



Frequently Asked Questions Our Charter

Q: Why do we have a Charter?

A: A charter is our reason for being. It states briefly, but clearly, why we are joining together as a new body of Christ.

Q: Does Manassas really need another church?

A: Yes. While Manassas has many churches, River of Grace offers a new and different experience of God's unconditional love. It is estimated that 2/3 of the homes in our community do not have a meaningful connection with a local congregation. While we will likely not meet the needs of every one of those households, there are hundreds, and even thousands, of people who are waiting to be touched by friendship, grace and hope within a ten mile radius of our church. And we are privileged to have a mission and a ministry that can touch and transform their lives. With our mission to Love God + Love Others, and our commitment to Worship, Grow and Serve, we can boldly proclaim, "Thank God we're here!"

Q: Who can sign our charter?

A: Anyone – man, woman, or child – who intends to live our Mission, to Love God and Love Others; and our Vision, to be caught up in God's love for the world, that we Worship, Grow and Serve following the invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have one Charter for Adults and Teenagers, and a second for Children. Signing the charter makes you a member, or a "partner in mission," at our new congregation. Our little children who cannot write their names will put their fingerprint on the Children's Charter, and Mom or Dad can write their names next to the print.

Q: Does signing the charter say that I want to be a Lutheran Christian?

A: Yes, it does. And remember, at River of Grace, it's always been more important for us that we are *Christians* than it is to be *Lutherans*; and being Lutheran helps us understand how Christ's life is lived out in our own lives.

Q: How can I learn more about being a Lutheran Christian?

A: If you've been involved at River of Grace, then you already have a head start! We believe some great stuff about Who we are and Whose we are. We will have more structured ways to learn those things, too, and Pastor Connie will be the leader. Stay tuned for more details.

Q: If I or my kids have never been baptized, are we welcome to sign?

A: Yes! And we will always have opportunity for adults and children to be baptized at River of Grace. Baptism means that you want to receive God's love for you, and that you want to walk with God all the days of your life. By the time we officially "organize" as a congregation, which will be in 2015, we would like for you to be baptized. Signing the charter before then could perhaps be a step along your journey towards that exciting new walk with God for you. And most important about your baptism is this: It is a gift from God ... it is not something you earn or deserve. God's grace is free, and it is plenty. God loves you already! Your baptism is a simple acceptance of that promise, and with your acknowledging it, stating that you would like to live in community with the Church so that you might grow more – through your lifetime – and discover more deeply what that promise means.

Q: Must I be rebaptized if I wasn't baptized in a Lutheran Church?

A: No! Lutherans believe in "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins." If you were baptized in any Christian church, it's valid and effective!

Q: Do most of the people at River of Grace have a Lutheran background?

A: It's hard to tell, because again we talk more about what it means to be "Christian," but this pastor's guess (that's me, Pastor Connie, if you can't tell!) would guess that maybe about 50% of the people who make River of Grace their church home have a Lutheran background, and even less are life-long Lutherans! Because our Christianity is the most important way we identify ourselves, River of Grace has been a breath of fresh air for many people - who have many various denominations in their background, or who have never considered themselves "Christian" or belonged to a church home before.

Q: We won't officially "organize" until 2015 and due to retirement or an upcoming job change, I may not even live in the area at that time. But River of Grace is my church home. Should I still sign?

A: Yes! Life changes are certainly part of life. When people sign the charter they will be invited to take a river rock home with them, and we will all be reminded that just like rivers and their paths change, so do we. We are grateful that God has you as part of the River of Grace family now, and that is what we are asking as much as we are asking for your engagement in the future. You matter to us. So yes. Please. Sign.

Q: I won't have a great deal of money to give as an offering. Can I still sign the charter?

A: Of course! Charter signing is not dependent upon financial dues. We want to welcome all who wish to make River of Grace their church. We hope all will respond to God's grace, and give back as the Lord has given to them. Giving is an individual's response to God's love. We will be challenged to respond responsibly and freely in light of God's blessings to us. And we encourage you to strive toward "growth giving," giving a higher percentage of your income each year, as you are able. And at the same time, we know everyone has different stories, different journeys, different abilities to give. What we are more interested in is your engagement in our life together. Not a "payment plan," or regular "invoices." Be here with your heart and your prayers. Meet people. Grow in faith and love. The rest will take care of itself. It always does.

Q: Who supports River of Grace?

A: We do! Your offerings make a big difference in the life of our congregation, and we are so grateful for the generous support of so many. Also, because we are a young congregation, Lutheran churches locally and nationally are supporting our mission and ministry. We will get to be on this kind of support for a couple more years, and as our growth occurs, those resources will diminish because our support will increase. We also hope to "pay it forward" to a new church or two somewhere down the road!

Q: If I'm not sure I want to sign the charter, what should I do?

A: Continue to think about it, pray about it, and talk about it with Pastor Connie and others at River of Grace. Find out why they are "making it official," and discern if you'd like to do the same thing!

Q: Will I be welcome to take part in the ministry of River of Grace even if I'm not a member/partner in mission?

A: Absolutely! But in making it official, you let us know that just like you count on the ministry of River of Grace for your daily living, we are able to count on you. If you're not ready yet, that's okay. If you haven't figured it out yet, we are about grace here. Remember, we Love God + Love Others. That's part of what makes our life together so beautiful.

Q: So I've signed the Charter. What's next?

A: It's important for us to have up-to-date records for you, so if we don't have current information with your name, address, phone numbers, email, etc., we have a form for you to fill out. We will make sure you get one. But that's the mundane stuff. The better stuff ... to continue to Love God + Love Others. Keep it up with the Worship, Grow and Serve. And keep on finding ways to dive into the ministry we share at River of Grace. It's a beautiful blessing because of all the people involved, and that includes YOU. Thank you for walking in faith, together!