



# THORNAPPLE

## COVENANT CHURCH

### The Evangelical Covenant Church

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a denomination of more than eight hundred churches in the United States and Canada. It was founded by Swedish immigrants in 1885 as a voluntary covenant of churches committed to working together to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Covenant churches emphasize the Bible's witness to new life in Jesus Christ expressed in a day to day walk with the Lord.

- **We are an apostolic church.** We confess the historic faith of the apostles. We believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, our Savior and Lord. We accept the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as "the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct."
- **We are a catholic church.** We see ourselves to be part of the universal church of Jesus Christ from the days of the apostles until now.
- **We are a reformation church.** We stand in the mainstream of the sixteenth-century Protestant movement which insisted on justification by grace alone through faith alone.
- **We are an evangelical church.** We were born out of the revival movement that touched all of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and came to flower for us in nineteenth- and twentieth-century North America.

Evangelical Covenant Church Mission: We are united by Christ in a holy covenant of churches empowered by the Holy Spirit to obey the Great Commandments and the Great Commission: to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind; to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to go into all the world and make disciples.

### Covenant Affirmations

The Evangelical Covenant Church has its roots in historical Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century. For Covenant people, our essential beliefs are summed up in what we call Covenant Affirmations. To view videos created by the Covenant explaining each affirmation, [click here](#).

Classes about the Covenant denomination and the affirmations are taught periodically at Thornapple, typically in the Fall and Spring. Refer to the church calendar or contact the church office to find out when the next series of classes are.

Here are the affirmations:

- **We affirm the centrality of the word of God.**  
We believe the Bible is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. The dynamic, transforming power of the word of God directs the church and the life of each Christian. This reliance on the Bible leads us to affirm both men and women as ordained ministers and at every level of leadership. It is the reason we pursue ethnic diversity in our church and is the inspiration for every act of compassion, mercy, and justice. To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).
- **We affirm the necessity of the new birth.**  
The Apostle Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, TNIV). New

birth in Christ means committing ourselves to him and receiving forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life. It means being alive in Christ, and this life has the qualities of love and righteousness, joy and peace. New birth is only the beginning. Growing to maturity in Christ is a lifelong process for both individuals and communities of believers. God forms and transforms us—and it is through people transformed by Christ that God transforms the world. To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).

- **We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the Church.**

The early Covenanters were known as “Mission Friends” - people of shared faith who came together to carry out God’s mission both far and near. Mission for them and for us includes evangelism, Christian formation, and ministries of compassion, mercy, and justice. We follow Christ’s two central calls. The Great Commission sends us out into all the world to make disciples. The Great Commandment calls us to love the Lord our God and our neighbors as ourselves. To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).

- **We affirm the Church as a fellowship of believers.**

Membership in the Covenant Church is by confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and is open to all believers. We observe baptism and Holy Communion as sacraments commanded by Jesus. We practice both infant and believer baptism. We believe in the priesthood of all believers—that is, we all share in the ministry of the church. We also affirm that God calls some men and women into professional, full-time ministry. The church is not an institution, organization, or building. It is a grace-filled fellowship of believers who participate in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. It is a family of equals: as the New Testament teaches that within Christian community there is to be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).

- **We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.**

The Covenant Church affirms the Trinitarian understanding of one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit works both within individuals and among them. We believe it is the Holy Spirit who instills in our hearts a desire to turn to Christ, and who assures us that Christ dwells within us. It is the Holy Spirit who enables our obedience to Christ and conforms us to his image, and it is the Spirit in us that enables us to continue Christ’s mission in the world. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to us as individuals and binds us together as Christ’s body. To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).

- **We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ.**

The Apostle Paul wrote, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1, TNIV). This freedom is a gift of God in Christ, and it manifests itself in a right relationship with God and others. It is not a private gift to be used selfishly, but is given to serve the community and the world. For Paul, this freedom means that we are set free from the power of those things that on their own tend to divide. United in Christ, we offer freedom to one another to differ on issues of belief or practice where the biblical and historical record seems to allow for a variety of interpretations of the will and purposes of God. We in the Covenant Church seek to focus on what unites us as followers of Christ, rather than on what divides us. To view a video explaining this affirmation, [click here](#).

## Conclusion...

The Evangelical Covenant Church is a pilgrim church. Until Christ comes, we worship, serve, and witness so that the whole earth may hear God’s voice, learn of God’s love, and experience God’s joy. If you want to learn more about the Evangelical Covenant Church, visit the Covenant website at [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org) for more information.

Affirmations like these are not to be taken as creedal statements. They are rather to be understood as true and valid descriptions of what Covenanters believe and cherish as they continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, awaiting that day when the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15).