



CREEKSIDE

CHAPEL

PATHWAY

TO

PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION TO PARTNERSHIP

It is our sincere belief that ministry partnership with a local church is God's design for everyone. Together, we are the body of Christ, with Jesus as our "head." Each follower of Jesus is a part of that body and therefore has their own role to play in the life of the church. *He (Jesus) makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love* (refer to Ephesians 4:15-16). Another biblically-inspired way to think of this is with God as a potter and each of us as his clay, we are being molded in his strong and caring hands, joining together with the other pieces of the pottery he is shaping.

Historically, claiming one's place in the local church has been referred to as "membership." At Creekside, we are choosing to use the word "partner" instead of "member" to describe this step in your journey as a disciple of Jesus. We're doing so because we believe it is a more accurate description of the relationship between the local church and an individual.

From a biblical perspective, we read the Apostle Paul using this word in his communication with the Philippian church: *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until*

now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:4-6).

We are partners together in living out and sharing the gospel of Jesus, and we're glad for it. Paul's words are our prayer and our hope for you!

We believe that partnership makes more sense than membership from a cultural standpoint as well. Membership with an organization can be a loose affiliation that may or may not include your regular participation and involvement, and often prioritizes your money.

Being a ministry partner means that you are actively participating in a relationship with the Lord and his people through this local church, the place where you are committing to worship and to serve God and his people.

Our mission to reach, teach, mend and send people in the name of Jesus can only be realized when the whole body is moving in the same direction. Partnership is a way for us to ensure that we are furthering the mission together.

Being a ministry partner is not required for you to participate in the ministries, gatherings and groups at Creekside Chapel. However, partnership does mean that you are taking on and being trusted with a higher level of responsibility in the church. As a ministry partner, you can:

- Participate in annual votes for our church board members and delegates (liaisons and representatives between the local church and the Genesis Conference), and on other major church decisions that may require a vote...
- Be considered for leading a ministry at Creekside Chapel, which includes leading other volunteers who participate in that ministry...
- Or serve on our church board or staff, if called upon to do so.

We understand that partnership assumes a certain level of commitment from both you and your church. Our hope is that through these materials you will see *who we are, what we believe and where we're going*, so that you can know what we are all committing to as you make an informed decision about partnership.

One more unique quality of partnership vs. membership is that while membership tends to be a relationship that goes on indefinitely regardless of the member's activity, ministry partnership assumes the active and ongoing participation of the individual. It's about more than being affiliated with something, it's about being part of something.

As you explore becoming a partner at Creekside Chapel, this exploration process may result in a few different outcomes for you:

1. **You are ready to enter into partnership.** We celebrate that and will help you make that commitment!

2. **You are interested in partnership** but have additional questions to address first as you prepare. It would be our privilege to have those conversations with you.

3. **You want to keep participating** at Creekside and determine what your next steps are, but you're not ready to become a partner yet.

In all of this, please know that we see partnership in ministry at and through Creekside Chapel as **secondary and supplementary** to your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is our desire to see every person following, living for and living like Jesus, in this life and on through to eternity. Your connection with God can certainly be initiated through the local church, encouraged by the local church and strengthened in the local church. It is part of God's design for the church to function in those ways. However, a relationship with the church should never substitute for or take precedence over your role as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We hope our partnership with you will last a long time, but most important to us is that your relationship with God endures forever. If and when the time comes that you can no longer partner with Creekside Chapel because of life's circumstances or changes, it is our hope and prayer that you will continue faithfully following Jesus, wherever he may lead you.

WHO WE ARE

CREEKSIDE CHAPEL'S HISTORY

The First Free Methodist Church of Allegany (now Creekside Chapel) was founded in August of 1860 as one of the first Free Methodist churches in existence, becoming incorporated later that decade. The FMC in Olean merged with the congregation in Allegany a little over 100 years later. The combined congregation moved from the village of Allegany to its current location on Five Mile Road in 1986, in order to accommodate the space and parking needed for a growing congregation.

