

No

Describe when and where.

Note: While we respect the religious heritage of those who have been baptized as infants, we believe Scripture teaches that baptism should come after a person has personally received Christ. We therefore require that a person be baptized by his or her own choice before becoming a participating member at Willow Creek (although that baptism does not need to have occurred at Willow Creek). If you have not yet been baptized since you became a Christian, we ask that you investigate baptism further at www.willowcreeknorthshore.org/adults/baptism or speak with Scott Cornelius, scornelius@willowcreek.org

Section 2: Personally Growing in Intimacy with Christ (GROWTH)

- Prayer, worship, and Bible study are vital elements in deepening one's walk with Christ. Describe how you are presently nurturing your spiritual growth through these spiritual disciplines on your own.

Note: Legalistic formulas and rigid rules do not guarantee a healthy devotional life. What matters is that you're becoming more like Christ, and that you're taking it upon yourself to improve your relationship with Him privately, and not solely be dependent on what public meetings provide.

- Do you regard the Bible as God's final authority in all areas of the Christian life and do you desire to be wholly obedient to it?

Yes

Yes, except for...

No

Please explain any reservations you have.

Note: If you have a major concern with living under the authority of the Bible, you will probably not want to go any further with this process—it would be out of order for anyone to be a participating member of Willow Creek without being in submission to Scripture. However, it may still be valuable to meet with your Dialogue Facilitator to discuss your reservations.

- In your pursuit of becoming more Christ-like, what areas are most difficult or challenging for you and most frequently need more attention?

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- Are there any ongoing patterns of sin in your life that you are not willing to turn from and are not yielding to Christ? If yes, please explain.
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Note: Those Christ-followers with yielded hearts who honestly confront areas of personal sin with the help of the Holy Spirit please God—what more could anyone do? If you're not open to change, not ready to have at least one other person help and offer accountability or other support, or if you're only at the early stages of confronting a sin-pattern, then it may be best to defer participating membership until time shows growth has occurred. If you have any hesitation, you should discuss this question in complete frankness with your Dialogue Facilitator.

- Do you desire to extend Christ's saving grace to others in your circle of influence, and, as a participating member of Willow Creek, partner with this local church and its ministries designed for people exploring a relationship with Christ (seekers)?
- Yes
- No
- If not, why not? If yes, in what ways have you actually done that recently?
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Section 3: Engaging in Biblical Community (GROUP)

- Consistent with God's call to commitment and community within a local church body, do you regularly participate in the corporate gatherings of Willow Creek (weekend services)?
- Yes
- No
- If not, is there a specific reason?
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Note: Seasons of life sometimes require extraordinary responses that preclude church attendance, as do health and family concerns, business trips, or other unavoidable circumstances (many find it helpful that weekend services are now available for viewing online at www.willowcreek.org). It is important that participating members value engaging in services even if they don't particularly feel like it or even if the speaker or music for that week isn't their favorite. Mature believers come to meet God as well as each other, and He always shows up!

- Do you affirm the specific mission, vision, values and objectives of Willow Creek?
- Yes
- No
- If not, what aspects are you unable to affirm and embrace?

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- Do you pledge your cooperation to the elders of the church and those in leadership positions?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, why not?
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Note: Participating members must be willing to go directly to the appropriate leader when issues of concern arise, with the desire to engage in honest and respectful dialogue. Complaints should never be taken to uninvolved members of the body in ways that promote rumor or divisiveness.

- The Willow Creek Statement of Faith summarizes the basic truths of Scripture. Do you wholeheartedly affirm that statement?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, what are your specific reservations?
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- Will you refrain from promoting doctrines not found in our statement of faith in ways that cause dissension?
 - Yes
 - No

- Are you connected to a group of believers (in your neighborhood, GroupLife or ministry team) here at Willow Creek for the purposes of growth, loving support, and accountability?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, please explain why.
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- Describe the quality of your community or GroupLife experience at Willow Creek and how it is impacting your spiritual growth.
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Note: The value of community is that somewhere, on a regular basis with a few other believers, all participating members have face-to-face meetings that help shape them—places they give and receive care. We believe that a Willow Creek GroupLife experience is an optimal place for that to happen. But we give a lot of latitude as to what kind of group this might be. At a minimum it must be with other believers where you get to know them and they get to know you and Christ is central to the group. The key is to get in relationships centered on biblical community and grow to become a more mature disciple of Jesus Christ.

- Do you have any relationships anywhere, such as within the church, at work, or at home, that are dishonoring to God (i.e., emotionally broken or sexually impure relationships)?
- Yes
 - No
- If so, please describe the problem or situation.

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- As far as it is up to you, are you committed to pursuing the biblical pattern of conflict resolution (Matthew 18:15-17) to rectify those or any future relational conflicts?
- Yes
 - No
- If not, please explain.

Note: Relational breakdowns are usually complex matters. We recognize and respect that. At the same time, participating members should be willing to engage in the strenuous process of conflict resolution. They should display entreatable hearts, a willingness to examine and address personal issues that may have contributed to the conflict, as well as an openness to receiving counsel where appropriate.

Section 4: Pursuing Servanthood (GIFTS)

- Are you responsibly using your spiritual gifts in a place of service within the church?
- Yes
 - No

If yes, in what area? If no, is there a specific reason? Do you intend to pursue some form of service in the near future? In what area(s) do you plan to explore?

Note: One of the core values of the New Testament and of Willow Creek is that the members of the body are the ministers. Practically speaking, the church cannot grow in a healthy fashion unless all of its core believers are sharing the ministry load. So, we ask all participating members to actively seek to contribute to the body by using their gifts in a place of service. At the same time, we recognize that demanding seasons of life or other unusual circumstances may require reducing the amount of involvement or taking a “break” for a period of time. But, in any case, it should be their desire and intention to reengage in some level of service—even if only on a periodic basis (e.g., summer Promiseland substitute, volunteering at special events/services).

