



Joining the Vowed Community 101

Following Jesus Together in Miami

WHAT IS THE VOWED COMMUNITY AND WHO IS IT FOR?

We believe that God calls us to commit ourselves not only to Christ, but also to following Jesus with a local expression of his Body, the church. Our community is one expression of the body of Christ in our city. When you ask how can I “be a part of Rhythm,” our first response is simply to say, “Come have a seat at the table. We’d love for you to take part in everything we do. If you want in, you’re in.” However, if the question you’re asking is “How do I live as a disciple of Jesus, commit myself to this community, and participate in the mission?” – then we invite you to consider becoming part of the Vowed Community.

Joining the Vowed Community is a great step to take if you are a follower of Jesus and see Rhythm as your “church home.” The Vowed Community are the people in Rhythm who are ready to say, “This is my church! I want to follow Jesus with these people and to invest in this community.”

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER JOINING THE VOWED COMMUNITY?

Belonging to a healthy local church is vital for all believers. The letters found in the New Testament are written to early Jesus communities who had been joined together by the gospel of Christ (Romans 16:3-5). The people who made up these communities consistently worshiped together (Hebrews 10:24-25), were accountable to one another (Galatians 6:1), encouraged one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), served one another (1 Peter 4:10), and contended for the gospel together using their spiritual gifts and financial means to edify the church and move the mission forward (Philippians 1:5, 27; 1 Corinthians 12).

In a city like Miami, concrete commitment in a church matters. It is easy to become surprisingly autonomous and anonymous in our city. Without knowing it, we can become isolated, caught in the distraction of habits that move us slowly away from the love of God. And our lives can get out of balance, so driven by other competing forces that our walk with God and participation in the mission of Jesus is pushed to the side. Joining the Vowed Community helps to keep our faith in Jesus grounded and growing.

WHO IS RHYTHM AND WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

Rhythm is a Protestant non-denominational church in Miami, one of the most culturally diverse cities in the United States. We seek to be a multicultural church serving a diverse urban community in the city. A group of friends started Rhythm in 2010 with a simple vision to follow Jesus together in his core rhythms and make disciples in Miami.

Rhythm exists to form and grow disciples of Jesus who join God in the renewal of Miami.

We live into this purpose by:

- *Listening and responding to the Spirit’s initiative personally and communally.*
- *Multiplied teams of disciples to express and extend God’s love.*
- *Embodying the beauty, wholeness, and diversity of God’s kingdom.*

Rhythm is not affiliated with a particular denomination, but we do draw and learn from different streams of the historic Christian faith. We participate as members of both the *Ecclesia Network* (ecclesianet.org) and the *V3 Church Planting Movement* (thev3movement.org).

To learn more about Rhythm’s core convictions, theology, leadership structure, and strategy please read ***Joining the Vowed Community 201***.

WHAT ARE THE COMMITMENTS OF THE VOWED COMMUNITY?

There are seven core commitments for someone joining the Vowed Community. The heart behind these concrete commitments is love, joy, freedom, and grace. Whereas membership for many organizations, clubs and institutions involve consuming and receiving, joining the Vowed Community of Rhythm functions like a family and is marked by participation and service. The Vowed Community is a spiritual family that has received God's grace and endeavors to share that grace with others inside and outside of the church.