For much of our history, we have averaged having around 200 people from Allegany and the surrounding communities who attend worship gatherings during the calendar year and who would call Creekside Chapel "their church." In our small-town setting we believe that the ministries and people of Creekside are making a big impact in the community,



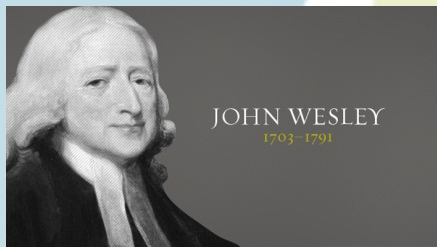
across the globe, and most importantly, for the eternal kingdom of God.

CHRISTIAN, PROTESTANT, METHODIST AND FREE METHODIST HISTORY

At Creekside we see ourselves as part of the larger Church, the body of Christ that spans the globe and has endured for centuries, initiated and led by Jesus. We are one small expression of that faith, one among millions of locations around the world for believers in Jesus and those curious about God to seek and find the love of God, to worship, and to serve him by serving others. This belonging to Jesus crosses all denominational, national, racial, cultural and societal bounds. We follow in the footsteps of those first disciples of Jesus, men and women who received the Holy Spirit and ministered to all in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As centuries passed, the practices and expectations of political leaders, religious leaders and religious organizations often became restrictive and demanding in ways that Jesus and his first disciples never intended. This shift led to protests from believers who wanted to get back to a more original and authentic, gospel-centered, book of Acts-inspired way of following Jesus. The Protestant Reformation of the 1500's was the result of this movement.

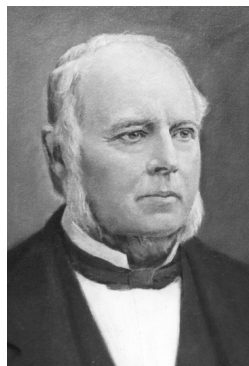
Out of the Protestant Reformation came several expressions of what it meant to follow Jesus and interpret his word faithfully. One such group was led by John Wesley, an 18th century minister in the Church of England whose emphasis



on methodical approaches to evangelism and gathering for worship, personal holiness, caring for the poor, and responding to the invitation of God out

of our free will captured the hearts of many in Europe, America and around the world. Out of this, the Methodist church was born.

Like many other iterations of the church, this movement too fell prey to societal pressures and poor leadership in certain areas. As conversations in America in the mid-1800's came to a boil over issues such as slavery, women's rights and caring for the poor among us, a group of Methodist ministers led by Benjamin Titus Roberts stood up for those who were being mistreated, just as they believed that Jesus would. They believed that the Methodist-Episcopal church was turning a blind eye to their brothers and sisters in need. Their condemnation of the church's stance on these issues led to their being removed from ordination, and their accompanying desire to provide "free" Methodist churches. Roberts (picture at right), who lived in the Rochester area, began working tirelessly to open new churches in Western and Central New York, as well as starting a school for students to learn how to apply their



Christian faith to their adult lives and vocations (to pray and work), which is now known as Roberts Wesleyan University.

Without taking away from the beliefs or practices of the Christian faith handed down through the centuries and expressed by Wesleyans around the world, these Methodists intended to open churches to the community where:

- slavery was condemned and all people were treated as though they were *free*...
- where both women and men were *free* to respond to the call of God to lead and preach...
- where all people could attend and *freely* sit in any seat of their choosing without the obligation to pay for it...
- where people could learn to live lives *free* from the trappings and temporal desires of this world...
- and where the Holy Spirit was *free* to minister to and move in and through the people, resulting in a *freer* kind of worship.

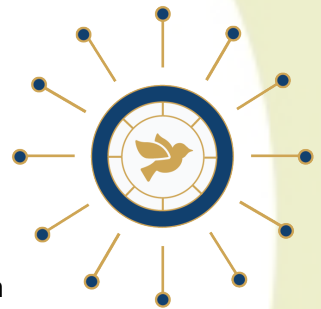
These are the primary characteristics that came to describe the newly established Free Methodist Church (FMC), and where our congregation found its beginning. We are, to this day, glad to be affiliated with the Free Methodist Church-USA (visit fmcusa.org for more information).

