all of life through the gospel. That's what discipleship means. Consider how Paul speaks of the corporate nature of this in 1 Corinthians and in Ephesians:

“For the body does not consist of one member but of many...But as it is God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose...The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ not again the head to the feet, ‘I have not need of you.’ On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body we think less honorable we bestow greater honor...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” (1 Corinthians 12:14-26)

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The mission of the church is shared by the members of the church. Elders, deacons, community group leaders, members, volunteers, all have different gifts and roles, but all share the responsibility to help each other follow Jesus and to help others know about Jesus.

As a congregational church, we believe that God has gifted individual churches with all the gifts and talents necessary to fulfill this role. This means church members must be active in helping each other follow Jesus “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10).

MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

As a congregational church we believe the Holy Spirit generally guides the church through the voice, votes and gifts of the collective body of the members (Ephesians 4:15-16, Acts 15:22, 2 Corinthians 2:6). While a congregation is not infallible or inerrant, it is a gift and privilege that Jesus has provided the church in this age. This means that we want our members to have clarity on a number of roles and responsibilities they have. Many of these roles are fulfilled over the course of the week, but some of them are specific to congregational meetings where a specific vote is being presented. Here are four key areas of responsibility our membership upholds:

1. **Appointing Elders and Deacons**

One of the most important decisions a congregation can make is who will teach it and lead it. This means that some of the most important votes you will cast as members are votes for the elders that you are appointing and seeking to serve. While existing elders will lead in this process, the responsibility of a member is to assess any elder candidate for sound doctrine and holiness in accordance with the relevant scripture passages. The same kind of scrutiny should be applied according to the standards and qualifications the Bible provides for Deacons in their service to the church. This includes not only affirming, but also learning to recognize the potential elders and deacons God has gifted your church with.

2. **Adding and Removing Fellow Members**

Because of the shared beliefs and shared participation members have with one another, we must take seriously the task of adding and removing members to the church. While elders will lead in the interview process of members (since they will be responsible to God for the souls of the members), existing members ought to take an interest in those who are requesting to join the church as they will share a responsibility for their growth and care. Are the people joining our church genuinely saved? Do they have needs which you might want to know and care for? Do you actually know them? Conversely, members labor together to keep and seek reconciliation for those who are requesting to leave the church. We want to only vote to remove members when we have done our due diligence to understand, care for and even gently correct those who might need such care.

3. **Exercising Church Discipline**

Matthew 18:15-20 lays out the involvement of the whole church in instances of church discipline. It is the role of the whole membership of the church to help those who are sinning, to protect those who are sinned against, and to uphold the purity of the church in the times of dangerous and unrepentant sin (Galatians 6:1). There will be times where after much pleading and care, the church will tearfully, and with much prayer publicly call a sinner to repentance (1 Timothy 5:20). If the sinner does not repent, it is the responsibility of the church to remove him/her from membership and to treat him/her as a non-believer (1 Corinthians 5:11-13, Matthew 18:17).

4. Discipleship and Evangelism

Elders and ministry staff are called to embody committed and healthy efforts in evangelism and discipleship, but as we saw above, both of these tasks fall on the whole church. Being a church member means you refuse to see ministry as belonging only to “professionals,” but you instead cherish the understanding that God has saved you for good works to be done for the glory of God. This includes healthy involvement in personal evangelism and efforts in your own discipleship and the discipleship of others (such as Community Group, Women’s Ministry, Bible Study...etc.)

5. Service and Support

It takes a church to run a church. Members are often called upon, and even relied upon to fulfill volunteer needs and ministry positions in the church. This includes official and unofficial roles of service and caring for one another. It also means that when it comes to affirming the church budget you are also committing to give generously in hopes of meeting or exceeding the need (including elders and deacons). While the New Testament does not provide a specific number for financial support, it does call for all of your life to be given as an offering to God. A general rule of thumb is given in the Old Testament as a tithe (10%) of your income. This is a good starting point for giving to the church, as it would make sense that we who have seen the completed work of Christ are motivated to greater generosity than those who labored under the law. For many people, especially new converts, generosity is a hard and often overlooked part of their spiritual walk. It is our hope as a church that we can help you grow in your generosity so that we can not only meet our own budget, but contribute generously to church plants and missions efforts across the globe.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The local church, or even the invisible church, is not the Kingdom of God. For the fullness of that reality we eagerly await the world which is to come (Romans 8:23). Yet, Jesus gave to the church the keys to the Kingdom of God (Matthew 16:18-19). This means that the church is not *the ideal* community—that community only comes when we are free from sin in glory. In the church we are living stones—and though we often bump and poke one another—we are being built up as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).

