

Lesson 3: Membership and Ministry

I. Church Membership

A. Why do we believe membership is important?

1. The NT assumes that a local church consists of a defined group of people.
 - a. Despite incredibly rapid growth the Jerusalem church managed their membership well enough to keep statics and build community. They knew who was in the church and who was not (Acts 2:41–47; 4:4; 5:11–12; 6:1–2, 5).
 - b. The local church is a flock under the leadership of an overseer (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1–2).
 - c. The local church is a body consisting of various parts that fulfill specific functions (1 Cor 12:12–28).
 - d. The local church is a household/family (Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 3:15) and a temple (1 Cor 3:16–17; Eph 2:21).
 - All of these passages and biblical illustrations communicate that the congregation manages its own doors into and out of the church and that being part of a church involves mutual commitment. The NT knows nothing of the anonymous churchgoer, so prevalent in our day, who comes and goes as he pleases.
2. The NT describes the local church as God's authoritative agent on earth.
 - a. Jesus gave the congregation the authority to affirm or reject people's professions of faith (Matt 16:18–19; 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:12–13).
 - The concept of "binding and loosing" in Matthew 16:19; 18:18 concerns judging the credibility of an individual's profession.
 - God ultimately saves, not the church, and the church cannot see the heart perfectly as God can. However, Jesus delegated to the church the responsibility to define for the world who has a credible profession of faith.
 - b. Jesus gave the congregation the authority to practice church discipline (Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:1–5; 12–13; 2 Thess 3:6, 14–15).
 - c. The congregation elects officers (Acts 6:1–6), sends missionaries (Acts 13:1–3; 14:26–28), and decides matters of doctrinal application (under the authority of Scripture) (Acts 15:22).
 - d. The congregation practices the ordinances (Acts 2:41–47; 1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:17–34).
 - The only way the church can exercise this kind of authority is if its membership is clearly defined. Congregationalism does not work without church membership.

B. What does it mean to be a member of a church?

- “Church membership is a formal relationship between a church and a Christian characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church” (Leeman, *Church Membership*, p. 64).
1. Being a member of a local church means that that the church affirms that you have a credible profession of faith (Matt 18:15–20).
 2. Joining a local church declares that you are committed to that church and to the mutual care of the people in that church (1 Cor 12:20–26).
 3. Joining a local church means voluntarily submitting to the authority (Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:5) and accountability of the church (Heb 3:12–13; 10:24–25).
 4. Joining a local church means committing to use your spiritual gifts and financial resources for the sake of the church’s growth (1 Cor 12:4–11; Eph 4:11–16; Phil 4:14–20).

C. What do we require of members?

- Our constitution states, “All members are expected to obey the moral precepts and principles taught in the Word of God and to support the church through attendance, giving, prayer, and faithful service.”
- We reject the notion that someone can be a member of a church while maintaining little if any contact with that church. It is impossible for a church to fulfill its basic obligations to a member who does not regularly attend, or for that member to fulfill his or her basic obligations to the church.
- We recognize that some people are not capable of attending due to physical limitations, work obligations, military service, or residential schooling out of the area. These realities will not affect a person’s membership; however, we ask these members to stay as connected to the church as possible. The church is also responsible to stay connected with these individuals.

D. How does someone become a member?

1. Tell one of the pastors that you want to join. The pastor will give the individual a questionnaire and a copy of the LPBC Constitution and Statement of Faith. The candidate must complete the questionnaire and read and affirm the Statement of Faith.
2. After completing the questionnaire, the prospective member must meet with a pastor or deacon to see if he or she has a credible profession of faith and either has been scripturally baptized by immersion or is ready to be baptized. We will not baptize someone who doesn’t intend to join.
3. The pastors and deacons must recommend the candidate for membership.

4. We typically put the names of membership candidates in the bulletin a week before the vote so that members have an opportunity to express privately any concerns they have about a candidate for membership.
 5. Typically, we do baptisms at the beginning of a morning service, and we vote candidates into membership at the conclusion of the service. The congregation must receive them into membership with a unanimous vote.
- E. How can someone's membership end?
1. By Death
 2. By Request: "Any member, not under church discipline, who personally wishes to withdraw from the fellowship of the church for any reason—no letter is granted."
 3. By Letter: "Any member in good standing who wishes to transfer to another church of like faith and practice—a letter of recommendation is granted to the church."
 4. By Continued Absence: "Any member who is absent for a consecutive period of one year, may be removed from the active membership by a vote of the church."
 5. By Discipline: "Any member, including the pastor and staff members, may be dismissed after the exercise of scriptural church discipline."

II. Church Ministry

A. Ministry is a vital aspect of discipleship.

- According to the NT, ministry in the local church is not optional. Unless a Christian is providentially hindered from serving, he or she is walking in disobedience if he or she is not serving the body.
1. The Nature of Spiritual Gifts
 - At conversion, every believer receives at least one spiritual gift to be used in the context of the local church (1 Cor 12:7-11; 1 Pet 4:10).
 - We are commanded to be good stewards of these gifts (Rom 12:6-8).
 2. The Nature of Community Ministry
 - Every member is responsible to fulfill his part in seeing the church grow into maturity (Eph 4:11-16).
 - When a member of the body does not fulfill the role God designed for him or her, the whole body suffers. The church needs all of its parts working together to function well (1 Cor 12:17-25).

B. Ministries with a Title

1. Service/Helps
 - a. Cleaning: Felicia Stephenson
 - b. Building and Grounds: Ben VanWyk

- c. Meals/Hospitality: Emilie Villaflor, Donnie-Anne Doyel
 - 2. Music/Worship
 - a. Choir: Pastor Kris
 - b. Greeters and Ushers: Nathan Doyel
 - c. Video and Sound: Kenny Clark, Nathan Seaman, John Sevilla
 - 3. Children/Teens

Everyone who serves in children and teen ministries must complete an application and a background check.

 - a. Nursery: Tami VanWyk
 - b. Primary Church: Jeff Darling
 - c. Junior Church: Craig Lawson
 - d. AWANA: Jeff Darling
 - e. Teens: Nathan Seaman
 - 4. Special Events (VBS, Fellowship Events, Funerals, Etc)
- C. Ministries without a Title
1. The NT commands every Christian, not just pastors, to reach the lost and to minister to one another.
 - Love Each Other (John 15:12), Hold Each Other Accountable (Heb 3:12–13), Confront Sin (James 5:19–20), Restore the Fallen (Gal 6:1), Disciple the Next Generation (Titus 2:1–5), Bear Burdens (Gal 6:2), Speak Truth to Each Other in Congregational Song (Eph 5:19), Rejoice with Those Who Rejoice and Weep with Those Who Weep (Rom 12:15), Pray for Each Other (Eph 6:18), Show Hospitality (1 Pet 4:9), Meet Physical Needs (1 John 3:17), Care for the Weak (James 1:27)
 - No matter your life circumstances, spiritual maturity, or giftedness, there are things in this list that you can do.
 - Get to know people, love and serve them, and God will open profound doors for ministry. You will be deeply blessed in the process.
 2. The most important ministry in the church is typically one on one or small group ministry to people.