

Discover Discipleship and Membership at FMC Bryan

*"If you abide in my word, you are truly
my disciples." - John 8:31*

*"By this all people will know that you are my
disciples, if you have love for one another." -
John 13:35*

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*Words in italics are from the author of this document. All others come from the GMC
catechism or the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline.*

Discover Discipleship and Membership at FMC Bryan

We believe there is nothing more important in life than your personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers by grace through faith. (John 3:16)

We believe the ultimate mission of First Methodist Church of Bryan is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We believe nothing is more important than this great commission. (Matthew 28:16-20)

We believe disciples of Jesus keep the great commandment: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

We believe disciples of Jesus keep the commandments of God which were summarized by Jesus: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:34-40)

We believe Jesus calls us to make a difference as His disciples in our community by doing "all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." (John 15)

We believe our mission field is best described by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, when he proclaimed: "The world is my parish." As an affiliate member congregation of the Global Methodist Church (GMC) we join together with brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe because the world is our parish. Our world starts with our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors, but we believe the whole world needs salvation which Jesus Christ alone offers. (see the entire Book of Acts)

What you believe matters. Every statement of this introduction to "Discover Discipleship and Membership" begins with "We believe." What you believe matters. Your beliefs determine what you will do in life. Your beliefs define your character, your life purpose and your daily life. Everything you do is predicated on what you believe. You believe "clothes make the man." So, you wear clothes. Be grateful people wear clothes! You believe you need food for your body so you eat. You believe you need food for your soul, so you eat true soul food, spiritual truth from God's Word.

What you believe matters. It's why we choose certain careers. It's why we fight wars to stop Marxism, fascism, and communism and other tyrannical governments. It's why you raise your children and grandchildren with a desire for education and to have wholesome character.

What we believe as a church matters! We are committed to every member of the church knowing what we believe and fully understanding their commitment to Christ and this church family. So, I have developed this "Discover Discipleship and Membership" training guide to help you:

1. Know the vows of **baptism** and what they mean
2. Know the vows of **membership** and what they mean
3. Know the **catechism** of the Global Methodist Church
4. Know the **expectations** of church membership
 - A. Know our “Plan of Discipleship” and how you can grow in your faith
 - B. Know how the membership vows are lived out in our church family

I always prefer to meet people one on one and have a conversation so that we can get to know each other and share our life stories. I often ask a person read this document so they are well informed before making a decision to join the church. Please read this document and contact me (rick@fmcbyran.org) to follow up with any questions you may have. Then, pray about where God wants you to be (I hope it's the FMC family).

The Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church contains paragraphs that delineate vows of baptism and vows of membership in two different sections (par. 316 and par. 319). There are a total of five vows taken upon baptism and five vows taken for membership into the church. Some of the vows are redundant, but all are important. Why are they redundant? Because the vows of baptism may be given to anyone at any time and do not require someone to join a local church. Methodists accept the baptism of anyone who was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we do not rebaptize anyone, but we affirm your baptism as an outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace that marks (identifies) you as part of the Christian community. Jewish people use circumcision as that mark while Christians offer the sacrament of baptism. Circumcision nor baptism can save anyone who does not place their faith in Jesus the Messiah. So, if you have already been baptized, then you may join the church by simply affirming the membership vows. If you have not already been baptized, then it will be our joy to celebrate this holy event publicly as you profess your saving faith in Jesus Christ. Although we cannot rebaptize, we do offer a service in which we rededicate our lives to Christ called a “remembrance of your baptism.”

Vows of Baptism

¶ 316. BAPTISMAL VOWS. In faithfulness with early Christian practice as well as the Wesleyan tradition, those wishing to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism within the Global Methodist Church shall first be asked the following questions:

**Do you renounce the devil and all his works, and reject the evil powers of this world?
I renounce them.**

To renounce means to reject or repudiate. The Bible describes the world we live in as “this present darkness” (Ephesians 6:12). John Wesley said it was the responsibility of Methodist preachers to preach salvation in Christ alone (the gospel) by proclaiming all need to flee “the wrath to come.” The wrath to come is God’s judgment and final reckoning upon humanity for eternity. Evil exists in “this present darkness” (our world) because sin entered the world through Adam and Eve who gave into temptation from a fallen angel. This deceiver is called the prince of this world. (Ephesians 2:2) Martin Luther called him the “prince of darkness grim.” We believe that when Christ returns He shall defeat this enemy just as Jesus has already defeated death and sin. We await the return of our Lord while we fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12).

The second question prior to baptism is asking someone if they repent of sin, believe in Jesus and confess Jesus as Lord (God) and Savior.

Do you repent of your sin, turn to Jesus Christ, and confess Him as your Lord and Savior? *I do.*

To repent means to turn around and start going down the right path. Repent means admitting that you are living your life outside God’s boundaries (God’s will) in thoughts, words and deeds. To repent is to leave the wide path that leads to destruction in order to begin walking a narrow path following Jesus with your whole life.