THE FREE METHODIST WAY: FIVE VALUES THAT SHAPE OUR IDENTITY

Free Methodists are first and foremost a Kingdom people. Yet throughout church history God has raised up distinct movements like ours to enrich the larger body of Christ. Building on the legacies of John Wesley and B.T. Roberts, but always discerning where God is moving today, our identity is shaped by values that are both historical and aspirational. Of the many values we hold dear, these five lie at the heart of our movement. We view them as a whole, each one bringing necessary balance to the others. In a time of rising polarization in our nation, we resist the pull toward both fundamentalism and theological liberalism—not out of a spirit of compromise, but from a radical commitment to what Wesley called “the middle way.” It is a path that takes the whole gospel seriously and continually calls us to “both/and” convictions in an “either/or” world. We call it The Free Methodist Way.

1. Life-Giving Holiness — God’s call to holiness was never meant to be a burden, but a gift that liberates us for life that is truly life by delivering us from the destructive power of sin.

All who are born again are made right with God by the finished work of Jesus Christ and called to experience the fullness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Forgiven and filled, we approach life with



confidence that we are acceptable to God even as He continues to transform our character and behavior to become more and more like Jesus. Life-giving holiness, then, is the fruit of full surrender to the loving reign of God over every aspect of our lives, establishing within us love that is truly love.

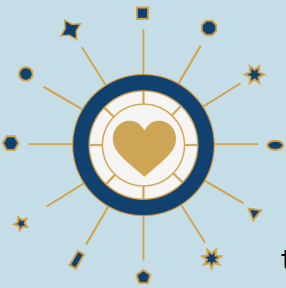
Leaving behind the legalism that once hindered our movement, The Free Methodist Way invites every believer to embrace the transforming work of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to love and serve God and others in joyful obedience.

2. Love-Driven Justice — Love is the way we demonstrate God’s heart for justice by valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children, acting with

compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding Creation.

We devote ourselves to our founders’ deep convictions around matters of injustice as they took their stand against the evils of

slavery, the oppression of the poor, the marginalization of women, and the abuse of power in the church. Our heart for justice continues and expands today, fueled by God’s holy love for the unborn, the vulnerable, oppressed, marginalized, and people of all races and ethnicities.



The Free Methodist Way is not only to realize a better society, but that all may be reconciled to God and one another in ways that reflect God's just character.

3. Christ-Compelled Multiplication — The gospel of Jesus Christ (the message He proclaimed, the life He lived, and the ministry He modeled) set into motion a redemptive movement destined to fill the whole earth.

Jesus' approach to discipleship was primarily a relational one in which He poured His life into a few with the full expectation that they would follow His example. His aim was not merely the transmission of information, but the transformation of lives by empowering those who followed Him to do what He had been doing. His mission is now our mission. We believe this redemptive movement of multiplication applies to every believer and should permeate our Free Methodist culture at every level: the found reaching the lost, disciples making disciples, leaders developing leaders, churches planting churches, and movements birthing movements.

The Free Methodist Way is to see God's kingdom expand exponentially as ordinary people are equipped by God's power to do extraordinary things.



4. Cross-Cultural Collaboration — From the beginning, God’s intent was to have a people from every tribe, nation, culture and ethnicity, united in Christ and commissioned to carry out His work in the world.



Today we celebrate the beauty of a multicultural and multiethnic church both in the U.S. and in over 100 countries around the world. In the U.S., we cling to the promise that we have been made one in Christ even as we dedicate ourselves to becoming a more diverse church that looks like the kingdom of God. Globally, we continue to send missionaries to other nations even as we rejoice that the nations are increasingly coming to us. Freely sharing our own gifts and resources, we are also challenged and inspired by the faithfulness, perseverance, ceaseless prayer, theological insights, and spiritual wisdom of our international brothers and sisters. Without question, we are better together.

