

Membership



Neighbours Church



Introduction to Membership

While it can be difficult for many people to make a commitment to a local church, becoming a family member or member at a local church is an important step of discipleship. As followers of Jesus we are called to relationship with one another that redefines family and community (as the Body of Christ first and foremost in our lives – Matthew 12:46-50). It is meant to be a vibrant community where we grow in our love for God and neighbour with one another.

Although membership in the body Christ started in the great commission in the book of Matthew, it really took shape in the book of Acts. They were keeping track of the numbers of people right from the very beginning, for instance 2:41 – Peter preached, 3000 were added to their number, and Baptized. They spoke of alignment with one another: 2:46-47 – they attended temple together and met in homes, and more were added to their number; 4:4 – their number had risen to 5000 men + women and children; 4:32 – they were in complete unity of heart and soul; 5:12 – the church continued to meet together even though their number was over 5000 (which is amazing when you think about how they would have done that without microphones or sound systems); 5:42 – they met in the temple for doctrinal teaching and from house to house for community application; 6:2 – they met for a church business meeting as a full community. In acts 6:2 you have the first church membership meeting.

The dividing line between those who were part of the number and those who weren't appears to have been Baptism, not just belief as you walk through the book of Acts. So, we actually see in the book of acts the functions of church membership happening.

In 1 Corinthians 5:2 Paul was helping a church that was struggling one of their members. And so he wrote them a letter and said, "You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. The early church was quickly keeping track of those who were part of them, and those who were being removed from fellowship.

This same person from 1 Corinthians 5:2, the congregation voted on removing is talked about again in 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 2:6, the punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. There was a majority vote, somehow they counted and had majority and decided he was out. But good news in 2 Corinthians 2:7, he has repented and realigned himself with the church and it says ... “Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.” This same man repented of his sin, and was then restored into fellowship. But there are those who are a part of membership and those who are not.

Membership in the church is meant to be this relational gift of accountability and love to one another. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.” There was a commitment to one another to use their gifts and help one another fulfill the mission of Jesus.

In 1 Timothy 5:9 it says “No widow may be put on the list of widows unless ...” The early church took care of one another, and kept lists of their members to do so properly.

This was how the early church experienced the fullness of Christ’s death and resurrection – by living differently together. This is ultimately what we are also called to live into. Contrary to popular belief, membership is not a modern, western concept. The Bible has always talked about the functions of membership in a local church: lists of people, accountability to local congregations and the expectations of leadership.

So, the first reason to become a member of a local church is that the Bible reveals the function of membership in a local church.

2nd, It reveals Christ in our lives.

It is an antidote to our society’s aversion to commitment. We live in an age where commitments – to a job, a marriage, community group – are easily and often taken lightly. This attitude has produced a generation of “church shoppers and

hoppers.” Membership swims against the current of “consumer religion.” It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character. It names our hope.

3rd, its an invitation to grow through it.

It produces spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. In becoming a member of a local church, we formalize our commitment to Christ and to one another.

4th, its practical.

It defines who’s entitled to a vote in legal decision-making processes, like affirming Leadership Board members or approving a budget.

5th, it produces clarity.

Clarity for the local church: for instance, at Neighbours Church our vision is to build a community of believers involved in two key relationships, those who are: taking one step close to Jesus (Mark 12:30) and their neighbours every day (Mark 12:31). And we commit ourselves to growing in 7 characteristics in each area.

7 characteristics of loving God: Responding to God’s Grace with Repentance, Identity Rooted in the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Active in Prayer, Uses the Bible as God’s Guide for Life and Understanding His Character, Living Life as Worship, Stewarding God’s Entrusted Resources, and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And 7 characteristics to grow in our relationship with our neighbours: Committed to the Church, Engaged in Deep Christian Community, Embraces Equality, Witnesses to Who Jesus is, See’s All of Life as Mission, Actively Takes Risks for the Sake of the Kingdom, and Has a Heart for Global Missions.

