

Grace Church of Orland Membership Class
Part 1, The Membership of the Church

I. Overview of Church Membership

Church membership is a process that formalizes the Christian's commitment to a particular congregation.

II. The Case for Membership

a. Biblical Arguments

- i. Shared commitment defines the local church (Matt 18:19–20).

- ii. The local church must be visibly distinct from the world (Matt 16:19; 1 Cor 5).

- iii. The local church must have defined pastoral relationships (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1–3)

b. Practical Arguments

- i. Provides an affirmation of your salvation (Col 1:3–8).
- ii. Ensures that only qualified people can serve in areas that represent the church (e.g., children, music, teaching, finances, legal, counseling).
- iii. Provides a way to regulate the church's teaching ministries (1 Tim 1:3).
- iv. Forms a voting body for affirming important decisions by the elders (e.g., annual budget, property purchases, ordination of elders).
- v. Helps existing members know when someone has decided to join us.

c. Objections

- i. There is no example or command about church membership in the Bible.
- ii. This is too exclusive. Won't this offend people?

d. Summary

Formal church membership is a practical application of Christ's command to make the true church a visible reality. It also provides numerous practical benefits to the pastors and the people. On the other hand, a church with an undefined membership blurs the line between the church and the world and eventually leads to spiritual decay.

III. Qualifications for Membership (Bylaws 4.01)

- a. Confess Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior (Rom 10:9).
- b. Affirm that salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone (Gal 1:8; 2:16; 5:4).
- c. Affirm the sixty-six books of the Bible to be the church's sole infallible rule of faith (2 Tim 3:16–17).
- d. Baptism by immersion as a believer (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41).

IV. Responsibilities of Membership

- a. To gather regularly (Heb 10:24–25).
- b. To love one another sacrificially (Eph 5:1–2).
 - i. By using your spiritual gifts (1 Pet 4:10–11).
 - ii. By contributing to the needs of your fellow members (Rom 12:13).
- c. To pursue doctrinal unity (1 Cor 1:10; 2 Tim 1:13).
- d. To fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20).
- e. To regular giving (1 Cor 16:1–2).
- f. To follow pastoral leadership (Heb 13:17; 1 Cor 6:1).

V. Our Membership Process

- a. Membership Class
- b. Membership Application
- c. Membership Interview
- d. Baptism
- e. Public Recognition