

What is .. Church Membership



Harlow
Baptist
Church



www.harlowbaptist.org



For the Christian, Church Membership is supremely a divine appointment. It is membership into the family of God (John 1:12) brought about by the action of God. (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17).

Membership is fundamentally the action of the triune God. It is the:-

Action of the Holy Spirit	(1 Corinthians 12:13)
Brought about by the Work of Christ	(John 14:6)
Ordained by the Will of the Father	(Ephesians 1:5)

1 Cor 12:12,13 also makes clear our commitment and dependence upon one another. Here also we find expressed the truth that Christians are a part of a much larger 'whole'. Through our acceptance of Christ (and subsequent baptism) we were baptised into the church family (1 Cor. 12:13). Part of that process was an identification with a GROUP of Christians.

The World Wide Family:

As we have noted, as Christians we have no say in whether we are to be members of Christ's Body or not. It is what we become when we receive Christ as Saviour. As we accept Christ we are adopted into the Christian family with millions of brothers and sisters worldwide. All we can decide is how responsible we are going to be in our service to God in the church family. It is a responsibility that needs the opportunity of local expression. Because 'general' membership is brought about by God's work in us, in this church we do not make a great distinction between Baptism and the need for recognition of membership into God's family.

The Local Church (family):

Clearly the world wide universal Church of God is too large and too remote a body to easily identify with, communicate with, work with, or receive support from. The local church is the immediate expression of this world-wide family. The individual Christian's duty is to pray and seek to know from God where He would wish them to express their local support and belonging.

Membership will involve us in a number of activities and commitments at a local level.

Worship

Peter's letters address the whole Church. In 1 Peter 2:9 we see that the role of priesthood is not just for ministers but for EVERY Christian! Firstly, this role of a priest calls us to be corporately involved in the worship of God. The

most common place for this is our Sunday Worship Services.

Secondly, the priest is the intermediary (the bridge) - the one bringing man to God, and taking the will of God to man. This can be carried out through prayer and action in the local community. However in order to pray and act effectively an identification with a local community needs to be made - hence local church membership - team work needs to be undertaken by the team i.e. its committed membership.

Thirdly, the priest needs to hear from God. We recognise that this is not a purely personal role. It is the body of Christ (the church of God in prayerful and committed fellowship with each other) where the mind of Christ is best discerned. As the bible says, we are the body, Christ is the head. (1 Cor 11:3; Eph. 4:15; Eph. 5:23;)

Fellowship

Acts 2:42 describes a job profile of the local Christian church in Jerusalem, and is seen as the basic biblical job description for churches today. Part of that job description is said to involve 'fellowship'. Membership is about a 'family' of believers' acting towards one another in a way that causes each other to be helped and to grow in the things of God. This giving, receiving, serving, sharing is what the word fellowship means.

Such commitment to fellowship can only logically follow a person's desire to be closely associated with a particular group of God's people - local church membership. Colossians 3:12-14 gives some yet more detailed instruction how church members are to be committed to each other. Note also that the actions of the local church in Jerusalem was intense, "*they devoted themselves..*". Again here we see the sense of commitment and accountability to the 'local'.

Service

Too numerous to mention here in detail, the bible is full of calls to acts of service including:-

- Evangelism..... Matthew 28:18,19
- Community service..... Matthew 24:31-46
- Support of other Christians..... Romans 12:10-16
- Regular giving of money..... 1 Corinthians 16:2
- Use of our personal talents..... Luke 19:11-27
- Use of our spiritual gifts..... Romans 12:1-8

All these acts of service need a local context before they can be expressed on a broader horizon. Hence yet again we find the need for Church Membership.

Bible Study (Life groups)

1 Peter 2:3 encourages us to grow up and learn from God's Word, the bible. Hebrews 5:11-14 criticises the lack of spiritual maturity in some Christians because they are not willing to move from 'milk' to 'meat' in their learning. Ephesians 5:17 tells us to use the bible as a God-given weapon through living by its truths. A regular committed attendance to a small study group gives opportunity to be obedient to God in our duty to grow in his 'family'.

Church Meeting

Our Church Meetings are “members” meeting where those who are members collectively seek together God's corporate call and direction for us his body as it is expressed at HBC through the vision and direction God has given us.

At Church Meetings only those who have accepted the responsibilities of membership are part of the decision making because they have accepted a:-

- Commitment to the local Christian family
- Commitment to the local church's vision
- Commitment to regular worship.
- Commitment to share communion.
- Commitment to regular giving.
- Commitment to regular study.

The most important aspect is the commitment to the plans and purposes of God for this community at Harlow Baptist Church as God seeks to draw other women and men to himself.

**IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BECOME A MEMBER OF
HARLOW BAPTIST CHURCH ?**

If so speak with the Pastor (01279 442642 / thepastor@harlowbaptist.org) or one of the church leaders today. They will be happy to explain to you the next step to make your membership possible