As a church we also hold some key values that may distinguish us from other churches in how we live out community with one another and the world around us, we are: Relationship Focused; Journey Oriented; Intentionally Diverse; Postured for Worship; and Choosing to Partner. To learn more about this, we encourage you to explore these sections of our website.

Clarity for the broader church: We share a statement of faith, a group of communally discerned beliefs, with other ACOP churches across the country and around the world. We are discipling people towards an ACOP understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

6th, it names our hope.

We are better together. Your gifts and my gifts together on mission make a statement of our love for one another and our community. There is a lost world looking at the church, and our love for one another draws people to the church.

Jesus promised that if we were one in the church and broke down the ethnic, socio-economic, and personal divides, that testimony would let the world know God sent Jesus.

John 17:23 “I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

7th, we believe the Holy Spirit has called us to be a part of this local expression of the Body of Christ.

We have a sense that it is right and good with Jesus to be a member of this local church; we feel called.

So why be a member in a local church:

1. The bible reveals its function.
2. It reveals Christ in our lives.
3. We grow through it.
4. It's practical.
5. It provides clarity.
6. It names our hope.
7. We feel called to be a member by the Holy Spirit.

Membership & Commitment

Commitment to the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12) at Neighbours Church can look different based on the choice of people who choose to participate and call Neighbours Church their home. We understand that each person is on a journey and may be comfortable at different levels of commitment to the church based on personal convictions. So, we want to acknowledge that we see at least four levels of commitment to Neighbours Church.

Level 1 Commitment: people are ‘**attenders**’; their commitment level is low at this point, they come to the church fairly regularly, and have the right to attend services, financially support the work of the church, attend our AGM, and participate in communion if they are a believer.

Level 2 Commitment: people are ‘**regulars**’; those who call Neighbours Church their home church, and have the right to attend services, financially support the work of the church, attend our AGM, participate in communion if they are a believer, and serve in a variety of roles at the church.

Level 3 Commitment: people are ‘**church family**’; those who have made a personal decision for Christ, call Neighbours Church their home church, are interested in greater accountability to the leadership of the church, voluntarily submit to the leadership of the church and discipleship, and have the right to attend services, financially support the work of the church, attend our AGM, participate in communion if they are a believer, and volunteer in most roles at the church other than those reserved for legal Members of the church.

Level 4 Commitment: the people are ‘**Members**’; everything that is true for ‘church family’ is true for ‘Members’, however as ‘Members’ they are part of the Membership. ‘Membership’ is a legal term referring to those that have legal rights and responsibilities within the organization.

Qualifications for Membership

A person qualifies for membership in the Church if he/she:

- has experienced the 'new birth' (John 3:5-7) through repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ and shows evidence that they are a child of God, born of the Holy Spirit;
- is willing to accept the spiritual oversight of the Lead Pastor, Associate Pastors, and Elders and is willing to follow their lead unless it is plainly contrary to the written Word of God;
- agrees with the Statement of Faith and is willing to strive to live out its principles;
- embraces the purpose and vision of the Church;
- affirms all of the provisions contained in this Constitution; and
- is willing to commit himself/herself to the Church by word, regular participation, tithing/giving, fulfilling the responsibilities of membership, and governing their lives according to Scripture.

Please initial the following attestations:

I am willing to accept the spiritual oversight of the Lead Pastor, Associate Pastors, and Elders and I am willing to follow their lead unless it is plainly contrary to the written Word of God.

Areas you would like to discuss:

I have read the statement of faith (see website for a copy of the statement of faith) and I agree to live out those beliefs in word and deed to the best of my ability.

Areas you would like to discuss:

I have read the vision and values (see website hamburger menu for vision and values) of Neighbours Church and embrace them wholeheartedly.

Areas you would like to discuss:



Rev. Chris Stevens
Lead Pastor Neighbours Church
chris@neighbourschurch.com
226-750-7130