



Understanding the membership process of First Baptist, Portales.



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

What church membership means at FBC.....	1
Why FBC maintains a church membership.....	2
Three things that unify the members of FBC.....	3
Our Shared Experience.....	3
Our Shared Convictions.....	4
Our Shared Commitments.....	6
Steps to becoming a member at FBC.....	8
Step 1 - Prayerful consideration.....	8
Step 2 - Personal application.....	10
Step 3 - Pastoral recommendation.....	10
Common Questions.....	10

What church membership means at FBC

When one becomes a member of a local church, they are basically saying two things:

1. ***“I want to be part of the life of this church family.”***

When a person joins a church, they’re saying they want to participate in the work of that church. While there are several opportunities for non-members to serve at FBC, there are certain areas that are reserved ONLY for those who have made the effort to become members of our church.

Joining a church is a way to stand up and let others know you can be counted on. So when a person joins our church, we understand them to be saying that they are interested in serving in whatever way they might be qualified to contribute. After all, this is what biblical membership is about.

In his book, **“I Am A Church Member,”** Thom Rainer explains biblical membership this way: *“Do you know how to remain a member of country club? Pay your dues. Do that and people will be available to serve you.*

Do you know how to remain a biblical member of a church? Give abundantly and serve without hesitation.

Note the word: biblical. Sure, you can remain on the rolls of many churches and never show up or give. You can remain an "active" member in other churches by being a CEO Christian: Christmas and Easter Only. You can even be a revered member in a number of churches by giving a nice sum to the church each year, even though you never lift a finger in service or ministry.

But please understand. That type of membership is not biblical membership. That approach to membership is man-made, man-centered, and man-maintained. It is totally contrary to what the Bible teaches. It has no place in our churches.

Biblical church membership gives without qualification. Biblical membership views the tithes and offerings as joyous giving. There are no strings attached. Biblical church membership serves and ministers as a natural way of doing things. Biblical church membership is functioning membership.”

2. “I want this church family to be part of my life.”

When a someone joins a church, they are also saying it's their desire to have that church family assume responsibility for their spiritual welfare. They are letting it be known that they want that group of believers to speak the truth in love to them and encourage them in their walk with Christ.

Can you be a Christian without joining a local church? Yes, but it is something like - being a soldier without an army or a football player without a team. You will not get very far in fulfilling your calling and purpose. Don't you want your life to count? Don't you want to live a life filled with purpose and significance? Don't you want to be involved in the heart of what God is doing in this world?

Then you should become a church member. Join AND to get involved. Beside other believers, you will make a difference in this world and God will make a difference in you.

Why FBC maintains a church membership

When a person comes to Christ, he becomes a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Because he is united to Christ and the other members of the body, he is qualified to identify with a local expression of that body. Becoming a member of a church means to formally commit to an identifiable, local body of believers who join together for specific, divinely ordained purposes.

In Acts 2:41-42, we read of a local church who met to study, fellowship, celebrate communion, and pray. Luke indicates there was some record of who was part of this group by what he says in verse 41, “3,000 were added to their number.”

The biblical basis for local church membership is seen in . . .

The example of the early church - The New Testament assumes Christians will “connect” to a local church where they live out their commitment to Jesus. Each New Testament letter was written to a local church or leader.

Just as there was a list of widows eligible for financial support (1 Timothy 5:9), there may also have been a list of members that grew as people were saved (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 16:5).

In fact, when a believer moved to another city, his church gave him a letter of commendation (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1; Colossians 4:10; 2 Corinthians 3:1-2).

The existence of church government - The pattern in the New Testament is for pastors to oversee the local body of believers. Their duties presuppose a clearly defined group of members under their care (Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3).

The exercise of church discipline - In 1 Corinthians 5:2, Paul called for removing a member. To formally exclude someone, you had to have previously formally included him. Church discipline would be difficult, if you didn't know who was in good standing and who wasn't.

The exhortation to mutual edification - Believers are told to practicing the "one anothers" of the New Testament (Hebrews 10:24-25) and use their spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Exhortations of this kind assume believers are part of a specific local assembly.

Is a church membership roll biblical? As biblical as video projectors or sound systems or any other method used to carry out God's work. But one thing's for sure, it is biblical for a believer to identify themselves with a church.