- Do you also desire to extend Christ-like compassion in and through the ministries of Willow Creek, as well as on your own in your neighborhood and other areas where God highlights the needs of others?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, why not? If yes, how have you grown in expressing compassion recently?
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Section 5: Surrendering to a Life of Stewardship (GOOD STEWARDSHIP)

- Do you believe the way you use your material wealth is God-honoring in all respects?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, in what areas? What action are you taking to make changes?
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- In light of the tithe as a biblical precedent for giving, do you regularly support this body using 10% as a goal to reach (or surpass as God prospers)?
 - Yes
 - NoIf not, describe your current practice and ways you’re moving toward this goal.
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- If proportionate giving becomes possible for you (that is, giving beyond 10% of your income), what dreams do you have for using your resources so the Kingdom can expand locally and around the world?
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Note: People can fall prey to a variety of errors in the area of giving. One extreme is to become compelled by guilt or legalistic “obedience.” Paul said God loves a cheerful giver. Reluctant, joyless giving evidences an issue that needs to be addressed. Paul also warned against unbalanced, irresponsible giving that ignores personal needs and can actually create financial dependence (2 Corinthians 8:12–15; 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–12; 1 Timothy 5:8). Yet another extreme is unplanned and haphazard giving that reflects neither faithfulness nor generosity. What has shaped Willow Creek’s position regarding giving? The Old Testament provides the backdrop— instructing God’s people to give the first 10% of their income back to Him—and as such, it ought to move us all toward adopting at least that percentage. In response to Christ’s lavish grace, the New Testament goes on to teach proportional giving, and spurs us to doing even more to advance the kingdom locally—and beyond—as God individually prospers and leads. On a practical level, church finances become harder to manage when the core gives sporadically or unpredictably. Willow Creek’s ministries benefit thousands of people (hopefully including you!). We want to continue to offer diverse ministry opportunities, but we don’t want to burden seekers or the less fortunate. And we certainly don’t want to resort to alternative means of generating income: bake-sales, raffles, high-pressured fund-raisers, etc. That leaves it up to us, the “participating core” of the church to pool our resources in a committed fashion so that our own needs can be met and ministry extended to those beyond our four walls. It is in this spirit that we ask participating members to support this church with their tithes. We realize for some this will be a goal to attain over time; for others, it’s already a mark they can surpass as God leads. In any case, we believe that God will bless and empower us as we joyfully band together to advance His cause.

Toward Intimacy with Christ in Loving Community

We hope this opportunity to take “spiritual inventory” has been rich and affirming. Remember, we are not looking for “perfect Christians” who live struggle-free lives. We are looking for those who are committed to Christ, to His church, and to ongoing growth. Our spiritual journey is a lifelong adventure maturing in Christ and intimacy with him as we walk in loving community with other followers of Jesus.

About Your Membership Dialogue

People tend to process information at a much deeper level when they discuss an issue rather than simply think or read about it. That’s why an honest conversation about your affirmations with your Dialogue Facilitator comes after you’ve completed your written responses. The purpose of the Membership Dialogue is to affirm your commitments, accurately assess the condition of your spiritual life, and plan where you’d like to go next. This step of participating membership may seem a little scary because of its emphasis on vulnerability, but it is highly beneficial because it offers both clarification of what’s going on and guidance to effect changes for the better. Perhaps at this stage more than any other, we stop “playing church” and get about the business of seeing ourselves in the holy light of Christ’s love with the caring support of a member of His body. This is loving, honest, Holy Spirit-infused fellowship at its best.

The person who conducts your Membership Dialogue is trained to facilitate your discussion. He or she takes this opportunity seriously, and wants to make sure you get the maximum benefit.

This person is instructed to listen attentively, ask meaningful questions about your responses, and most importantly, support you in whatever way seems appropriate as you take this next step in your spiritual journey. As you talk, you will both decide whether your appropriate next step is to become a participating member. Typically, if you think you're ready, so will your Dialogue Facilitator. If you sense there are problems, they are there to help. In some rare cases, the person you meet with may want to "press the pause button" and wait on your participating membership until some issue is addressed. It is important for you to know that the person who conducts your dialogue cannot stop your membership process without involving a staff member or elder. If a problem does arise—especially if the two of you disagree about anything you've discussed related to whether or not you should be confirmed—a staff member or elder must be called in for a follow-up meeting. Again, the whole purpose is to address issues and move forward—not shame you or hold you back in your spiritual progress.

In-Class Dialogue

- Your Dialogue Facilitator will receive your completed Personal Response Guide via email if you complete online (which is preferred). If you choose to handwrite it, please bring to class for session 2 (May 21) so your Dialogue Facilitator can review before session 3 (May 28). If you decide to have your Membership Dialogue in class, feel free to bring your questions to class for one of the teachers to respond to.

Outside of Class Dialogue

- If you decide now is not the time for you to become a participating member, we would like to help you continue this investigation process by providing you with our Participating Membership Study Guide. After completing the study, you can schedule a Membership Dialogue with a Dialogue Facilitator through Roy Chapin, rchapin@willowcreek.org

After your dialogue, one of two things will happen. You and your Dialogue Facilitator will both sign the Willow Creek Statement of Commitment, or else you will be directed to schedule another meeting with a staff member or elder to discuss whatever issue is of concern. Realize that both of these steps are moves forward. Both focus on your spiritual well-being, foster growth and progress, and carry the assurance that God's plan for you is unfolding right on schedule: "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). If you decide to keep investigating or arrange for a second meeting, that will be your next step. If you become a participating member, your Dialogue Facilitator will deliver your Participating Member Confirmation Form at the church office.