

## **How do I join First Baptist Church of Asbury Park?**

We are excited that you are prayerfully considering joining our church. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Membership**

#### **What is it?**

According to the Bible, church membership is a commitment every Christian should make to attend, love, serve, and submit to a local church.

#### **Why is it important?**

Biblical church membership is important because the church presents God's witness to himself in the world. It exhibits his glory. In the church's membership, then, non-Christians should see in the lives of God's changed people that God is holy and gracious and that his gospel is powerful for saving and transforming sinners.

As believers, one profound blessing stemming from our salvation is that we are joined as members to the very body of Christ—that is, the church. We at First Baptist Church teach that the formal expression of commitment to the body of Christ is accomplished in membership. The biblical teaching on membership can be seen in the following principles:

1. **The early church models membership.** Paul wrote to Timothy in order to give him specific instructions on leading the church and in 1 Timothy 5:9–10, Paul instructs Timothy to keep roll. The local church in Ephesus knew specifics about the people in their church so they could effectively shepherd them. Individuals were associated with specific local churches—consider Phoebe, the servant of the

church of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). Furthermore, the early church kept lists to help them identify who was in and who wasn't.

**2. The responsibility of church leadership requires membership.** Elders have the responsibility to shepherd a specific flock made up of the people among them (1 Peter 5:1–2). For this to happen, there has to be a clearly identifiable flock that an elder is responsible to shepherd—it can't simply be anyone who happens to wander through the church doors on a Sunday. Membership makes this command viable and sustainable. There is, moreover, an implied relationship between elders and the members of the church. Shepherding involves a relationship, and believers are called to imitate the faith of those God has placed in spiritual leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Imitating involves knowing your leaders well and being committed to sharing life together with them.

**3. Church discipline necessitates membership.** The goal of church discipline is always restoration (Matthew 18:15–17). Church discipline is practiced here at First Baptist Church with a desire to call believers to repentance and restore them to holiness and fellowship with the church. If church discipline progresses to the final step, the church is instructed to put the unrepentant individual out of the church. A person cannot be removed from the church, however, if he or she never officially belonged to it. For church discipline to work in the way God has ordained, church membership has to be in place.

**4. The “one another” commands demand membership.** There are over fifty “one anothers” in Scripture. God cares very much about how we interact with each other. We are called to be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10), rebuke one another (1 Thessalonians 5:14), serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), forgive one

another (Ephesians 4:32), and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), just to name a few. These commands demand a commitment to a local church. Who are you devoted to? Who are you serving? Whose burdens are you bearing? You must know other believers, and you must know them well. This doesn't work without a commitment to be involved in the lives of other believers. In other words, the "one anothers" only work consistently and effectively with the ones who you are committed to, and those who are committed to you. If you have any questions or desire to become a member of First Baptist Church, please call our office at 732-775-2662. Lastly, after prayerful consideration, if you would like to join our fellowship, please speak with an elder.