



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AT DBC

Joining a local community of fellow believers is the natural next step for those with a new found faith in Jesus Christ. Members of the very first Christian church devoted themselves not only to God, but also to one another and to the life of the church.

“Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” Acts 2:41-42

The Baptist concept of church membership reflects this intentional step towards committed belonging. It involves making a public declaration of commitment, first to Christ, and second to his church as represented by a local body of believers. We serve Christ in part by serving in the local church, in this case Dunchurch Baptist Church.

Privileges & Responsibilities of Membership

Church membership brings with it both privileges and responsibilities.

It is a privilege to belong to a caring family of believers, seeking to be obedient to Christ’s command to love one another.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” John 13:34-35

As part of the local church we receive support and encouragement from other Christians in sustaining our faith and life of discipleship, also in testing times brought about by illness, bereavement etc.

“Be devoted to one another...” Romans 12:10

“Stop passing judgement on one another...” Romans 14:13

“Accept one another...” Romans 15:7

“Be patient, bearing with one another...” Ephesians 4:2

“Be kind and compassionate to one another...” Ephesians 4:32

“Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another...” Colossians 3:13

“Encourage one another daily...” Hebrews 3:13

“Live in harmony with one another...” 1 Peter 3:8

The key responsibilities of membership can be summarised as follows:

- attending worship, including the Lord’s Supper, and participating in church activities
- contributing to the life and work of the church through the use of God-given gifts and abilities
- attending and participating in Church Meetings, and abiding by the decisions made
- supporting the church financially in proportion to personal resources and circumstances
- helping to care for and to support other members of the fellowship through prayer and, where appropriate and when possible, by other more practical means
- seeking to maintain a close personal walk with Christ, especially through prayer and bible study, and to uphold Christian values
- bearing witness to Christ by word and deed through personal and corporate actions

There will be times when, for various reasons, shouldering some of these responsibilities is not possible even though the desire to participate and contribute is still there. In such circumstances membership is still appropriate and the loving care of the fellowship should be accepted.

Becoming a Member

The process of becoming a church member is as follows:

- an initial enquiry about membership can be made to the Minister or to another church leader, and the Minister may make a preliminary visit. Arranging a letter of transfer of membership from another Baptist Church may be appropriate
- a visit will be made by two church members, one from the leadership team, to talk to the applicant about their faith, to discuss the meaning of membership with its privileges and responsibilities, and to answer any questions about the life and work of the church
- based on feedback from those visiting, an application for membership will then be approved first by the Elders and then by the Church Meeting
- new members are officially welcomed at a communion service

Although not an essential requirement for membership, if the candidate has not been baptised as a believer they will be encouraged to consider being baptised as a part of the overall process of coming into membership.

The following promises are made by those being welcomed into membership:

- 'Do you declare your faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, having found new life in Him?'... **'I do'**
- 'Do you believe that God has called you to serve Christ as a part of this local fellowship of believers?'... **'I do'**
- 'Do you commit yourself to love and serve the Lord within this church community, and in the world; and being filled with the Holy Spirit, to fulfil your ministry in the Body of Christ?'... **'I do'**

The congregation also make a promise:

- 'Do you commit yourselves to support and encourage [...] as your sister/brother in Christ and as a member with you of the body of Christ?'... **'We do!'**

Becoming a member of a local church is not seen as a life-long commitment but one that will last for as long as it is deemed to be appropriate by both member and church.

This process for becoming a member was approved by the Church Meeting, March 2011.

Church Meetings

More information about membership and also about Church Meetings can be found in the church Constitution. Church Meetings are open to non-members and everyone is encouraged to contribute. However, it is a rule of this church that in order to vote at a Church Meeting a person must have been a church member for at least 6 months and be aged 16 or over. Any changes to this ruling will require agreement from the Church Meeting.

Final Comment

Church membership emphasises the value of committed relationships in helping to build a strong church. Only through such relationships can we enter fully into the New Testament vision of the church as a community of love.

Further Reading

DBC Constitution

Baptism, Belonging & Breaking Bread (2010, BUGB)

Baptist Basics: Church Membership (2009, BUGB)

DMW, March 2011

www.dunchurchbaptistchurch.org.uk