

## [MEMBERSHIP FAQs]

### **What does Covenant mean?**

Covenant is a biblical concept. In the Ancient Near East, it was a binding agreement in which covenant members had certain obligations and could expect certain benefits in return. What made a covenant different from a simple binding agreement is that covenant implied meaningful relationship: God covenanted with Noah, with Abram, with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai, and eventually brought about a new covenant, available to all through Christ. In the Scriptures, “covenant” meant an agreement that lasted for life—at Mars Hill we are attempting to use this meaningful term while recognizing that membership of a local church is often not for life. This is one reason why we occasionally ask members to renew their Covenant.

### **What’s the difference between covenant and membership?**

Both models are expressions of belonging and commitment, and both are biblical. [The Old Testament refers to covenant often, and Paul develops the term ‘member’ in his letters.] Covenant is Mars Hill’s form of membership.

### **Who is the covenant between—me and God or me and Mars Hill?**

Both. As one people, we covenant with God. As a local expression of God’s church, we covenant together with each other. This means we covenant with each other and with God.

### **Why should someone covenant with Mars Hill?**

The ultimate question here is, “Why should someone be part of a church?” Committing your life to Christ, to others in community, and to bringing the healing of Jesus to the world is what it means to be church. Formally participating in covenant is a way of declaring that this commitment to Christ and His church is a serious reality in your life.

### **How can I become a Covenant Member?**







Although you can covenant with Mars Hill at any time throughout the year, Covenant Season takes place annually mid-April to mid-May; this is a time of focused reflection on what it means to embody our shared values [The Directions] as a community. At this time, any follower of Christ [13 years of age or older\*] is invited into covenant with Mars Hill through the following procedure:

1. Prayerfully consider what you are signing and prayerfully interact with others who are already in covenant at Mars Hill
2. Personally commit to embodying our shared values [the Directions] in the covenant
3. Sign the Covenant Application and submit it to the Welcome Center or church office

\*Persons 13 and older are eligible to enter into Covenant; however, you must be 18 or older to vote at meetings.

### **What is the role of a Person in Covenant? How can I live that out?**

A Covenant Member both agrees to and commits to adopting our shared values [The Directions]. Together, we covenant to go:

-  Backward, embracing the roots of our faith.
-  Forward because the life of faith is a journey.
-  Inward because we want to be whole people.
-  Withward because we were made to live in community.
-  Outward because Jesus calls us to serve the world.
-  Upward, celebrating God’s redemption of all things.

Covenant Members keep each other accountable in loving relationships of mutual submission. Served by leadership, House Churches, serving groups, and other forms of community, we take care of one another and help each other to live the way of Jesus. [For information on joining a group or on serving at Mars Hill, email [info@marshill.org](mailto:info@marshill.org).]

A Covenant Member is also eligible to engage in determining the business of the church: in particular, by receiving regular updates from and by participating in dialogue with the Ministry Leadership Team, by serving as part of small groups responsible to carry out our mission and vision, by taking part [when applicable] in the Elder nomination process, by voting on the recommended Elder Team and other matters at the Annual Meeting, and by affirming the proposed budget.

## [DIRECTIONS]

The Directions are our shared values in living out the way of Jesus—qualities we strive to embody individually and in community. They are intimately tied to the belief that God’s story is an ongoing narrative, and for this reason it is helpful to reflect on them in tandem with our Narrative Theology Statement [visit [marshill.org/believe](http://marshill.org/believe)].

### **ROOTS** [Backward]

We affirm the central truths of historic orthodox Christian faith, seeing ourselves in a long line of generations taking part in the endless conversation between God and people. We believe the Bible to be the voices of many who have come before us, inspired by God to pass along their poems, stories, accounts, and letters of response and relationship with each other and the living God. To know where we’re going, we have to know where we’ve been.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go backward, embracing the roots of our faith.

### **JOURNEY** [Forward]

We have great confidence that God will restore all of creation under the authority of Christ. We believe that every church has to ask the question: “What does it look like for us to live out that future reality today?” We are constantly exploring, questioning, and wrestling with new and creative ways to live out and communicate the teachings of Jesus. Because we see faith as a journey, change is assumed, innovation is expected, and rebirth is welcomed.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go forward because the life of faith is a journey.

### **WHOLENESS** [Inward]

We believe that God wants to bring about a new humanity by redeeming every part of us. We embrace the salvation Jesus offers as the only hope for the healing of our relationships with God, each other, ourselves, and creation. We believe that all of life is spiritual, and that all of our fears, failures, and brokenness can be restored and made whole. We value the inner journey, because we want to be fully integrated people—mind, body, and soul, emotions and experiences all offered together to God.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go inward because we want to be whole people.

### **COMMUNITY** [Withward]

We value the image of God in all people, everywhere. We believe that we were created to live deeply with one another, carrying each other’s burdens and sharing our possessions, to pray for and confess our sins to each other, to suffer and celebrate together. It’s in these honest, loving relationships that God transforms us and truth becomes a reality. The way of Jesus cannot be lived alone.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go withward because we were made to live in community.

### **SERVING** [Outward]

We believe that Jesus is God in human form and that the church is God’s ongoing presence in the world. Led by the Spirit of God, we are passionate about relieving suffering and fighting injustice, joining the God of the oppressed in living out the transforming message of the resurrected Jesus. Jesus calls His church to be a compelling force for good in the world, and we believe that the church is at its best when it serves, sacrifices, and loves, caring about the things God cares about. We were created to live for something larger than ourselves.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go outward because Jesus calls us to serve the world.

### **CELEBRATION** [Upward]

We take great joy in partnering with God to change the world, embracing the truth that all of life is sacred, hope is real and tomorrow can be better than today. We celebrate the divine in the daily, pursuing lives of hope, gratitude, and worship. God invites everyone everywhere into this way of life, and we believe it is the best possible way to live.

RESPONSE: We covenant to go upward, celebrating God’s redemption of all things.