

United Free Church of Scotland

St Andrew's Church, Bellshill

Profession of the Christian Faith and Church Membership

What is a Church member?



Minister

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What is a Church member?

This leaflet is aimed at those considering joining the Church, whether by transfer from another congregation, or by profession of faith for the first time. It is equally valuable to those are looking for a refresher on what being a Christian means, especially in the context of the local church.

I trust that this resource will be useful to you in considering your walk with Christ.

Rev. Jason Lingiah
Minister
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Someone who believes

Believers trust Jesus Christ with their lives. This involves believing truths about him and having a personal relationship with him upon repentance and faith. The Bible, which Christians believe is God's Word, clearly tells us that the following essentials must be understood, believed and committed to if a person is to be a Christian:

- there is only one true God who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- all created things came into existence and keep existing by the will of God
- the relationship between human beings and God was broken by sin and needs to be restored

- to sin is to think we know better than God and to live as if we don't need God, with our own ideas of what is right and wrong
- sin alienated us from God and deserves punishment, but in love for us God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who died in our place and took the punishment we deserved (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- being fully human like us, yet fully God, Jesus achieved forgiveness for us and restored us to a right relationship with God (Colossians 1:21-22)
- Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and now shares God's reign as Lord of all (Philippians 2:9-11)
- the gift of the Holy Spirit assures us of our restored relationship with God as Father, enables us to grow in character, faith and understanding and makes each of us an indispensable part of his body, the Church, with specific gifts to contribute
- it is the certain hope of the Christian that Christ will come again, final judgment will be done, sin, suffering and death will end and his people will share the Father's love in eternal joy.

Someone who belongs

Because Christians belong to Christ, we also belong to one another as part of the family of God. We are all loved by God, but we do not become His children until we come to faith and we receive adoption as his sons. While it is possible for a believer in a country where Christians are severely persecuted to be very isolated, it was always Christ's intention that believers would meet regularly. In our part of the world, we are blessed to have the freedom to worship, something that is not the case for all.

As Christians we all belong to the catholic or universal church, a worldwide movement spanning the continents and the centuries, but we are also called to be involved in a local church as a concrete and living experience of this reality. We cannot be Christians on our own, or worship God in our own way, we need to come together as His people as much as circumstances distaste.

Depending on circumstances the definition of 'local' will vary (in some parts of the world people have to walk many miles to church). The important thing is to be rooted in and committed to a congregation of fellow believers in Christ.

Two key parts of belonging are baptism (if you are a believer and have never been baptised please speak to the Minister) and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism does not make one a Christian or give one salvation, but is an initiation into the Christian faith and is a means of grace.

Upon membership of the church, one is entitled to come to the Lord's Table, having made a public profession of faith.

Someone who worships

Because Christians believe, it naturally follows that they worship God for who he is and what he has done for them. To worship is not just singing songs of praise (although it very much includes this) but also to honour God with all of our lives (Romans 12:1).

As a church we have a special time in the week on Sunday when we gather to praise God, pray and hear from his Word, the Bible.

This time must take priority over other demands because it is church family time that is to be protected.

Someone who prays

For a Christian, who lives in a restored relationship to God, praying should be something we do every day and throughout the day. The Bible tells us that prayer is about offering praise to God, telling him we are genuinely sorry when we sin (1 John 1:9), saying thank you for what he has done and asking him to help us and others in many different ways (Philippians 4:6).

It can be easy to do this on our own (as long as we remember!) but making the most of opportunities to pray with others who follow Jesus allows us to praise and thank God together and to encourage each other.

Someone who learns

We have been given the Word of God to feed and sustain us as Christians (Matthew 4:4). Just as a relationship is broken if there is no communication our lives are broken if we do not hear from God through his Word. Like prayer, receiving from God's word is something that is done both on our own and together. The obvious example is the Sunday sermon but there will be other opportunities like Bible studies or informal ways like talking with others about what the message of the Sunday sermon means in your life (Colossians 3:16).

Christians also receive from God by spending time daily reading and reflecting on the Bible and filling their minds with the truths it contains.

This means that we live our lives in accordance with God's ways. It takes time to change, or be sanctified. It is important as we consider church membership, to consider if our lifestyle matches our profession, and how we can live Christian values in our choices with prayer and discernment. Sometimes this may involve aspects such as thinking about forgiving others and receiving forgiveness, prioritising church attendance and the study of God's Word, considering situations such as cohabitation and how we conduct ourselves.

Someone who serves

Every follower of Jesus is called to serve him through the Holy Spirit, both in the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) and in the world (John 17:18). All believers have gifts for serving others (1 Peter 4:10) and are called to make a difference (Matthew 5:13-16).

Knowing Jesus gives us a heart to serve in church, home, work, leisure and public life. In order to use our gifts in God's service (Ephesians 2: 9-10) we may first need to discover what they are. Ask others you trust to give you honest feedback about where you are gifted and how these gifts can best be used in the service of Christ and other people.

Someone who gives

God has given us the precious gift of his only Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Everything we have comes from him and belongs to

him. This makes a church member someone who gives generously.

Giving financially is crucial to resourcing God's work in both the local and wider church and such giving is also a sign that we love him more than money (Matthew 6:24). Please also see the St Andrew's leaflet *Christian Living and Giving* which breaks down what is involved in running the Church.

But giving involves much more than money. It also includes our time and effort, even when this costs us. It is giving ourselves.

Someone who tells others about Jesus

Being a church member means being involved in the mission of reaching out to others with the love of Jesus. The local church will have specific ways to do this. The thought of telling others about Jesus can be scary, but they deserve to know about the precious gift we have received (Acts 4:20): a restored relationship with God who loves us. Our lives should show that Jesus is real, but we also need to explain that we live as followers of Jesus and are members of his church. As we recall that we were lost to Hell without Jesus before we came to Him in repentance and faith, we also want others to have that hope and forgiveness in their lives that only Jesus can offer.

Someone who is committed

It can often be hard to be a Christian in today's world. Jesus said that to follow him is costly and demanding (Luke 14:27-33).

Pressures of life can make commitment to Christ's church difficult too, but the Bible encourages us to keep meeting together

(Hebrews 10:24-25). In this way we can love and support each other to bring honour and glory to Christ in every aspect of our lives.

Questions asked at the Admission of Members

Candidates are normally admitted to membership during public worship on a Sunday prior to Communion. These are the questions that you will be asked.

-You have come of your own choice to acknowledge the covenant of grace, to profess publicly your own faith in the Lord Jesus, and to receive the strengthening of the Holy Spirit.

Do you reject sin, confess your need of God's forgiving grace, and pledge yourself to glorify God and to love your neighbour?

-Do you believe the Christian faith into which we are baptized?

-In the presence of God and before this congregation, Do you confess your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, taking the Father to be your Father, the Son to be your Saviour and Lord, the Spirit to be your Helper and Guide?

-Do you promise to join regularly with your fellow Christians in worship on the Lord's Day, to be faithful in reading the Bible and in prayer, and to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents and money for the Church's work in the world?

-Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to profess publicly your loyalty to Jesus Christ, to serve Him in your daily work, and to walk in His ways all the days of your life?