Though we are not yet the ideal community the church strives to live under *kingdom ideals*. Even though we know we are not perfect or sinless, our covenant responsibility is to live, by God's grace, to the standards which our salvations enables us to. We want to pursue holiness, spiritual disciplines as we grow in Christlikeness together. We want to put off sin, even if it takes long and intentional efforts. We want to fight for greater care and gospel witness in our community even if we know ultimate human flourishing won't come in this age. We want to serve those who are less off even though Jesus himself says that we will always have the poor among us (Matthew 26:11). This is what it means to not be the ideal community, but to still live under kingdom ideals.

The covenant which we take as members of Sovereign Hope is a covenant made implicit in baptism (Romans 6:3-4) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25). It is converted members of a local body committing to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called," (Ephesians 4:1) for the glory of God and the love of one another. It is what undergirds our times of joy, and what supports our weight in times of sorrow or hardship.

There are three bi-lateral promises in this membership covenant:

1. A promise from the elders to the members of the church to lead, shepherd and teach
2. A promise from the members of the church to the elders to submit to them, serve them, and to hold them accountable
3. A promise from members to each other to elevate the glory of God and love of others over self interest

All of these promises are dependent upon God's grace and to be entered into with joy, eagerness and humility. At each congregational meeting we will remind ourselves of these promises before we add or remove members into our body.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

THE SOVEREIGN HOPE CHURCH ELDERS COVENANT:

- To appoint elders and pastors who will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church and to steward her resources in a wise and God-honoring manner.
- To care for and seek the growth of the church body, in part by equipping them for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13) and praying for them, particularly when sick (James 5:14).
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Titus 2:1).
- To be on guard against false teachers (Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28-31, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 1 John 4:1).
- To lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20).
- To set an example and join you in fulfilling the responsibilities of church members (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, Titus 2:7-8, 1 Peter 5:3).

MY COVENANT TO SOVEREIGN HOPE CHURCH:

- I wholeheartedly agree with the Sovereign Hope Church Statement of Faith, Core Values, and Mission and will not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3, Hebrews 13:7, 13:17).
- I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scripture as the final arbiter on all issues (Proverbs 30:5, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- I covenant to pursue Jesus through repentance, regular Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship. My relationship will be evident through participating in weekly worship services, engaging in biblical community, serving those within and outside of this church, and living a life that glorifies God (Psalm 1:1-2, Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:23-25, Galatians 6:10, 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- I will steward the resources that God has given me, including my time, talents, and treasures. This includes regular financial giving, service, a participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Proverbs 3:9, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8-9, 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- I agree, by God's grace, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus. I will practice complete chastity before marriage and complete fidelity in heterosexual marriage by abstaining from such practices as cohabitation, premarital sex, adultery, and pornography (Job 31:1, Proverbs 5, Romans 13:12-14, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, Ephesians

5:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Hebrews 13:4). If married, I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Sovereign Hope Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 5:31-32, 19:1-9, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, 1 Corinthians 6:1-11). I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, and other sinful behavior as the Bible, my pastors, and my conscience dictate (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:18). Should I sin in such a manner, I agree to confess my sins to Christian brothers or sisters and seek help to put my sin to death (Matthew 5:23-24, Romans 8:13, James 5:16, 1 John 1:6-10).

- I covenant to submit to discipline by God through his Holy Spirit, to follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with my Christian brothers and sisters, to submit to discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers, and to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise (Psalm 141:5, Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, Hebrews 12:5-11, Galatians 6:1-8, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 2:25, Titus 1:9, 3:9-11, Revelation 2:5-7, 2:14-15).
- I will not function as a leader, member, or consistent participant in another church body (Hebrews 13:17).
- I accept the responsibility to notify the Sovereign Hope Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any important questions, comments or concerns regarding Sovereign Hope Church.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

As spoken to above, membership is a joint commitment to shared belief. Below are the statements of faith and core values which Sovereign Hope Members must affirm. While honest Christians, and fellow members of our church, might disagree on certain points of theology, the following statements on pages 13-15 are required to be affirmed for membership.

1. THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible is the Word of God and is therefore our ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice. The Bible consists the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, has been intentionally given to us by God, and alone constitutes the verbally inspired Word of God. The Bible is therefore completely true, sufficient, beneficial, joy-producing, powerful and without error in the original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Peter 1:3, Psalm 19:7-11, John 15:11).

2. GOD - THE TRINITY

We believe there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. He is the one true and living God, the Creator of all that exists, and is infinitely perfect in his knowledge, love, and holiness. He sovereignly rules over all things and graciously brings about his eternal good purpose to redeem a people for himself. He is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration (Deuteronomy 6:4, Psalm 90:2, Isaiah 45:5-6, Isaiah 46:9-10, Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-3, Ephesians 1:11-12, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 4:11).

3. JESUS

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, and is therefore both fully God and fully man (Mark 2:1-12, John 1:1&14, 8:58, 20:28, Romans 9:5). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:34-35). We believe in his sinless life, his miracles, and his teaching (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, Acts 2:22). We believe Jesus was crucified on the cross and died as the substitute to pay the penalty for our sin (Matthew 20:28, Romans 5:6-8, Hebrews 9:28, Galatians 3:13); that he physically rose from the dead and ascended into heaven (Matthew 28:1-7, Acts 1:9-11, 2:23-24, 5:30, Romans 1:4, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

4. HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, who convicts the world of sin, and by his powerful work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith. We believe the Holy Spirit indwells every person who believes in Jesus, giving them gifts for the

building up of the church and empowering them to live a godly life (John 14:16-17, 16:8, Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:1-11, 14:12, Galatians 5:22-25, Ephesians 4:11-12).

5. HUMANITY

We believe God created human beings, male and female, in his own image, and that we were created as very good and are fearfully and wonderfully made (Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 139:13-14). Therefore all human life is sacred from conception until death. At creation God established and ordained marriage as the life-long, covenantal union of one man and one woman, as a representation of Christ's relationship to his church. (Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:4-6, Ephesians 5:22-33, Revelation 19:7-9, 21:2, 21:9). Adam disobeyed God as the representative of the entire human race, and we have all inherited a sinful nature in him. We all are therefore sinners, guilty by birth and action and thus deserve the penalty of physical and spiritual death. As a result we are separated from God, stand under the condemnation and wrath of God and are in an entirely hopeless situation apart from God's gracious intervention (Genesis 3:5, 6:5, Psalm 51:5, Romans 3:10-18, 3:23, 5:8, 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22, Ephesians 2:1-3).

6. THE GOSPEL

We believe the gospel is the life-transforming good news of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:44). By Jesus' perfect obedience to all of his Father's commands and purposes, including his substitutionary and atoning death on the cross, he satisfied the just demands and the righteous wrath of God on our behalf, and his righteousness can now be credited to us by grace through faith. We believe salvation is accomplished through God's predestining and regenerating love through Christ Jesus, and man's right response of repentance and faith in the person and work Jesus Christ. Those who believe have their sins fully forgiven and are reconciled to God. They become a new creation, are allowed to experience true life and joy and are given eternal life. We believe Jesus is the only way of salvation and that salvation is found in no one else (John 3:14-16, John 5:24, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Galatians 2:21, Ephesians 1:3, 11, Ephesians 2:4-10, 1 John 5:1, 1 John 1:9, John 14:6, Acts 4:12).

7. CHURCH

We believe the church includes all the people who have been saved by Jesus Christ and is central to God's purposes in creation. Jesus is the head of the church. The church is the means by which God is fulfilling his primary purpose in the world of raising up a people from every nation, tribe, tongue and language who will declare and delight in his greatness and glory. This mission of good will succeed. We believe the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly commanded in the New Testament, and that active, involved membership in a local church is essential for a follower of Jesus. We believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the different parts of the body for the building up of the body and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. We believe Jesus

has commanded two ordinances for the local church, baptism of a believer by immersion and the Lord's supper, which should be administered until the return of Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 3:10-11, 5:25-27, Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 16:18, Habakkuk 2:14, Revelation 7:9-10, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:38, Acts 2:42-47, Romans 6:3-4, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 14:12, 1 Timothy 3:1-3, Titus 1:5-11, Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

8. LAST THINGS

We believe in the personal, visible, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe every human being will live forever, will be physically resurrected, and will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Those who have not trusted in Christ will receive the just penalty for their sins, eternal conscious punishment in hell, as Jesus himself taught. Those who have trusted in Christ will live and reign in eternal blessedness in the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth (Matthew 24:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, Romans 14:9, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Matthew 25:41, Mark 9:43-48, Luke 12:5, Revelation 21-22).

