

## BRANCHGRAM JUNE

“We engage to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine.”

As we think about this second stipulation, we are reminded that to promote entails assertion. There are no passive promoters. We have not engaged to be neutral with respect to the church. Our commitment to the church is an active commitment. There are to be no spectators. What is it, though, that we have engaged to promote? We have engaged to promote its prosperity. Prosperity certainly refers to the financial health of the church, so part of the action to which we have committed is the regular dropping of our money into the offering plate. With that said, I also believe the prosperity of the church applies to its reputation. Our covenant calls us to foster a positive reputation for the church in the community which includes speaking well of each other individually and corporately in public as well as in private.

Promoting the spirituality of the church is summed up in the second clause of this pledge. We can promote the spirituality of Vine Street by sustaining “its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine.” You might be asking, How can I sustain the worship at the church? Is that not Michael and Johann’s job? Well, yes, we are finally responsible for the shape and direction of each worship service, but you can fulfill your role by using your gifts in creative ways. For instance, the decorating committee helped “sustain the worship” through beautifully adorning the sanctuary during Easter. Chandler supports the service technologically. Donnie makes sure that everyone is greeted and accounted. Many people sing solos and the choir helps guide the church in worship. Each one of us has a unique role in sustaining the worship.

With regard to the ordinances, when I was a child I used to think that since we were at church, the baptistery and Lord’s Supper were somehow mysteriously prepared. Then I realized that those things are prepared because somebody came early and turned the water on or filled each cup with juice. I want to encourage you to think about one area of the worship where you could be the one who prepares or at least can fill in when the regular is away.

Discipline is one area in which I would like to see us improve. It is biblical and imperative for maintaining the holiness of our church (see May Branchgram). This requires that we hold each other accountable and be willing to rebuke for the good of the individual and the health of the church. Although many of us probably never think about doctrine in particular, we should develop discerning ears and spirits, so that if something does not sound right, we will at least ask (1 John 4:1). My natural tendency is to let things slide and not make too big of a fuss, but sometimes “fusses” need to be made for the sake of the church.