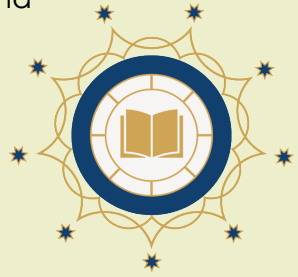
The Free Methodist Way aspires to move beyond colonialism and ethnocentrism in favor of a collaborative partnership in God’s global work in anticipation of the day when a great multitude from every tongue, tribe, people and language makes up the eternal throng before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9).

5. God-Given Revelation — We hold unswervingly to our conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Drawing on our Wesleyan heritage of understanding truth through the lenses of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, we keep Scripture primary.

While the church will always be tasked with authentically communicating and applying biblical truths with sensitivity to cultural dynamics, we do not subjugate the Bible's timeless truths to cultural norms or social trends.

The Free Methodist Way is to fully align our lives and our movement on the unshakeable foundation of God's Word.



The Free Methodist Way

Five Values that Shape our Identity

OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: The FMC (nationally and locally) and at Creekside (pastors, staff, board and ministry leaders)

- **In the Free Methodist Church**, the Board of Bishops (currently three people) oversees the FMC-USA as a whole, as well as areas of ministry in countries around the world where domestic leadership is not yet fully established or independent. Bishops are elected by a national conference of ministers and laypeople every four years.
- **Superintendents** oversee the ministries and ministers of the 30 districts (called Conferences) in the United States and report to the Board of Bishops. They are elected every four years by a regional gathering of pastors and laypeople who have been selected to represent others by individual churches. Creekside is part of the Genesis Conference (genesismc.com).
- **Pastors** are appointed to lead local churches after superintendents seek the Lord for wisdom and work with Conference and local church leaders in finding the best person for that assignment. Each pastor is morally and doctrinally accountable to a group of pastors and church leaders called the Ministerial Educational Guidance Board. This is a great blessing for both the church and pastor.

- **At Creekside**, our ministry staff is typically made up of pastor(s) and part-time positions for office manager, care and outreach coordinator/deacon, and teen ministry director. Additionally, depending on the need, Creekside often also employs a quarter-time cleaner and a quarter-time maintenance supervisor. All staff members report directly to the lead pastor.
- Every local church in the FMC also has a **board of administration** (church board or leadership team), which work in partnership with the pastor(s) to implement the vision for the church and to promote and support the church's mission. This board is additionally required by New York State for our operation as a non-profit (501c3) organization. Board members are nominated for election by a nominating committee and then elected by our ministry partners on a rotating basis, for terms of up to six years, at the church's annual meeting.
- **Ministry leaders** are partners who are responsible for the oversight, coordination and recruitment of volunteers for a particular ministry. Ministry leaders invest in, have relationship with and pray for the people they serve alongside. They are typically appointed by the staff member who oversees that specific area within the church.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

FROM THE FREE METHODIST BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

TRINITY: We believe in ONE GOD, who is eternal, all-powerful, and absolutely holy, who has revealed himself to humans as existing in three distinguishable persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and John 14:15-17)

BIBLE: We believe that the bible is God's eternal, inspired, infallible word in its entirety; it is the supreme standard and final authority for all conduct, faith, and doctrine. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

CREATION: We believe in the creation, test, and fall of humanity as recorded in Genesis. (Romans 5:12, 18; 8:1-9; 6:23; 3:23; 7:18, 21-25)

JESUS: We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of humankind – conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully man, He died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day, and personally appeared to His disciples. He is returning to earth. (Luke 1:26-35; John 1:18; Isaiah 7:14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 17; Romans 4:25; 1 Tim 6:14-16)

SALVATION: We believe in the salvation of sinners by grace (not by good works), through repentance and faith in the perfect and sufficient work of the cross of Calvary by which we obtain forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 9:12-15; Romans 5:11)