ABOUT SOVEREIGN HOPE

Our church was founded in 1968 as First Evangelical Church and has existed since then as South Hills Evangelical Church (SHEC) and now Sovereign Hope Church. We are members of the association of churches known as Conservative Baptist North West (CBNW).

Our mission statement: Glorifying God and loving others by being and making disciples.

Church Offices: As part of her membership, Sovereign Hope has two appointed offices:

Elders: Biblically qualified men who lead the church by shepherding and teaching the flock.

Deacons: Biblically qualified members who serve the elders and members by emotional, spiritual and physical care for the church.

Theological Distinctions¹: Here are four aspects of theology and polity which shape the ministry and public teaching at Sovereign Hope

Baptistic: We believe baptism to be administered to confessing believers after conversion and by immersion.

Congregational: We are a church led by congregationally appointed elders but who understand the congregation as a whole be the final authority for issues related to church guidance which are not otherwise stated in Scripture.

Reformed: We follow the tradition of the protestant reformation of the 16th century and their “five solas”: Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, for God’s glory alone.

Complimentarian: We believe that God created males and females in his image, of equal dignity and value, but distinct in role and function.

¹The only aspects of theology we require members to affirm in solidarity are the doctrines in our Statement of Faith. To varying degrees members are not required to be in total agreement with the theological distinctions above.

READING THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Members are not required to affirm the Constitution and By-Laws of the church, but they are required to submit to them as they are the internal governing documents of the church. These dictate the parameters of how the church is to conduct discipline, vote, install elders, conduct her members and decide on issues of doctrinal clarification. In light of this we ask that you have read through these documents and ask your elder during your interview any questions you may have.

CONTENTS

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I – NAME

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

ARTICLE III – INCORPORATION

ARTICLE IV – STATEMENT OF FAITH

ARTICLE V – FORM OF GOVERNMENT

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

ARTICLE VII – OFFICES

ARTICLE VIII – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS

ARTICLE X – EFFECTUAL POWER OF THE CONSTITUTION AND DISSOLUTION

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – General Procedure

Section 2 – Admission

Section 3 – Removal

ARTICLE II – ELDERS

Section 1 - Selection and Terms of Service

Section 2 – Removal from Office

ARTICLE III – DEACONS

ARTICLE IV – STAFF

ARTICLE V – FINANCES

SOVEREIGN HOPE CHURCH CONSTITUTION (Ratified 2016)

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of the church shall be Sovereign Hope Church.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

Since the church exists by the sovereign will of God as part of the body of Christ, its purpose shall be to glorify God according to the teachings of his word. It shall seek to attain this end through the public worship of God, the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures, the administration of the New Testament ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the preservation of true doctrine, the discipling of its members, faithful Christian living in all spheres of life, and the evangelization of its community and the world.

ARTICLE III - INCORPORATION

To implement this purpose legally, the church shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Montana, so that it may own, provide, and/or maintain a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings), receive, hold, and disburse gifts, bequests and funds, and/or do all things necessary or incident to carry on such purpose.

ARTICLE IV – STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice and the standard for all subsequent creeds. The church shall hold a Statement of Faith to serve as a summary of the essential tenets of the Christian faith and the basis for membership in the church. In addition to this, the church holds to the ecumenical, orthodox creeds, specifically the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Chalcedonian Creed, and is in substantial agreement with the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. All statements of faith and confessions are subordinate to Scripture and amenable.

ARTICLE V – FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The government of this church shall be under the headship of Jesus Christ and in obedience to the word of God. Under Christ's leadership, the congregation as comprised of its members is the final authority within this local church. This authority is normally exercised through the election

of Elders to govern the church. However, the vote of the membership of the church at a properly called Congregational Meeting shall be required to effect the following actions:

1. Membership and Discipline – Accept members into the church or remove members because of discipline or other reasons.
2. Leadership – Elect officers of the church.
3. Doctrine – Adopting or amending the Statement of Faith or Membership Covenant.
4. Budget – Approve annual budgets of the church.
5. Rules – Adopt and/or amend the Constitution or Bylaws of the church.
6. Other – Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter sufficient in importance to be brought before the congregation, as determined by the Board of Elders.