Baptism candidates are asked three more questions and since these three questions are asked in similar ways in the membership vows section we refer you to the questions and answers within the section on membership vows.

Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? *I do.*

See Membership Vows question # 3.

Do you accept the responsibility to resist evil, injustice, and oppression by the grace and power of God? *I do.*

See Membership Vows question # 2.

Will you obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of your life by the grace and power of God? *I will.*

See Membership Vows question #4.

Those who present candidates for Holy Baptism who are unable to answer for themselves will also be asked this question:

Question to parents or guardians:

Will you nurture these children (persons) in Christ's Holy Church, that by your teaching and example they may be guided to accept God's grace for themselves, profess their faith openly, and lead a Christian life? ***I (We) will.***

We believe there are three commitments being made at a child's baptism.

- (1) *The Lord has given the parents this precious gift of life; therefore, baptism is a time to give thanks to God who is covering this child with prevenient grace.*
- (2) *The parents are making a commitment to bring their child up in the Christian faith so that their child may confess saving faith in Christ at some point in their childhood or certainly to affirm their faith in Christ through confirmation classes.*
- (3) *The church is making a commitment to offer Christian education classes such as Sunday School classes and VBS as well as a program of spiritual formation to support the parents in raising their child in the Christian faith.*

The congregation is then asked to affirm their commitment to support the baptismal candidate in the faith.

Question to the congregation:

Will you who witness these vows encourage [these persons] in the faith and do all in your power to support [these persons] in [their] life in Christ? ***We will.***

Baptismal candidates (or those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves) are then asked to confess their faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Question to baptismal candidates or those presenting candidates for baptism:

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, [who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, [the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.]

The Apostles' Creed is a trinitarian creed that outlines basic tenets of Christian theology. After affirming belief in basic Christian doctrine, having repented of sin (if the person is of age or of sound mind to repent), and having confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, crucified and risen, a person may be baptized through one of the following modes:

1. *Sprinkling with water*

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." (Ezekiel 36:25)

2. *Pouring*

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18, Joel 2:28-29)

3. *Immersion*

"And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38, Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16)

Vows of Membership

¶ 319. VOWS OF MEMBERSHIP. In addition to taking the vows of baptism (¶ 316) those wishing to become professing members of the Global Methodist Church shall be asked the following questions before being received into the church:

1. **Do you believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit?**

2. **Do you confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put your whole trust in His grace, and promise to serve Him as your Lord? *I do.* This vow finds a parallel in the vows of baptism: Do you repent of your sin, turn to Jesus Christ, and confess Him as your Lord and Savior?**

3. **Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures?**

This vow finds its parallel in the baptism vow: Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? I do.

The GMC is a Protestant church. When we say we believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament we are rejecting the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church's adoption of additional books in the canon of Scripture. We believe in the catholic (universal) church, but we reject Roman Catholicism and its hierarchy while embracing the priesthood of all believers. Further, this vow about the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is a rejection of past heresy, such as Marcionism, that cut out the Old Testament and other parts of the bible. We reject any modern-day attempt at Marcionism. For example, some espouse that hard scriptures which clearly define sexual immorality should be placed into "a bucket" with other scriptures that should be interpreted today as not applicable to a Christian today. Instead, these false teachers ignore or reinterpret the holy scriptures to allow sexual behavior outside the clearly defined biblical values of celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage between one man and one woman.

Do you promise, according to the grace given you, to keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of your life as a faithful member of Christ's holy church? *This vow is comparable to a vow in the section on baptism: Will you obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of your life by the grace and power of God? I will.*

5. **Will you be loyal to Christ through First Methodist Church of Bryan and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries through your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness as Christ's representative in this world?**

The Last Vow is the ONLY Local Church Membership Vow

The only local church membership vow is the last vow. It begins by asking you to be loyal to Christ. Be loyal to Christ above all. The local membership vows are the expectations we have of every church member. All of us are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us we joyfully work to strengthen the ministries of the church by doing our part in the body of Christ. We are not all hands. We are not all feet. We are all parts of the body and we need each other to carry out the ministry of Christ and His church. So, let's be crystal clear about what we expect a member of the church to do in faithfully living out their life in the First Family.

(1) Pray

We ask that you pray for one another (Galatians 6:1-2) and for our church ministries, staff and clergy.

(2) Be present

*How can you possibly fulfill your holy vows to be a member of the church, but are not present and involved in the life of the church? New studies are showing that people believe once a month attendance for worship is being faithful. Yet, worship only a few times a year can never be true faithfulness **if you are able** to attend worship. Being present means being involved in ministry in some way. We believe every member should be involved in ministry and we have many ministries that need your time and gifts. We also believe that every disciple is a minister for Christ and should find a place in their community or through their vocation to be present as a light in this world.*

(3) Give (gifts)

Let's be plain spoken. This vow means financial giving. We believe in tithing. Every year we have a stewardship campaign and we teach and hope members will tithe. If everyone tithed 10% of their annual income as a way of expressing our love for God and our gratefulness for His blessings, then our church would have more than enough for ministry and paying our staff a living wage. Sometimes, there are members who have the ability to leave the church a sizable gift through estate planning. It is only because of these gifts that FMC Bryan is able to sustain its ministry. I would love to meet with you to share how you could support your church through Endowment Funds that will continue to bless the Lord's work while you are in heaven.