- (1) *I have or will publicly affirm my faith in Christ*** - A prerequisite to being part of the Vowed Community is being a follower of Jesus who has been baptized. If you have not been baptized, then one of our pastors would love to discuss this with you!
- (2) *I will faithfully commit my whole life to being formed in Jesus and his way*** - The first call of every disciple of Christ is to Christ himself - to know him, love him, and be formed by him. Vowed Community members commit to pursue whole-life formation in Christlikeness individually and alongside others. Practically this includes regular participation in Public Worship, pursuing emotional health, building spiritual friendships, and personalizing the communal Rhythm of Life with concrete spiritual practices (see Rhythm of Life guide).
- (3) *I will intentionally join God in his mission of making disciples in Miami*** - The second call of every disciple of Christ is to make more disciples - to participate in Christ's mission in the world. Rhythm's primary strategy for forming and growing disciples of Jesus in Miami is starting and multiplying Missional Churches (MC). Vowed Community members commit to making disciples through active participation in an MC or some other concrete way.
- (4) *I will sacrificially serve our church with my time, energy, heart, and presence*** - Servanthood is one of the primary characteristics of a disciple of Jesus. We want this to not just be a "duty" that we perform but a posture that we take towards people and our community. Vowed Community members commit to practically serve Rhythm in some way (e.g. hospitality team, Rhythm Kids, set-up/tear-down, worship team). This could take a variety of forms and change in different seasons, but joyful servanthood is significant.
- (5) *I will diligently protect the unity of Rhythm and the wider Church in Miami*** - One of the final prayers of Jesus recorded in the Bible is of him praying for his followers to be unified (John 17). The unity of God's people is beautiful when experienced, it must be guarded with prayer and humility, and is a key form of witness to the world. Vowed Community members commit to prioritize the unity and peace of Christ in Rhythm and the wider Church in Miami through prayer, words, and actions.
- (6) *I will generously give my financial resources to empower the ministry and mission of Rhythm*** - Financial generosity is an important discipleship issue - it is an act of worship and thanks to God, surrender and trust to Jesus, and commitment to the mission of making disciples. Vowed Community members commit to steward their financial resources so they can give 10% or more to the ministry and mission of Rhythm. Please email one of the pastors for a copy of Rhythm's current budget.
- (7) *I will consistently pray for people in Rhythm, Miami, and for God's kingdom to break in*** - Prayer and intercession are the fuel behind any kingdom movement and breakthrough. Rhythm is committed to a missional expression of the church, so we depend on the resources of God. Vowed Community members commit to lead our church towards greater intimacy with God, fervor in prayer, and spiritual power for the mission.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

If you are considering making this commitment for the first time or have questions about joining the Vowed Community, then please participate in the Family Meeting lunch after Public Worship on *September 23* to hear more about Rhythm's vision, mission, and strategy. There will be lots of time for dialogue and to ask any questions you may have.

If you have made this commitment in the past and do not have any questions, then simply communicate with one of the pastors about continuing your commitment.

Whether you are renewing your commitment or joining for the first time, please confirm with one of the pastors of your final decision by *September 30*.



Rhythm of Life Guide

Rhythm exists to form and grow disciples of Jesus who join God in the renewal of Miami. Disciples begin to form as they experience the transforming life and love of Jesus for the first time and begin to take steps towards Jesus. Disciples start to grow as they concretely apprentice themselves to Jesus, his way, and his rhythms. And that's exactly why Rhythm has a Rhythm of Life.

A Rhythm of Life helps us root our lives in Jesus and his core "rhythms" (worship, mission, surrender, community). A life in Christ calls for dying to self and living in the Spirit. We are to "put on the Lord Christ Jesus" (Romans 13:14). Following Jesus doesn't happen accidentally - we need to have concrete rhythms that continually form and transform our hearts, desires, thoughts, and actions.

Below is a fuller explanation of the Rhythm of Life, along with descriptions of the core rhythms and practices that we're committing to as a community. We've also listed the biblical passages that inform each of the four vows. This is meant to be a framework for freedom, providing healthy boundaries while leaving plenty of room for flexibility and personalization.

✠ Rhythm of Worship

Jesus cultivated a lifestyle of worship and communion with God.

Jesus has pursued us with his relentless love so that we may experience his presence, intimacy, care, and wholeness. We recognize the temptation to wander after alternative loves, but choose instead to embrace Jesus and love him with our whole heart.

Because God is to be worshipped and treasured above all things, we commit to loving God in all aspects of our life, and pursuing Him individually and communally through spiritual practices and holy habits including prayer, scripture, and sabbath rest.

(Psalm 29:2; Deuteronomy 8:1-3; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; Ephesians 5:19-20; Exodus 31:12-13)

Prayer. Prayer is our communication with God. That means it's the most important part of our life. We set aside time daily to meet with God in prayer and to dwell in His presence. We embrace many forms of prayer including spontaneous prayer, fixed-hour prayer (the Divine Hours), journaling, prayer walks, and centering prayer.

Scripture. God's Word is sweeter than honey and a lamp unto our feet. In other words, it is our food and primary means of revelation from Him. We spend time each day in Scripture, seeking God's face and listening to His voice. Maturing in Christ requires a life where we read, memorize, meditate, enjoy, study, and obey God's Word.