This church is independent and autonomous and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority. The church may cooperate with other churches and/or organizations of like mind and purpose, and may affiliate with the same as long as the right of withdrawal is reserved. However, the decision of no other organization shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church, nor shall the authority or the property of the church be subordinated to any other organization.

ARTICLE VI - MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the church shall consist of persons who profess repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who give evidence of regeneration by living consistent with this profession, who have been baptized as a believer by immersion, who agree with the Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant, and who have been received into its membership according to the Bylaws of the church.

It is the aim of the church to vindicate the integrity and honor of Christ by maintaining the purity of the church and her worship (Matthew 18:15-18, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Titus 1:13, 2:15, 3:10). The church, by consistently applying biblical practices of formative and corrective discipline to members, shall strive to restore offenders (1 Corinthians 5:5, Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20) and deter others from sin (1 Timothy 5:20).

ARTICLE VII - OFFICES

The offices of the church shall be Elder and Deacon.

The leadership of this church shall be vested in the Board of Elders, comprised of male members who aspire to the office of Elder, who meet the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3, and who are chosen according to the Bylaws of the church. The Elders are responsible to govern the church, to teach the Word of God and protect sound doctrine, to fulfill the ministry of prayer, and to shepherd the flock of God in this church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The titles Elder and Pastor shall be used synonymously. The Board of Elders shall be composed of no less than two elders and up to as many as the Lord calls to this under-shepherding role. In regard to all matters fiscal or legal, the Board of Elders shall function as the representative board of the church.

The Board of Deacons shall be comprised of male and female members who meet the qualifications given in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and who are chosen according to the Bylaws of the church. The Deacons shall serve the church and assist the Elders in the work of ministry as directed by the Board of Elders. The number of Deacons shall not be fixed but shall include as many as are necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

ARTICLE VIII – CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

The church shall hold an annual Congregational Meeting for the delivery of reports, the election of officers, and voting on the church budget on a date determined by the Board of Elders. Other special Congregational Meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Elders or by a written request by ten percent of the members presented to the Board of Elders. An agenda for orders of business for a Congregational Meeting shall be determined by the Board of Elders. Notification of all Congregational Meetings must be given at the regular worship services on two successive Lord's Days immediately before the Congregational Meeting. A quorum will be understood to be met by those members present. All votes will be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present and determined by simple majority, except in cases specifically set forth in the Constitution or Bylaws. No absentee ballots or proxies will be permitted for any vote at any Congregational Meeting of the church.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS

The Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members voting at any Congregational Meeting of the church, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous Congregational Meeting.

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at any Congregational Meeting of the church, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous Congregational Meeting.

The Bylaws shall describe the practical implementation of this Constitution. The Bylaws shall be adopted and may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at any Congregational Meeting of the church, provided the Bylaws and amendments shall have been offered in writing

at the previous Congregational Meeting. No Bylaw which is in violation of any of the terms of this Constitution shall be valid.

ARTICLE X – EFFECTUAL POWER OF CONSTITUTION AND DISSOLUTION

This Constitution shall take effect immediately upon its ratification by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting. This Constitution shall remain in force as presently formulated or as duly amended according to Article IX until this corporation is legally dissolved. This Constitution shall not be suspended or abrogated.

The church shall be considered dissolved if so decided by a three-fourths vote of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting, provided the motion to dissolve shall have been offered in writing at the previous Congregational Meeting. In the event of dissolution, the property and assets shall be sold, either through private or public sale, as determined by the Board of Elders. No member or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets. Assets of the church shall first be used to pay any outstanding debts. Following this, the remaining assets of the church shall be given to one or more non-profit Christian organizations of like faith and practice for the benefit of the church's supported missionaries and/or such other Christian endeavors as the Board of Elders shall determine.

SOVEREIGN HOPE CHURCH

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – General Procedure

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or removal, shall be by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.

Section 2 - Admission

Any person desiring to become a member of Sovereign Hope Church may indicate that desire to an Elder at any time. Upon reviewing the Covenant Membership packet and completing the Covenant Membership application, an Elder will interview the person (1) to determine whether the person has a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, (2) to determine whether the person has been baptized as a believer by immersion, (3) to determine whether the person is in agreement with the Statement of Faith and Membership Covenant, and (4) to discuss the responsibilities of church membership. If the person is or has been a member at another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in the church and the reason for leaving. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders, the person will be admitted as a member by a majority vote of members voting at a Congregational Meeting. Upon admission, the new member shall withdraw their membership from any previous church.