(4) Serve (service)

Jesus said, "I did not come to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many." Find a way to serve in the church ministries or outside the church walls. Giving your utmost for His highest in service provides rewards in this life and the life to come. Our Adult Ministry Director, Natalie Patterson, hopes to involve every member in ministry and our ministries (children, youth and music) need your gifts and service.

(5) Witness (for Christ as His ambassador for His kingdom)

Witness. Everything you do reflects upon Jesus. We witness with our life. Every social media post is His post. Every encouraging word to others is His encouraging word. A witness is always looking for a way to tell others about the most important relationship they have in the entire world - Jesus. Always look to build relationships with all kinds of people so that you earn the right to witness to your faith in the Lord in His time.

GMC Catechism

The GMC has a catechism which is a composite of its basic doctrinal beliefs. It matters what you believe and even though you may have slight differences of interpretation, you should be part of a church you generally align with doctrinally.

You can access the entire GMC catechism at this link:

<https://globalmethodist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Transitional-Discipline.20211010-1.pdf>

Plan of Discipleship

¶ 320. GROWTH IN FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP. Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves. Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Hebrews 12:14 reads: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." John Wesley, founder of Methodism, believed spiritual growth (sanctification) would only arise when Christians banded together to pray, study scripture, worship and serve together. Wesley called this social holiness and by the word "social" he meant being in a relationship with others. Wesley rejected the idea of trying to lead a Christian life in isolation. He called this attempt "holy solitaires". True Christian growth can never come in isolation from other Christians, which is one reason the bible says "do not forsake the assembly of yourselves together." The goal of discipleship is Christlikeness. The sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit works through the common means of grace of worship, the sacraments, bible study, prayer, fasting and meeting with other believers who are walking in faith together.

Methodism began as a movement to reform and revive a dead church known as the Church of England or Anglican Church. After the Revolutionary War, John Wesley allowed the formation of Methodist Churches in America that transformed our nation. Originally, Methodism had societies which would be the equivalent of our local churches. The two foundational groups that made Methodism unique as a spiritual reform movement were classes and bands. Bands were 3 to 5 people meeting together for spiritual growth, accountability and support. Bands were people of the same sex who prayed for one another, encouraged one another and studied the Scripture together so that the Holy Spirit could transform them toward Christlikeness.

Classes were large bodies of 12 or more who met together with similar purposes as bands. Our church has classes (Sunday School classes) with a class leader as a means of teaching biblical truth and caring for one another in true Christian fellowship.

The Global Methodist Church has prayed for and is working toward bringing back classes and bands. Our church is committed to creating bands of 3 to 5 people of the same gender who meet weekly who will follow a simple model of spiritual formation for spiritual growth. Our discipleship plan is to have everyone in a band and class that requires daily bible reading and a weekly meeting.

How do I become involved in a ministry, class or band at FMC Bryan?

Our Adult Ministry Director, Natalie Patterson, will be glad to help you find a class, band (small group) or ministry for you to find a place for fellowship and discipleship.

natalie@fmc Bryan.org

Our Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Will Pepper, will be thrilled to help you plug into any youth ministry program and into the young adult ministry.

pepper@fmc Bryan.org

Our Director of Children and Family Ministry, Jeff Hobbs, will be ecstatic to help you find your place in our discipleship ministries. Jeff welcomes you to step up in serving in this vital area of ministry.

jeff@fmc Bryan.org

Our Director of Music and Worship Ministries, Chris Caffee, has a place for you in music ministry (handbells, choir, solos, children's choir) and would warmly welcome you into the fun of music ministry.

chris@fmc Bryan.org

Please fill out the information sheet for our Administrative Assistant, LeeAnn Broeker so that she can make sure your membership records are complete.

leeann@fmc Bryan.org

If you make a commitment to give financially to the church, our Director of Business and Facilities Manager, Eileen Winkle, would be glad to help set up an auto draft or any other method for giving.

eileen@fmc Bryan.org

If you are already a member and completed this study, please let one of our staff or pastors know if it was helpful. Let us know if you have any questions by writing to any staff member if you have a question about their ministry or by writing to our clergy. rick@fmc Bryan.org or augusto@fmc Bryan.org.

I hope this material was helpful. Our goal is for you to join the First Family. We hope above all else that you believe in Jesus Christ and seek to live as His disciple. When you are ready to join, then we know you have prayed about where God wants you to be and are willing to make a commitment to Christ and this church. There is an information page for you to fill out and give to the pastor or Administrative Assistant. We are praying for you and asking the Lord to have your heart join with our hearts as part of the First Family. "All Glory be to Christ."