Sabbath. Each week we set aside a 24-hour period for sabbath rest, structuring our time around prayer and play. This is a day to slow down, contemplate God's goodness, and be reminded that God is the one who cares and provides for us. If our schedule allows, we practice this on Sundays so we can gather with others to be refreshed through worship and built up as the body of Christ.

✠ Rhythm of Mission

Jesus cultivated a lifestyle of mission and restoration in this world.

Jesus has called us to live as sent people in this city, extending his good news to everyone we meet, but especially with the poor and vulnerable. We recognize the temptation to focus entirely on ourselves and those who are like us, but choose instead to embrace the people and pain of our city.

Because God's desire is to bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we commit to being on mission with God by practicing faithful presence in the city, working for restorative justice and renewal, and sharing the good news of the gospel with others.

(Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:25-37; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 2:9; Jeremiah 29:7)

Presence. We believe that God is at work in people and places. Disciples of Jesus are "sent ones" but we do not go alone because God is already at work. Our calling is not to bring Jesus to people, but to be faithfully present to the work that God is already doing in people, helping them to take steps towards God's kingdom. We engage in presence by consistently showing up in nonChristian environments, building relationships with nonChristians, and discerning how the Spirit is at work.

Justice. God loves Miami and so do we. Because we care about the good of the whole city, not just of those in our own tribe, we engage in issues that matter to our city and join others in working for the common good. We find tangible, concrete ways to extend God's kingdom and compassion to our poor and marginalized neighbors. We recognize that Miami is filled with both beauty and brokenness, and we are sent into the city to labor for its holistic healing.

Gospel. We point others to a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. The coming of Christ is both the culmination of Israel's story and the greatest news in the world. Our aim is to make this good news known, always with humility and love, to nonChristian people in Miami. We value building relationships with nonChristians because Jesus deeply loves them and desires for all people to experience his abundant life.

✠ Rhythm of Surrender

Jesus cultivated a lifestyle of surrender and trust in his Father.

Jesus has invited us to stop trying to control our lives or the lives of others, and to let him lead us into freedom, joy, and healing. We recognize the temptation to grasp for control in a power-hungry society, but choose instead to embrace humble obedience to Jesus.

Because Jesus is Lord, we commit to surrendering to Him in all areas of life including our money, our sexuality, and our power, and to showing our city how money, sex, and power can be used in life-giving ways.

(Mark 10:6-12, 21-27, 42-44; Philippians 1:27; Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31)

Money. We manage our material resources in a manner that honors God (e.g. giving a percentage of our income to the mission and ministry of Rhythm, sharing with others who have needs, etc) and avoids the traps and enticements of Western culture (e.g. bad debt, conspicuous consumption, gambling, etc). We want our lifestyle to show that we serve God and not money.

Sex. We avoid both secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We pursue purity in our relationships and private life, and reserve sexual expression for the covenant relationship of marriage. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life patterns are different from ours.

Power. We are committed to power sharing and to dissolving the divisions of race, culture, social class, and gender among us. We see people as ends in themselves, never as means to ends. We go about our daily life remembering we are in Miami not to be served but to serve.

✠ Rhythm of Community

Jesus cultivated a lifestyle of community and togetherness with others.

Jesus has formed us into a new family so that his powerful love can be seen and displayed through our love for one another. We recognize the temptation to live isolated and individualized lives, but choose instead to embrace a common way of life together.

Because the Trinity binds us together in community, we commit to doing life together, pursuing spiritual friendship with one another, and reconciling in a way that honors Christ and each other.

(Ephesians 4:2-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 4:32-35; James 5:16; Matthew 18:15; 1 Peter 4:9)

Togetherness. God intends for us to live deeply with one another, to not merely attend Rhythm but to belong. We do this by making room for each other in our lives and striving to walk together in intimacy and authenticity. Our goal is to see ourselves as a family, and to be connected in such a way that we feel the joys and sorrows of one another.

Friendship. We seek out a spiritual friend in the community that we can regularly share and pray with about the details of our life. This relationship is built on mutual encouragement, and we invite this person to hold us accountable to living the way of Jesus and give them permission to speak truth into our life. When we do this for them, we do it with lots of grace.

Reconciliation. We resolve the inevitable relational conflicts that arise within community life in a way that honors Christ and one another. This involves listening well, clarifying assumptions and expectations, admitting our own brokenness, and moving toward forgiveness and reconciliation. Whether someone has wronged us or we've wronged them, we go to that person rather than going to others.