For legal reasons, members less than 18 years of age are not entitled to vote, but are otherwise entitled to all the privileges and responsible for all the duties of members.

Section 3 – Removal

Upon recommendation of the Elders and a majority vote of the Members voting at any Congregational Meeting, a member will be removed as a member on the basis of one of the following procedures:

1. Physical death

2. Relocation

Any member who moves away from the immediate area shall notify the church and then be contacted by an Elder to encourage and assist that member to become a member of a like-minded church in the new area.

3. Withdrawal

A member may request to withdraw his or her membership at any time. The request for withdrawal must be made to the church in writing. The Elders may reject a request for

withdrawal and choose not to present it to the congregation if the request occurs while the member is in the process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

4. Non-attendance

Members who do not regularly attend worship services without valid reason for a period of at least 3 months shall be contacted by the Elders to discern the member's intentions and to remind the member of the duties of membership. Unless the member exhibits a renewed commitment to the church, the Elders will begin the process of either church discipline or removal.

5. Exclusion through Church Discipline and Restoration

Corrective church discipline is the process of confronting a member regarding unrepentant sin, which culminates in the exclusion of that member from the church.

Members are disciplined for sins which endanger:

1. The moral purity of the church (1 Corinthians 5:9-11, 6:9-10, 15:33).
2. The doctrinal purity of the church (1 Timothy 1:19-20, 6:3-5; 1 John 2:22-23, 4:1; 2 John 9-11).
3. The unity of the church (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Titus 3:9-11; 3 John 9-10).

The purposes of church discipline are to:

1. Glorify God by maintaining the purity of the church (1 Corinthians 5:6).
2. To edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20).
3. To pursue the spiritual welfare of the offending member by calling the member to repentance and restoration (Galatians 6:1).

In all cases where an offense has occurred, the responsibility for administering the process of scriptural discipline rests with the Elders, and the responsibility to exclude rests with the Congregation (Matthew 18:17-20, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

Private Offense:

All grievances between members will be addressed and guided by the church discipline practices found in Matthew 18:12-20 and the redemptive principles and motivations found in Galatians 6:1-2 and 2 Timothy 2:23-26.

This includes, but is not limited to, the causation-defining and heart-correcting checks and balances which guide Christians through every conflict, as found in Psalm 34:13-14, 119:9, 24; Proverbs 12:17, 16:25, 18:19; Zechariah 8:16-17; Matthew 5:9, 23-24, 6:11-15; 7:3-5; Mark 11:25; John 7:24; Romans 12:9-21, 15:1-6; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; James 3:13-18, 4:1-4; 1 Peter 2:1-3, 13-25; Jude 1:20-23. In addition, we will follow the best practice wisdom from Peacemaker Ministries.

No public charge will be considered until these biblical checks and balances and peacemaking practices have been given sufficient time for application and response. Additionally, one elder must confirm that one or more of the parties involved in the conflict are in a position where Matthew 18:16 has failed to bring closure. It is at this juncture when the full Elder Board will become involved.

When the full Elder Board becomes involved, the person charged with a private offense will be given adequate notice and opportunity to be heard by the full Elder Board. Once charges are made to the full Board, the Elders may take such action as they deem biblically proper. Elders are the only ones in the church who have the authority to crisscross back and forth between the stories of members when charges are being made against each other (Deuteronomy 1:16; Proverbs 11:14, 18:13, 17; John 7:51). After hearing the person, the Elders may take the more formal action of informing the larger body of members at a specially called members-only Congregational Meeting.

No member will be excluded from membership for a private offense at the same congregational meeting during which the charge is first presented.

Lawsuits Among Members / Believers:

In the event a member of Sovereign Hope Church pursues legal action against another member or another believer, the Elders will follow the principles of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. Wisdom and patience is needed in any and all conflicts between people regardless of scale, but the biblical principles and checks and balances and the best practices of conflict resolution are the same and must always be a believer's first option and always must be rigorously applied.

Public Offense:

Grievance of a public and/or scandalous nature should be dealt with according to the principles of 1 Corinthians 5, in order to protect the honor of Christ and his church. A member may be removed from membership for a public offense during the same Congregational Meeting during which the charge is first presented.

