

Expectations Associated with Membership

~ Adopted by the Elders of Grace BFC Wallingford on August 23, 2013 ~

Membership carries the expectation that those who are members will make confession of faith in Jesus Christ and be like-minded in their understanding of God's word.

- A member must confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord. "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:10) Belief is a matter of the heart and only the believer and God know what is in the heart. What is in the heart is known only to the believer and God. Yet God makes it clear that what is in the heart will be confessed from the mouth. Those who become members should formally and publicly profess their trust in what Christ has done, express their assurance of acceptance by God because of Him, and their submission to Him as lord.
- A member must be baptized. Baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a public identification with Christ. Baptism is a step of obedience and a profession of a person's desire to obey Christ and follow Him.
- A member must share the convictions of our church concerning what God desires for members. While doctrinal differences are a sad fact of church history and a reality among churches today, a shared doctrinal conviction draws us together in a common understanding of what God has done and is doing. We cannot be united as members of one body if we are divided on our understanding of the essentials of what God's word teaches. Members will be expected to be in sympathy with the doctrinal convictions expressed in the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church.
- A member must accept the evangelistic task of our church, to confess Christ as Savior to our world, our nation and our community. We must be willing to be clear and firm in sharing the truth of the Gospel even when such proclamation may bring condemnation to us as individuals and as a church.

Membership is an attitude formed by commitment and submission.

- The word of God makes it clear that the children of God are to live out the new life as a part of the family of God. We are "all members of one body" (Ephesians 4:25). We were all "baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). We are not to "give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25).
- While we become members of God's universal church when we are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, God calls us to be committed and submitted to a local church which gathers for hearing God's word, enjoying fellowship, celebrating our Christ-won redemption, and praying together.
- The decision to belong to a local assembly of believers is made by individual believers or their family. The decision to join a part of God's family is a significant one and should be made prayerfully and deliberately. Any decision to break the bond of membership is a serious matter and should be considered only in consultation with the elders.
- The decision to be a member is expressed in commitment. Commitment is the desire to take one's place among the family of God which forms the assembly. Commitment accepts responsibility to participate in the ministry of the church and adopts the biblical vision of that church. Commitment shares the concerns of and for brothers and sisters in Christ who have themselves made the commitment to belong. Commitment makes God given spiritual gifts available for ministry. Commitment understands the significance of strong and healthy relationships between brothers and sisters in God's family.
- The decision to be a member is expressed in submission. Submission is recognizing and embracing the will of another. Membership is submission first to the will God and the teaching of His word. Membership is secondly submission to those whom God has appointed as leaders and spiritual care givers in the local church. Membership is also submission to other members whose needs and desires are given priority over the individual member's needs and desires.
- Those who become members understand that shared commitment and submission create a special bond between the followers of Jesus. That bond creates a family in which individual members know they are accepted and supported. That bond creates an understanding in which individual members know they have responsibility to others who are part of that family.

Membership carries the expectation to glorify Jesus Christ with our lives. We are not perfect, nor will we ever become perfect until we meet Jesus Christ face to face. However, members should be ever maturing in Christ, surrendering more through growth in faith, and more clearly understanding the richness and fullness of God's abounding grace.

- As God enables, members will worship the Lord with other believers by engaging in public worship and by observing the Lord's Supper.
- Members will pursue holiness by personally spending time with God. This includes reading the Bible to develop a deeper understanding of God's word; spending regular time in prayer, confessing our sin, seeking his wisdom, and asking for his direction in our lives, as well as the lives of others.
- As God enables, members will participate in the fellowship and the community of our local assembly of believers. Members will seek to discern their role within the local fellowship of believers, and step out in faith to be used by God as they invest their talents to the glory of God and the benefit of all.
- Members will model the importance of community to younger generations.
- Members will support the local fellowship of believers by actively praying. Members recognize that all they have comes from God, including the right to petition God through prayer for others
- Members will support the local fellowship of believers by systematic giving of their income. Members recognize that all they have comes from God, including the privilege to generously give back to God through tithing to the benefit of the local church, as well as the church universal. Members are encouraged to give above and beyond their tithe as God directs and blesses.

Membership Blessings:

Those who become members enjoy the following benefits and blessings:

- Members receive the spiritual care of elders.
- Members are supported through being held accountable.
- Members participate in decisions of the congregation.
- Members are part of a family network bound together by a publicly expressed commitment.