HOLY SPIRIT: We believe in the Spirit-filled life, a life of loving God and others fully and avoiding those attitudes and actions that God calls sin. We believe in the ongoing operation of the gifts of the Spirit as manifested in the Early Church. (Ephesians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 7:1; 1 Corinthians 12-14)

ETERNITY: We believe in eternal life for believers: a literal heaven, where we will live and reign with Christ, and a literal hell for those who reject Christ. (John 5:24; Mark 9:43-58; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:10-15)

SATAN: We believe in the reality and personality of Satan and demonic forces of evil. Christ has overcome Satan on the cross and eternal judgment awaits Satan and demons. (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10-15)

SACRAMENTS FOR ALL: We believe in baptism for all who decide to follow Jesus as Lord, and in communion (or the Lord's Table or Eucharist) as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:28-32; Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:34-36, 19:1-6)

WHERE WE'RE HEADED

PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

PURPOSE – Why do we exist?

Love for God and a heart for people. It is our desire to live out what Jesus himself called the greatest commandment, which is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors the way we want to be loved and cared for. *And who are our neighbors?* Everyone we come into contact with.

VISION – Where are we headed? What would God have us look like?

An active, thriving, outward-focused church that boldly follows Jesus.

A welcoming community where people come expecting to encounter God.

MISSION – What will we do to achieve our vision?

- **Reach:** meeting people where they're at
- **Teach:** equipping people to follow Jesus
- **Mend:** bringing hope and healing to the wounded
- **Send:** sharing our talents and resources here and abroad

VALUES – How will we go about it?

- People of Prayer: Being in consistent relationship and communication with God. (Philippians 4:6)
- People of God's Word: Teaching the whole Bible for life application. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Integrity and Honesty: Creating an atmosphere that is free of gossip, animosity and judgment. (Titus 2:7-8)
- Unashamed: *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes."* (Romans 1:16)
- Forgiving and Compassionate: We strive to forgive as we've been forgiven and to love as we've been loved. (1 John 4:19-21)
- Discipleship: Helping people on their journey to follow Jesus and become more like Him. (Psalm 119:105, Romans 12:2)
- Intentionality: Discovering what we've been called to do and doing it well. (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
- Strength through Weakness: We confess to our own brokenness and weaknesses, which can only be healed and made whole through the work of Jesus in our lives. We affirm that God is the source of our strength. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 1 John 1:8-9)

DISCIPLESHIP

Making disciples is the main business of the church. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands his disciples, and by extension, us, to reach, teach, mend, and send:

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Disciples are students of Jesus. In a way, the local church is similar to a classroom giving students tools to grow in their relationship with Jesus. We spend time with Jesus, learning how to be like him.

There is a growth path for every person that engages at Creekside. The desired outcome of that engagement is for all people to grow in faith and to become more like Jesus.

- We intentionally pray for and share with those who are not yet following Jesus. Because we know that following Jesus is the best offer around (it truly is good news!), we are not ashamed to make sharing the gospel a regular occurrence in all facets of church life. We will regularly offer opportunities for people to decide to follow Jesus.
- It is our intention to also welcome guests and build connections with those who are new at Creekside but not new to following Jesus. As a church, we are committed to providing these people a place to be connected, grow,

and serve. We offer care, teaching, and the sacraments. We walk them through the process of discerning a place of service and we equip them to joyfully serve wherever they are called.

GROUPS

- Part of the growth path for those who are new at Creekside is a gathering with others. An introductory group will be offered at various times throughout the year where information about the church's mission and vision will be shared, with time for discussion. Those who attend the gathering will be encouraged to get connected with a growth group. This first group will be focused on being a safe place for people to land who may be unfamiliar with church.
- Other groups will be offered that meet the growth needs of those who are at various phases along the path. Facilitators will be recruited and trained. It is our aim to equip them in understanding how spiritual growth happens in the life of a disciple. The emphasis is less on transferring information and more in training disciples for transformation.
- The culture of groups will nurture authenticity and trust. Every person participating needs to feel seen, heard, and valued. We recognize that healthy community provides the best environment for growing in Christlikeness.