Restoration:

Restoration is the process that restores the removed person to the full privileges withdrawn through church discipline (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). When the disciplined person repents, the restoration process begins. The Elders will determine whether satisfactory evidence of repentance exists. The person can fully be restored as a member upon the recommendation of the Elders and a majority vote of members voting at a Congregational Meeting.

ARTICLE II - ELDERS

Section 1 – Selection and Terms of Service

Recognizing that God himself is the one who equips and appoints Elders for his church (Acts 20:28), the church will trust God to direct the Elder Board and Congregation in the recognition of new Elders. The Board of Elders, as those entrusted with the task of knowing and shepherding the congregation, is charged with recognizing, evaluating, and recommending men to serve as Elders. The Elders will review and evaluate prospective men according to the biblical qualifications set forth in the Constitution. Upon the unanimous recommendation of the Elders, a prospective Elder will be presented to the Congregation at least three months prior to a vote on the prospective Elder, in order to provide input to the Elders on the nomination. Upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting, the candidate will be recognized as an Elder.

Every three years the church shall reaffirm its confidence in each of its Non-Vocational Elders upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting. Vocational Elders serve for an indefinite period of time. An Elder may serve as long as he remains biblically qualified, desires to continue to serve as an Elder, and is reconfirmed by the Congregation. An Elder may resign his office without prejudice if for valid reasons he is no longer able to discharge the duties required. An Elder may request a leave of absence from the responsibilities of being an Elders for a period of time, under the determination and direction of the Elder Board.

All Vocational Elders shall be licensed as a Pastor in conjunction with their approval as an Elder.

Vocational Elders who desire to devote themselves to the ministry of preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17) may request the process of ordination. Upon completion of the examination and training process determined by the Elders, the candidate for ordination will be presented to the congregation at a Congregational Meeting. Upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting, the candidate will be approved for ordination to be completed at a public worship service, through prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Elders (1 Timothy 4:14). Ordination shall not be revoked except for disciplinary reasons.

The Elder Board shall select a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary of the Board. The Chairman serves as the President of the Corporation, and is responsible for setting the meeting schedule and agenda for Elder and Congregational Meetings. An Elder may serve as Chairman for no more than three consecutive years. The Vice Chairman will be responsible for these responsibilities in the absence of the Chairman. The Secretary is responsible for taking accurate minutes of Elder and Congregational Meetings.

Section 2 – Removal from Office

When a grievance exists against an Elder, either due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in the Statement of Faith or to alleged conduct unfitting to an Elder, such

grievance must be brought to the Elders in writing by any two members of the church, in accordance with 1 Timothy 5:19-20. When a grievance against an Elder is presented, his authority and responsibilities as an Elder may be temporarily suspended while an investigation of the grievance is taking place, as determined by the other Elders. If the other Elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the grievance to be true and substantial, they will terminate the Elder upon a three-fourths vote of the other Elders and will inform the Congregation at a Congregational Meeting.

ARTICLE III - DEACONS

The Elders will evaluate the men and women of the church in order to nominate potential new Deacons and review a candidate to ensure that he or she meets the biblical qualifications set forth in the Constitution. Upon a three-fourths affirmative vote for a nomination by the Elders, the candidate will be presented to the Congregation at least three months prior to a vote on the prospective Deacon, in order to provide input to the Elders on the nomination. Upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting, the candidate will be recognized as a Deacon.

Every three years the church shall reaffirm its confidence in each of its Deacons upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at a Congregational Meeting. A Deacon may serve as long as he or she remains biblically qualified, desires to continue to serve as a Deacon, and is reaffirmed by the Congregation. A Deacon may resign his or her office without prejudice if for valid reasons the Deacon is no longer able to discharge the duties required. A Deacon may request a leave of absence from the responsibilities of being a Deacon for a period of time, under the determination and direction of the Elder Board. If a charge is made against a Deacon, and the Elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the grievance to be true and substantial, they will remove the person from the office of Deacon upon a three-fourths vote of the Elder Board, and will inform the congregation at a Congregational Meeting.

