

# Membership FAQs

## Why does First Baptist Church have “members”?

The Bible uses the metaphor of a body to describe the church: *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12)*. It’s a beautiful illustration of how we’re each created to serve different functions, and we need everyone to function in order to be a healthy body, and all of us as separate parts find purpose and unity under Jesus, “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). The church is not a building, it is a body, and its members linked together form the church. (Eph. 2:19-22).

## What’s the difference between a member and somebody who attend every week?

We make a distinction between “members” and “attender.” If you’re not a member, then you’re technically a guest that remains to a certain extent separated from our church family, and separated from the maturity, protection, accountability, and care that comes with being an active part of the church. This may not make much difference for visitors and non-Christians, but Christians who consume rather than commit to a local church do a disservice to Jesus’ body (the church) and themselves. Members, on the other hand, participate as the church: sacrificing time, talents, and treasure; committing to the care and community of their fellow members; and submitting to the authority God has established to lead our congregation. In short, the difference between a member and a non-member is that members are “on mission” together.

## What does it mean to be “on mission”?

To be on mission means that you’re a Christian, that your identity is founded in Jesus, and that you have chosen to be an purposeful part of developing followers of Jesus Christ from every generation on mission for the good of the world. (Matt. 28:18-20).

## Why should I become a member?

The local church body known as First Baptist Church is a family, adopted by God (Gal. 4:6-7; Eph. 1:5). We care for each other, pray for each other, and serve together. If you’re already a Christian, if you’re already in some form of a small group or community at First Baptist, if you’re already giving of your finances

and your time, then you're already fulfilling some functions of a member. Without making an official commitment, however, we cannot provide the same level of pastoral care and community support, in part because we may not know who you are, and in part because the Bible requires that we take care of our family first (Eph. 2:19 cf. Gal. 6:10).

If you're not a Christian, don't worry about membership until you've been reconciled to God through Jesus. If you are a Christian who has spent a lot of time at First Baptist Church, without becoming a member, search your heart and identify your hesitation. There may be valid reasons to abstain from membership. But we're rebels by our cursed nature; if you bristle at the very idea of becoming a member, ask yourself why—and don't hesitate to speak with one of our pastors about your hesitation.

### **What are the benefits of being a member?**

Scripture calls us a body, a family, a household—being a Christian is not a solo effort. Jesus works through the church (Eph. 2:10), the church is Jesus' body (1 Cor. 12:27), and apart from Jesus, you can do nothing (John 15).

This isn't Blockbuster, it isn't a country club, and it isn't 24-Hour Fitness. Again, members are the church. *"In love [God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"* (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:19).

You don't join for the perks—although members do enjoy greater access to leadership, and certain volunteer opportunities are only available to members. The benefit is that we get to worship Jesus together, serve in His kingdom, and be children of God! We enjoy the guidance that His Word provides, and, when sin comes between us, we enjoy the reconciliation Jesus' blood provides.

### **How do I become a member?**

It's a four step process. Content, Connect, Conversation, and Covenant

*Content* – View the video series "First Look" and complete the forms.

*Connect* – Connect with God through faith in Jesus Christ and demonstrate that connection through public baptism by immersion (You may have already done this).

*Conversation* – meet with one of the pastors to share your story, ask any further questions you might have and clarify your understanding of membership.

*Covenant* – Signing your pledge and publicly affirming your agreement with our doctrines and your commitment to live out the expectations of members:

- Community. Live life with other members of the family by remaining active in worship and a small group/community group.
- Serve. Use your gifts, talents, skills, and time to serve the church and participate in Jesus' mission to the world.
- Give. Members are asked to financially support the church with sacrificial and generous offerings given on a consistent basis.

### **What is a “member covenant”?**

A covenant is a promise by which we obligate ourselves to one another in such a way that the obligation of one party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other (Ezek. 20:44; 36:22; Ps. 76:11; Hos. 2:19-20; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:13). A covenant is what we would use to describe the vows between a husband and his wife, and between God and his people. We ask our members to sign a covenant so that we know that prospective members understand what it means to be a part of the church. The member covenant is not a legal document or some sort of cultic rite. It is an affirmation, an agreement, and a source of accountability for both the church and its individual members.

### **Do members have to be baptized?**

Since Jesus commands that all of his disciples be baptized, baptism is a requirement for all First Baptist members (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 1 Peter 3:21). If you've already been baptized since you became a Christian, you don't need to get re-baptized. We perform believer baptisms only, which means we do not baptize infants. This topic is covered in the First Session of First Look. If you have more questions about baptism specifically; please speak with one of our Pastors.