

Membership Privileges and Responsibilities

What does all this actually look like in practice?

Members at Veritas Church will be asked to affirm their faith in the Holy Trinity through the Lord Jesus Christ, either through a public membership vow, or through their baptism. Members will be asked to affirm a brief statement of faith, covenanting with the elders of the church to live accordingly.

Members are also asked to commit to the following, which are simply a practical outworking of the Christian life in our local church:

1. To recognise the authority of the elders of this local church and any presbytery of which the church is a part, including a willingness to accept their discipline, if that should ever be necessary, according to the Scriptures.
2. To promise to support this local church through prayer, the giving of time and money, and in practical care for other members of the church.
3. To commit to the unity and health of this local church insofar as it depends on you. This means treating each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, building health relationships with fellow members and leaders. This also implies regular, committed attendance to the Lord's Day worship service, where the church gathers in person.
4. To attend, as much as able, members meetings, when the elders call them.

Ultimately, the bar of membership in a local church should be no higher than the bar of entry into the Kingdom of God. Genuine Christians are citizens of the Kingdom and should have that citizenship affirmed and expressed in a local church. The above list is a simple summary of what that looks like practically. It is an attempt to hold Christians to the standards of Scripture without going beyond Scripture.

Recommended Reading

Church Membership,
Jonathan Landry Cruse

Church Memberhsip,
Jonathan Leeman

Is Church Membership Biblical?,
Ryan M. McGraw & Ryan Speck

Duties of Christian Fellowship,
John Owen

Devoted to God's Church,
Sinclair Ferguson

How Do I Become A Member?

First, speak to an elder or send an email to info@veritaschurch.co.uk.

You will be asked to listen to three sermons on church membership, available on our website.

Following this, an elder will meet with you to discuss what you've heard and ask/answer any questions.

The elders will then present your membership request for approval at the next Elders' Session.

If you were a member of a previous church, we will request your previous church transfers that membership to us.

Then you will be invited to come forward on a Sunday to take your membership vows.

Membership at Veritas Church

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

1 Corinthians 12:27



9 Reasons for Church Membership

It's biblical. In Old and New Testaments, we see example after example of things that leaders and congregations are told to do that require some sort of formal relationship between a church and its members.

It's inescapable. You are individually members of the body of Christ. The only question is, will you be a faithful one?

It's how you can best live out the various biblical images of the Church: body, family, temple, kingdom, etc. They all have members. They all know who is formally a part of them and who isn't.

It's how you can best serve your fellow Christians. Membership helps you know which Christians you are to prioritise in terms of those 'one another' commands.

It's how you can best follow biblically qualified leadership. It's how you know who your leaders are, it's how you know which leaders you are responsible to obey and submit to. It's how you can have a formal say in who leads you spiritually.

It's how church leaders can lead well. Every elder needs to know exactly who it is they have a responsibility to give an account for to God.

It's how the church can guard the reputation of Christ, and the spiritual well-being of the flock, through church discipline.

It ensures that spiritual commands get rooted in reality. Obedience and service and loving one another and worshipping together and evangelising and discipling in an actual place and time, among an actual group of people.

It displays the Kingdom to the world around us. Through formal structure, the world can see a different way of living, a different way of being community together; one that represents Christ and His rule, His kingship, to those who are far off.

A Scriptural Example

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith... Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Hebrews 13:7, 17

In this passage, there are two lists: a list that contains 'your leaders' and a list that contains 'your souls.' In other words, there was a formal understanding in the church just who was a leader in the church, and who was a member in the church.

Leaders (elders) must give an account to God for the souls of those God entrusts to their care. To account, leaders must *count*. They must know just for whom they are responsible. They cannot use the excuse that they know who their sheep are 'more or less.' To account, leaders must also be held *accountable* by the members of the church. Leaders must preach the pure Word of God and live a life worth imitating according to the Scriptures.

Members have responsibilities too: to 'remember your leaders,' to 'consider the outcome of their way of life,' to 'imitate their faith,' to 'obey' and 'submit to' them. This all implies some sort of formal relationship. This is not something that can be done casually. This is something that requires clear expectations, limitations, and process.

Also if we consider scriptures such as Acts 1:23 and Acts 6:3, where members of the church are involved in appointing church leaders, we can see that the church membership has the biblical right to have a say in who leads in the church. This should not be done by just anyone, but by people who are formally committed to that church through some kind of membership.

FAQs

Who can/should become a member? Every believer, aged 20 and upwards, who considers Veritas Church their home church should become a formal member. Baptised children of members are also considered members, who will be asked to affirm their membership aged 20.

Must I become a member to participate? If you want to be more than a visitor, then you should seek to become a member. Membership will never be forced on anybody, but taking the Lord's Supper together with a body of believers for a consistent period of time implies a unity with – a membership in – that body, which should be formally recognised.

Is this not heavy shepherding? No, it is the exact opposite. To have a voting membership means to give permission and responsibility to those people to have a say in the leadership of the church, including bringing formal charges if necessary. Many people have experienced abusive authority in their lives. We shouldn't seek to correct one error (abusive leadership) with another error (anti-authority, expressive individualism).

Do I have to be Reformed theologically? Do I have to subscribe to the Westminster Standards? No, you don't. Our church is made up of people from many different streams of Christianity. What's important is that you know that we are a Reformed Church that subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Members do not have to subscribe to those standards, but they do need to be able to live in unity despite any theological differences.

Isn't this all a bit formal and rigid? In light of biblical passages such as Matthew 18:15-20 and Hebrews 13:17, we can see that even the early church had some sort of formal register for who was and who wasn't a part of the church. Likewise, marriage has a formal set of vows and a marriage certificate associated with it. The formality doesn't undermine the relationship, but strengthens it.