ARTICLE IV - STAFF

Section 1 – Pastoral Staff

It shall be the duty of the Elders Board to recommend the calling of a Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor (Vocational Elders) and to nominate as a Pastor one who possesses the biblical qualifications for Elder set forth in the Constitution. Upon a thorough review of the candidate and a unanimous vote of the Elders, the Elders will schedule and notify the congregation of a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of calling a candidate for the position. Only one person shall be considered or voted upon for any position at a meeting. Upon an affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members voting at the Congregational Meeting, the candidate will be called to the position of either Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor. The Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors of the church will serve as Elders and will be called for an indefinite period of time.

The compensation and benefits of the pastoral staff shall be determined by the Elders in accordance with the congregationally approved annual budget. Vocational Elders shall not have the authority to determine or vote on their own compensation.

Termination of a Vocational Elder Pastor will be done according to the procedure for the termination of an Elder as set forth in the Bylaws.

Section 2 – Other Staff

The Elders may hire other staff as deemed necessary to carry out effective ministry and for which salaries have been allocated in the church budget.

ARTICLE 5 - FINANCES

In order to be above reproach before God and one another as stewards of all the Lord has entrusted to the church, the Elders will be responsible to establish proper accountability and accurate accounting practices for the handling of all financial resources of the church.

The financial planning of the Church shall be carried out through the use of an annual budget, which shall be recommended by the Elders and approved by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at the annual Congregational Meeting. The fiscal year of the church shall begin on August 1 and conclude on July 31 of the following year.

If the Elders determine a need to make a significant budget adjustment (affecting five percent or more of the total annual budget), it must be presented at a Congregational Meeting and will be approved by a two-thirds vote of the members voting at the meeting.

In order to ensure that Church facilities are not used in a way that conflicts with the Church's faith, mission, or moral teachings, the Elder Board is the final decision-maker concerning use of church facilities.

WHAT IS A MEMBERSHIP INTERVIEW

The Membership Interview process at Sovereign Hope is a meeting between applying members and an elder(s) from Sovereign Hope. This interview is not a theological exam or a rigorous peppering of tough questions. The purpose of this interview is for an elder to personally hear from and know all applying members at Sovereign Hope, since our elder board will have to personally give account to Jesus for how we care for our members (Heb. 13:17). In this interview we want to make sure you understand what membership means, and how that effects your role in our congregationally lead church. This also gives you an opportunity to ask any question you might have about the church as well. Be sure to bring this packet and the last two pages (signed and filled out) as your interview will reference some of the content addressed in here.

WHAT TO EXPECT

At the interview you can expect to have some of your basic contact information recorded so that we know how to get ahold of you if we need to. We will also want to hear a brief two to three minute story of how you came to know Jesus (if you would be more comfortable, feel free to write out your testimony and bring it to the meeting). The Elder at the meeting will want to make sure you have a clear understanding of what it means to be a member and answer any questions you might have about the office or the process. Also you will be asked some basic background questions like, “Are you baptized?”, “Did you grow up in a church?”, “Have you ever had any significant issues in regards to church involvement?”

These meetings are not meant to be ominous or nerve racking. It’s a time to make sure you are cared for and known by our elders.

THOUGHTS BEFORE YOUR MEETING

Before coming to your member interview you might want to reflect on your personal testimony, how Jesus has shown himself as beautiful in your life, what it means for you personally to become a member, what gifts you have which could help the church, and any questions you might have for us. To best prepare for this, and to help the elder prepare, please fill out the pre-interview form at sovhope.com/apply

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

AFFIRMATIONS AND APPLICATION*

*Note, this sample is for information purpose only, the applications and signature page will be given out at the Church Essential Seminar for those who are interested

Name (names if applying as a married couple):

Address

Phone

Spouse Phone (if applicable):

Email (print clearly)

Spouse Email (print clearly)

Requirements for Membership (please check boxes):

- ☐ I consider myself a Christian because I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross as the substitute for my sin, and I have placed my faith and trust in him. I desire to follow and treasure Jesus Christ in all that I do.
- ☐ I agree with the Sovereign Hope Church Statement of Faith.
- ☐ I have been baptized following my conversion or will seek membership pending walking through the baptism process.
- ☐ I agree to the Covenant Responsibilities as described in the Sovereign Hope Church Covenant Membership packet.
- ☐ I have read and understand the Constitution and By-Laws
- ☐ I agree to be held accountable to the Bible's teachings in all issues of life and doctrine participating in and submitting to church discipline in accordance to scripture and this church's by-laws.

Signature

____/____/____
Date

Spouse (if applying as couple):

Signature

____/____/____
Date