

What is Church Membership?

The people who make up Camrose Baptist Church come from many different backgrounds — not just in terms of geography but also in terms of church affiliation. You will find people here from Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Brethren and Pentecostal churches, to name just a few — as well as those who have never belonged to a church before. So what do we mean when we talk about Church Membership?

As soon as people started to become Christians they recognised the importance of being a part of a community of people who were being obedient to Jesus' teaching. They did this so that they could learn together, support each other and grow in their new faith (see for example Acts 2:42).

God works in many different ways, but the primary way He has chosen to work in the world is through His people. In the Old Testament we see how God chose Israel, the Jews, to be His people, so that they might reveal God to the other nations. In the New Testament, following the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, we learn that being the people of God now has nothing to

do with ethnic origin. Writing to those who have responded positively to the news about Jesus, Peter says to all Christians, 'you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God' (1 Peter 2:9-10).

So when a person becomes a Christian they become a part of what Peter calls 'the people of God'. Paul says that they are now a 'part of the body' (1 Corinthians 12:12-21). They are a part of the Church.

But we cannot become a part of the Church, and we cannot commit ourselves to the Church in general without becoming involved in a local church, with a local congregation.

God in His wisdom has chosen to gift His people in different ways. No one in the church is qualified to do everything—but everyone is qualified to do something. Some of those things are up-front, such as preaching, leading, singing or playing a musical instrument. Some are more in the background such as making the tea, welcoming people as they come in the door or helping in the Sunday School. Some are almost invisible such as cleaning the church during the

week when no one else is around, or counting the offerings after the service when everyone has gone home. There are lots of other things that are done too. What we must remember is that they are all equally important — the important thing is to ask, 'what does God want me to be doing in the church?'

Committing to a local church is a two way relationship. For the individual this commitment involves sacrifice — of things like time, money, and emotional and physical energy. On the part of the church there is the commitment to be a place where you can grow spiritually and to be a support and help to you in your life's journey.

Membership in a Baptist Church

Because membership involves commitment it is more than simply attending on a Sunday morning. Therefore we do not assume that everyone who attends is automatically a member, even if they have been coming for fifty years.

Membership is not open to everyone. For example, a person who wants to be a member must accept the beliefs of the church, they must commit themselves to serving in the church, and

they must accept their responsibilities as a church member ...¹

Another important reason for having an actual membership list is to do with the way that a Baptist Church is governed; or how decisions are made. Unlike some other churches, within a Baptist Church the decisions are not made by the Minister or the Deacons but by the Members—this is called Congregational Government. These decisions are taken at a Members' Meeting. For the practical day to day running of the church it is recognised that some decisions can be delegated to the Minister and the Deacons, but the decision to delegate those responsibilities was taken by the Members and if the Members wanted to they could change that decision at a future Members' Meeting. Members are responsible for all decisions which includes issues relating to the budget and the appointment of a Minister.

Because the Members are responsible for making decisions relating to how the finances of the

¹ The beliefs of the church, the full list of responsibilities of a church member and the full list of who can become a church member are listed in the Church Constitution. A copy of this is available on request.

church are spent, and issues such as Health and Safety and Child Protection, it is a requirement of the Charity Commission that an up to date membership list is maintained.

But of course there is much more to Members' Meetings than making decisions about the colour of the carpets. It is an opportunity to spend time in prayer and to seek God's guidance for the future of the church. We believe that it is as we come together to seek God's will that He will speak to us—and you never know, we may hear Him through you.

Everyone who is a member of Camrose Baptist Church will have an up to date Members' Address List and a copy of the Constitution. If you do not have these booklets then you are probably not a member. (Non-members are allowed to attend most Members' Meetings but they will not be allowed to vote.)

If you want to become a member of Camrose Baptist Church then your first step is to speak to a deacon who will arrange to come and visit you. This is an opportunity for he/she to get to know you better, and a chance for you to ask any questions you may have.

Camrose Baptist Church



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