- It is occasionally the case that groups are on-going, providing stability and safety to those who are mending from the harsh realities of life. However, it is an expectation that healthy groups will multiply and send some among them out to reach others who do not yet follow Jesus.

GENEROSITY

As a church we have committed to a spirit of generosity, largely because we have seen and experienced God's generous love and provision. We think that when we live generously, that says a lot to a watching world about the nature of our God. This is expressed through a number of commitments:

We are committed to tithing 10% of the financial resources we receive as a church each year, giving them away to others who are serving the Lord or are in need of temporary assistance. Creekside gives away tens of thousands of dollars each year toward local and global initiatives by:

- supporting Free Methodist missionaries and churches worldwide...
- giving to churches and leaders in areas of the world undergoing severe crisis...

- partnering with and supporting local and global ministries and agencies who minister to the poor and vulnerable, including widows and orphans...
- prayerfully answering calls for financial assistance from community members...
- and offering financial or ministry support to smaller churches who are on mission to make disciples and transform their communities in the name of Jesus.

We offer a food pantry and clothing closet free of charge to the residents of Cattaraugus County. The food we purchase and/or receive as a donation comes from FeedMore WNY, local businesses, and people from our congregation and community. Around 100 families or individuals per month come through our doors to receive assistance, at which time they are also offered care, compassion and prayer.

We seek to financially, prayerfully and practically support external organizations that care for the vulnerable, hurting and oppressed, such as:

- Operation Christmas Child (gifts and the gospel for children in third world countries)
- Wunders (providing hygienic and educational care for teenage girls in Africa)

- International Child Care Ministries (providing food, shelter, and education for at-risk children around the world)
- Set Free Movement (bringing awareness and help to the ongoing crisis of human trafficking)

Lastly, it is our intention to be generous toward the people of Creekside. We offer competitive wages to our staff. We look for every opportunity to bless those in our congregation who are going above and beyond to serve or who are celebrating significant milestones in life.

We encourage those who call Creekside “home” to partner with us in this posture of generosity as well. Which of these next steps might best describe the best one for you when it comes to financially partnering with us?

- I’ve not yet given to God through the church, but I want to take the next step and **begin giving**.
- I’ve given to God through Creekside before, but I’m ready to make an intentional plan for **consistent giving**.
- I consistently give to God through Creekside (and maybe other ministries, too), but I will move toward **giving away a specific percentage of my income**.
- I am ready to faithfully give **10% of my income** to God through Creekside (this is what the Bible calls “tithing”).

- I intend to give **beyond** my tithe to God through Creekside (and most likely other ministries, too), living a life that is marked by generosity and blessing others.

We wholeheartedly believe that this matter is primarily between you and the Lord, not you and the local church.

We stand behind the Scriptures when they say to us,

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver...” (2 Corinthians 9:7 and following)

Knowing that we can't take our earthly treasure to heaven with us, and that God has a much better eternal treasure in store for his children, we commit to giving away what we can here and now in order to share God's love and generosity with others. In doing so, we demonstrate our trust in his provision and his loving concern for us.

PARTNERSHIP PLEDGE

Please carefully consider and honestly answer the following questions:

1. Are you confident that God has forgiven your sins through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Are you determined, by God's grace, to be Christlike in heart and life, opening yourself fully to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the nurture and fellowship of the church?
3. Do you believe that the Bible is God's written word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit, and do you accept its authority and guidance in your life and in the life of the church?
4. Do you believe that you are ready to partner with the beliefs, goals and leadership of the Free Methodist Church and Creekside Chapel, as put forth in these materials?
5. Will you do so by sacrificially and faithfully offering to God and others your time, talents and resources?

If you are ready to answer each of these with a "yes," then you are ready to have a conversation with one of our pastors about partnership! If you are unsure or unable to answer yes to one or more of these questions, we would also encourage you to consider speaking with a pastor to further your preparation for partnership, or as you continue to find new ways to participate at Creekside.