Three things that unify the members of FBC

1. Our Shared Experience.

With Christ - Members of FBC can testify to a time when they prayed to God, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

With Baptism - Additionally, members of FBC can testify to having experienced baptism by immersion as a testimony of their faith in Christ. We believe that . . .

Baptism isn't optional. Jesus tells all believers to be baptized (Matthew 28:19). In every instance in the Bible where people are saved, they are baptized: 3,000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:41); the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38); Cornelius (Acts 10:48); and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33).

Baptism is for believers only. When the eunuch wanted to be baptized. Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may," (Acts 8:36-37). A believer is someone who has repented of his sins and acknowledged Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Baptism isn't for babies or children who have yet to understand their personal accountability to God for their sin.

Baptism is by immersion. Only immersion can picture a burial and resurrection. Baptism is a "show-and-tell" that one's old sinful life is buried forever and that, with Christ, they are "raised to walk in newness of life," (Romans 6:4). Placing the believer under the water portrays the old life of sin being buried. Bringing the believer up out of the water portrays the fact that one has been "raised to walk in newness of life" because of Christ. Baptism is not salvation but a picture of salvation. It is an "outward expression of an inward reality."

2. Our Shared Convictions.

Here is our statement of faith.

The Bible - The Bible is God's Word to us. Human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote it. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is truth. Exodus 24:4; Psalm 119:11; Jeremiah 36; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:23; John 17:17; Romans 16:25-26

God - There is only one true God, revealed to us as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the same in essence and equal in every way. Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 64:8; 7:14; 61:1-3; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; 4:7-31; Acts 1:1-9; 1 John 4:4-5:12

Sin - Adam and Eve were created holy, innocent, and happy, but by the disobedience of one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all mankind since all have sinned. Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 3; Psalm 1; Romans 1:19-32; 3:23; 5:6, 12

Salvation - The only way of salvation is by grace through faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. Acts 4:12; Romans 3:23-27; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9

Eternal Security - Nothing can separate true believers from the love of God; they will be kept by His power through faith unto salvation. John 10:29; 14:2-3; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 13:5; Revelation 3:20

Baptism - Christian Baptism is administered only by the immersion of believers in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 6:3-5, 11

Communion - The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby believers memorialize the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming. Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-22; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Judgment - There will be a resurrection of the dead and a time when all mankind will be judged according to their deeds. The unbelievers shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous believers into eternal life with God. Matthew 16:27; 25:31-46; Luke 16:19-26; Luke 19: 20-37; John 14:1-3; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 20:11-15

The work of the church - The Christian ministry is a divinely appointed means for sharing the Gospel throughout the world. It is the responsibility of all believers to contribute to its support. Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 9:37-38; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 2:46-48; Acts 1:8; Romans 10: 13-15

Marriage - We define marriage as a life covenant between one man and one woman according to scripture. We believe the Bible teaches that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. Therefore, any sexual activity outside of the context of the marriage relationship is sinful. Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 18:22; 24:3; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 6:18-7:1-5; Ephesians 5:22-31; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4

Gender identity - We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Therefore, rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person; God's gift to that person; and God's plan for that person. That being said, we also believe that one's ultimate identity is to be found, not in their gender, sexual orientation or marital status, but in their identity as a Child of God. Gen 1:26-27; Psalm 139:13-16; Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:1-3

Singleness - We believe that singleness is a gift from God and affirm the fact that it is not always God's will for a person to be married. We believe that value, purpose, meaning and significance in life doesn't require that one be married, for fulfillment and purpose is found only and ultimately in our love relationship with God through Christ and our finding contentment in Him. Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; Matthew 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1; 7; 32-35; Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5-6

Who is welcome at our church - We believe in the importance of welcoming everyone who wishes to participate in the activities of our church in an effort to seek truth and know God through Christ, without showing discrimination in any way. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are not to be found within the fellowship of God's family. Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31; Romans 13:8-10; James 2:1-9

3. Our Shared Commitments.

Our church covenant reflects the commitments our members seek to live up to.

