

■ FORUM · COVENANT COURSE

Covenant of Belonging

Part One — What we believe, and how it holds us together.

Two sessions · Teaching, then conversation at your table.

■ WHERE WE BEGIN

01 What does it mean to be the church?

02 What is my part in it?

■ LET'S BE CLEAR FROM THE START

~~Not a service provider.~~

~~Not a social club.~~

What we invite people into is a *covenant*.

■ THE WORD THAT MATTERS

Covenant

A binding, mutual commitment between two parties about how they will treat one another. Covenant, not ***consumer***. A healthy relationship is not transactional, not “I’ll show up as long as I’m getting what I want.” It’s a **vow**.

— Section 01

What We Believe

Forum's story, and the Restoration DNA we carry.

■ OUR STORY

1954

Eleven people began meeting in a **sheep barn** on the old Boone County Fairgrounds — the property we now call the ARC.

A desire to unite around the truth of God's Word, and to follow Jesus together. That is the whole founding vision.

■ THE TRADITION WE STAND IN

The Restoration Movement

Born in America in the early 1800s, from a simple desire — clear away centuries of accumulated human tradition and get back to the Christianity of the New Testament.

Jesus at the *center* and the *authority* of the Scriptures guiding all that we do.

■ WORTH MEMORIZING

In essentials, **unity**. In opinions, **liberty**.
In all things, **love**.

Five things baked into our DNA

- 01 **Scripture** as the final authority of faith and practice
- 02 Congregational **Autonomy**
- 03 An emphasis on Christian **unity** that goes beyond denominational traditions
- 04 Believers Baptism by **Immersion**
- 05 **Weekly** practice of the Lord's Supper

Your Story

- 1 What's your story with Forum — what brought you here, and what's kept you coming back?
- 2 What do you think it means to be a member of a local church? Have you been a member elsewhere (if so, what did it involve)? "Covenant, not consumer." Does that reframe how you've thought about belonging to a church?
- 3 What is your faith background, and how does it align with or deviate from our background? Are you familiar with the Restoration Movement? What questions does it raise?

— Section 02

What We Believe

A short, shared confession — in three movements.

MOVEMENT ONE

The God We Worship

Father, Son, and Spirit — three statements.

STATEMENT 01 · THE TRINITY

We believe in one creator God, eternally existing in three co-equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Relationship is not an add-on to God - **His nature is communal.**

STATEMENT 02 · JESUS CHRIST

Out of love for the world, God sent his Son — fully human and fully divine, born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, suffered death on the cross, was buried, **physically rose on the third day, and ascended into heaven.**

Bodily. In history. We don't blink on that one.

STATEMENT 03 · THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. He indwells, empowers, and **gifts the followers of Jesus as they are led to proclaim the gospel and grow in spiritual maturity.**

Every follower is gifted, on purpose. Hold that word — it returns in Part Two.

MOVEMENT TWO

The Word & the Gospel

Two statements.

STATEMENT 04 · SCRIPTURE

The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are fully inspired by God and are **the final authority for faith and practice.**

Not the church above the Bible. The Word is the final court of appeal.

STATEMENT 05 • SALVATION

Salvation is a **gift through faith in Jesus Christ. His death is the only sufficient payment for our sins — available for anyone who has faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.**

A gift. The only sufficient one. For anyone — no one is too far gone.

MOVEMENT THREE

Entering & Enduring

How faith begins — and where it's all going.

STATEMENT 06 · BEGINNING & CONTINUING

Faith in Christ begins by repenting from sin, confessing faith, being **baptized by immersion — and continues as we live according to the pattern and teachings of Jesus.**

Repent. Confess. Be baptized. That's a starting point, not the finish line.

STATEMENT 07 · THE LONG VIEW

Those who have faith in Christ have eternal life with God. Christ will return one day in glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom and reign are without end.

A King is coming back. His kingdom will never, ever end.

■ THE UNITY

Seven. ■

These are historic doctrinal statements shared by the followers of Jesus for almost 2,000 years.

We could have written seventy. We didn't. We drew a circle around what is genuinely essential and left room for liberty on the hundreds of ***secondary*** questions Christians have always disagreed about.

In essentials, unity. In opinions, liberty.

■ WHY IT MATTERS

Common ground.

Not a wall to keep people out — the shared foundation that lets very different people belong to one another. You cannot *covenant* with people you share nothing with.

Eleven in a barn — or 2,500 across a city — one body, instead of a crowd attending the same building.

Our beliefs around a table.

- 1 Which of the seven is easiest to affirm wholeheartedly? Which is hardest, or raises a question?
- 2 Where have you seen doctrine used to divide? Why might a lean confession matter?
- 3 Baptism by immersion is part of how we receive members. Where are you in your own baptism story?

— FINAL THOUGHTS

What Holds Us Together

■ TWO THREADS

WHO WE ARE

Since a sheep barn in 1954 — unite around God's Word, and follow Jesus together.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

A short, shared confession — the essentials held firmly, liberty extended on everything else.

NEXT WEEK · PART TWO

What does this look like on a Tuesday?

Next week will start with one word: **Hesed**. God's loyal, covenant love. The love we have **received** becomes the love we get to **live out**.