

When a person becomes a Christian they are saying they want to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. An important way this is expressed is by identifying with Jesus' people (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). The decision to journey through life with Jesus as Saviour and King, is also a decision to journey with other Christians in the community of the local church. Membership in a local church is a powerful way of expressing our partnership together in the gospel locally and official recognition of belonging to the world wide church.

Members are Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church so that it is built up for God's purposes (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). The early church had a notion of being a member that included numerical record (Acts 2:37-47), records of widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16), elections (Acts 6:1-6), discipline (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1), accountability (Hebrews 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Romans 16:1-16). Levels of active participation in the life of the church will vary with individual circumstances and at different life stages but our desire is to fulfil to each other our responsibilities to the best of our ability.

The purpose of church membership

Membership of a church is important for a number of reasons:

- **Doctrine:** Binscombe Church stands for the evangelical faith and membership is a way of expressing oneness with this faith.
- **Government:** In order to know who is qualified to take part in the government of the church, there must be a committed membership. 1 Corinthians 14:40.
- **Pastoral Care:** By membership a Christian submits to the pastoral care and discipline of the church. 1 Peter 5:1-5.
- **Help:** In cases of need, the primary responsibility of the church is to its own members. Galatians 6:10.
- **Fellowship:** Membership is an important way of saying that we want to be associated with local Christians for spiritual fellowship. Acts 2:42.
- **Evangelism:** By church membership we follow the New Testament pattern in that all our outreach and service for Christ will be with the guidance and support of the local church.
- **Legal Constitution:** Church Members are members of Binscombe Church CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). CIOs are the recommended legal structure for our churches, with benefits relating to liability, property ownership and finance.

The commitment of Binscombe Church leadership

- To lovingly care for you and to seek your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).
- To provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (1 Timothy 5:17-18) that will cover the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-28).
- To help you in times of need (Acts 4:32-35; James 2:14-17).
- To ensuring that your elders and deacons meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- To pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
- To be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
- To exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
- To help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- To seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures to follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- To set an example and join you in fulfilling the responsibilities of church members (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12).

Church Members...

Church members are people who are Christians. A Christian is someone who recognises that their rebellion against God separates them from him and makes them God's enemies (Colossians 1:21), under his wrath (Romans 1:18). However, a Christian is someone who believes the best news in the world. That the only way to be saved and enjoy eternal life with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Christians are people who have turned their back on their old way of life and have accepted Jesus' free and undeserved gift of salvation, by putting their trust in his death for their forgiveness (1 John 1:9). They believe that when Jesus died on the cross he took the punishment they deserve for their sins (John 3:16–18; Romans 3:23–26) and that when he rose from the dead it was so that they might have eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:14–16). Christians are people who have been born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3–8) and confess Jesus Christ is their Lord and Master (Romans 10:9).

Jesus commanded all believers to be baptised, openly showing their commitment to being his disciples (Matthew 28:19–20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21). We expect all church members to obey Jesus' clear command. We also welcome into membership Christians who are Paedobaptist.

Church members are people who accept our FIEC Statement of Faith, 'What we believe', realising that these are issues of primary importance. We believe that whilst secondary issues are important they are not essential to our worship and work together. We ask church members to show understanding and love towards those they disagree with on secondary issues (Roman 14, Ephesians 4:1–3) and to respect the position of the church leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Church members are people who show their commitment to Jesus through regular participation in Sunday meetings and members' meetings (Hebrews 10:23–25), willingness to use their spiritual gifts to serve Jesus' mission in Binscombe (Romans 12:3–8, 1 Peter 4:10–11), fellowship with other members of the church primarily through small groups (Acts 2:42–47), praying together (Ephesians 6:18) and regular financial giving to Binscombe Church that is sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8–9).

We encourage members to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1–11), by seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17), and by not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28). We expect all church members to obey Jesus' teaching on reconciliation in Matthew 18:15–17 and to submit to church discipline if the need should ever arise (1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 2 Corinthians 2:5–8).

Church members are people who seek to submit to the authority of the Bible as the final authority on all issues (Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

We want to acknowledge that there are godly church members whose involvement in the life of the church will be less than is stated above. This is not due to lack of spirituality or commitment on their part but due to age, physical condition, or other extraordinary circumstances. We want these members to realise the crucial role they fulfil at Binscombe. We want them to feel cared for by the church. And we want them to be encouraged to use their gifts to whatever degree they are able.

For more information on the way Binscombe Church is organised and governed see our 'Church Rules'.