Having been led, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to:

1. Protect the Unity of the Church

- a. By acting in love toward other members
- b. By refusing to gossip
- c. By prayerfully following our elected leaders
- d. By being slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation
- e. By promptly uniting with another church if it is ever determined that God is calling us from this place

2. Share the Responsibility of Our Church

- a. By praying for its growth
- b. By inviting those who are not currently attending a church to attend
- c. By warmly welcoming those who are guests
- d. By seeking the salvation of our families and acquaintances
- e. By seeking a closer relationship with Christ through prayer and Bible study

3. Pursue the Ministry of Our Church

- a. By discovering our gifts and talents
- b. By being equipped to serve by the leaders of our church
- c. By looking for opportunities to serve in the church
- d. By developing a servant's heart
- e. By sharing our Christian testimony at every opportunity
- f. By remembering each other in prayer
- g. By aiding each other in sickness and distress
- h. By cultivating Christian compassion, courtesy and speech

4. Support the Testimony of Our Church

- a. By attending faithfully
- b. By living a godly life
- c. By enhancing the unity of our church
- d. By giving regularly of our time, talents and finances

Steps to becoming a member at FBC

Step 1 - Prayerful consideration

In becoming a member of First Baptist Church, you will want to prayerfully consider if you can meet the requirements of membership.

Have you had an experience of giving your life to Jesus Christ, trusting Him as your personal Savior and Lord?

Write out your personal testimony of how you came to faith in Christ here:

If you've never experienced the new birth through repenting of your sins and placing your trust in Christ, you can choose to experience salvation now. If the following prayer expresses the desire of your heart, why not offer it as your prayer right now?

"Dear Jesus, I come to you, admitting I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I believe You died on the cross to pay for my sins. I believe You were raised from the dead. I choose to place my trust in You, Jesus, as my personal Savior and Lord. Amen."

If you just prayed to receive Christ, or if you have questions about salvation, one of our pastoral staff will be delighted to visit with you further and answer any questions.

Have you followed the Lord in believer's baptism by immersion?

Write about where and when this happened here:

If you haven't been baptized by immersion as a testimony of faith in Christ, a member of our pastoral staff will be happy to visit about your baptism and arrange for you to be baptized.

Are you in agreement with our church's statement of faith?

Write any differences you might have with our church's statement of faith here: _____

A member of our pastoral staff will be happy to visit with you about any questions you might have about our church's beliefs.

Are you willing to take on the commitments called for in our church covenant?

Write out any reservations you may have about our church covenant here: _____)

A member of our pastoral staff will be pleased to visit with you about any questions you have about our church covenant.

Step 2 - Personal application

If, after prayerfully considering your experience of salvation and baptism; and our church's beliefs and covenant; you believe you would be interested in becoming a member of our church family, you may apply to join our church.

Enclosed in this booklet is an application form. Complete it and turn it in at the Connection Center or give it to a member of our pastoral staff. They will then arrange to go over your application with you and answer any questions you might have.

Step 3 - Pastoral recommendation

If you and the pastoral staff are in agreement, then they will recommend you for membership at our next quarterly business meeting. Upon the church's vote to accept you as a member, you will be added to our membership roll.

Common Questions

1. What about my children? Can they become church members, too?

If you want to join as a family, then every member of your family who has accepted Christ and has been baptized by immersion can be received as members.

2. Can a child or a teenager join the church without their parents doing so?

Yes. Again, if they have accepted Christ and have been baptized by immersion as a testimony of their faith in Christ, they can be received as a member.

Children and teenagers will be taught by our church family in keeping with our statement of faith and church covenant.

3. What if I am a member of another church already?

If they are a sister Baptist church, we can transfer your membership from that church to ours.

4. What if the church where I was saved and baptized; or which I am presently a member is not a Baptist church?

That is why we ask you to share your testimony of salvation and baptism. If it's in keeping with our beliefs and practice, we will gladly accept you for membership

5. What if I realize I need to be baptized?

We will be happy to arrange for your baptism. You can then apply for membership afterwards if that is your desire.

6. What if I do not agree with some of your doctrine or church covenant? Can I still be a member?

While it is difficult to understand why one would want to join a church with which they disagree, our pastoral staff will be happy to visit with you about any concerns. We'll just pray and see how God leads!