



What DOES IT *mean* TO BE A

Church Member?

When you join a church, you are received into membership on the basis of your faith in our Triune God: God the Father, maker of heaven and earth; God the Son as your Lord and Savior; and God the Holy Spirit as the One who can enable you to be his faithful disciple to your life's end.

But what are your obligations as a member? What does it mean to be a church member?

When you come into fellowship at OZARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, you vow before God and the congregation "to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability, to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and to study its purity and peace." How do you express your vows of membership in our practical, everyday life together in this local manifestation of the Body of Christ? What exactly are you committed to because you are a member of this church?

When you join OZARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, you promise:

TO MAKE DILIGENT USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

The Christians in apostolic times "*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*" (Acts 2:42).

The grace of God ordinarily comes to us when we come together to hear his Word, as we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (and also as we consider and improve our Baptism), and as we engage in prayer, all with the attitude of faith. To neglect these means of grace is to starve the spirit and stunt the soul. Our Lord has taken care to design these means of grace to suit both his work and our nature, and when we use them diligently in faith, we will "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18).

TO SHARE FAITHFULLY IN THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

We are told in God's Word not to neglect "*to meet together*" for the public worship of God (Hebrews 10:25).

Except for illness or works of necessity and mercy, Christians ought always to attend the weekly services on the Lord's Day. Where even "*two or three*" are gathered together in Christ's name, he is

present (Matthew 18:20), and where he is present, we should not be absent. Our response should be, *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD’ ”* (Psalm 122:1).

TO SHARE FAITHFULLY IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

Every child of God has at least one gift of grace given to him or her for service in the Church. Among these many gifts are teaching, service, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy (Romans 12:4-8). Both you and the church have a responsibility to make sure that these gifts of grace are used *“for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* so that the church *“builds itself up in love”* (Ephesians 4:12-13, 16).

Whatever special gift of grace you may have, however, everyone can serve by being good missionaries or evangelists for Christ – inviting others to public worship, greeting worshippers in a friendly way, and witnessing to Christ day by day in word and deeds of love and mercy (Matthew 5:16, Philemon 6, 1 Peter 2:12).

If you know someone who is interested in church membership or who has questions and wants to know more about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, or even who Jesus is, you can serve by inviting that person to church, and/or to Sunday School and by introducing that person to others in the church, perhaps even the pastor.

Remember the apostle’s saying, *“Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (Colossians 3:17).

TO GIVE OF YOUR SUBSTANCE AS THE LORD MAY PROSPER YOU

We are taught in God’s Word to support the Lord’s work by giving regularly, proportionately, and joyfully: *“On the first day of the week, each one of you put aside something, saving up to whatever extent he has prospered”* (1 Corinthians 16:2), for, *“the point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

The biblical model is this: count your blessings, consider the need, and then give accordingly with thanksgiving and joy in your heart.

TO GIVE YOUR WHOLE HEART TO THE SERVICE OF CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

The life of every Christian is lived before the face of God, in obedience to Christ the King. His will is the law of our lives. Our purpose in living is to serve him as loyal and loving subjects: ‘to glorify him and enjoy him forever.’ God forbid that we should ever bring disrepute upon his banner by the inconsistency of our conduct before a watching and skeptical world. May we ever be zealous for the crown rights of our Redeemer, wholeheartedly committed to him who loved us and gave himself for us. *“Walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory”* (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

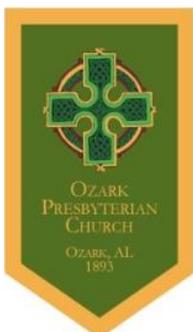
So far, we have commented on the sacred obligations of church membership. But what of its blessed privileges?

Church members are invited to share in the Lord's Supper and have a right to present their covenant children to God in baptism. They are entitled to the oversight and care of the Session, men whom God has appointed and ordained as leaders and overseers through election by the church. They have the opportunity to learn more of Christian teaching and ethics in Sunday School.

As a church member, you have a place in God's household of faith and the benefits of pastoral care. Christ appoints ministers so that his people may hear the inspired Scriptures faithfully preached, and souls in need may receive instruction, encouragement, and help. Also, he has appointed shepherds (the elders) to watch over you. Your elder/shepherds are always willing to pray for you in times of sickness, sorrow, or doubt, and to counsel you in confidence when you are faced with personal problems and decisions.

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies
of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

1 PETER 2:9



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All Scripture quotes from
the English Standard Version