

Membership at Trinity Fellowship

Was there membership in the early church?

In ancient times the first churches were probably house churches, or small numbers of people who met in individual homes for worship. Some of the first churches met in synagogues, since the earliest people to convert to Christianity were Jewish. From the scriptures we cannot see that there was a specific system of church membership in biblical times, however it is clear from the Bible that the early Christians enjoyed close fellowship with one another, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:42--45). Even though formal church structures were not in place, it is evident that the Holy Spirit was doing a mighty work, bringing individuals together for worship, prayer, evangelism, and care. The Greek word translated fellowship in the New Testament is *koinonia*, which refers to the loving fellowship among believers and also to the close union between Christians and their savior, Jesus Christ: “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1 Cor.1:9).

Why become a member of a local church?

Simply put, the church is unlike any other organization in the world. Jesus did not command his followers to organize themselves around any social, economic, or political interest. He commanded them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). This mission can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit and the commitment of people whose lives have been changed by Jesus Christ. The Bible also warns us to not live the Christian life in isolation, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25). Being a member of a local church affords one the opportunity to receive sound biblical teaching, prayer, encouragement, and support in times of need. In addition, membership in a local church gives each believer the chance to contribute using his or her spiritual gifts. Every Christian is crucial to the functioning of a healthy church: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ...The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor. 12:12,21,27).

Are there requirements for membership at Trinity?

At Trinity Fellowship we have only two requirements for membership. The first, and most important, is that you are a follower of Jesus Christ and have placed your faith in him as Lord and Savior. The second requirement is that you take the Getting Acquainted class and interview with the elders. This class is offered at least twice a year and is taught by various elders in the church. The topics of the class include the statement of faith of our denomination (The Evangelical Free Church of America), the history of Trinity Fellowship, and our philosophy of ministry. After taking this class you are not obligated to become a member, but it does serve as a prerequisite for membership. After the class, the elders will interview those seeking membership and will make a recommendation to the congregation. New members are affirmed at congregational meetings.

What are the responsibilities of each church member?

Just as a marriage is not only a commitment between a man and a woman but also a commitment before God, membership in the church is a significant commitment between individuals and the Lord. Peter says in his first letter to the church, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Because all believers are in one sense, priests, each has the responsibility of serving Christ and living a lifestyle that is consistent with biblical principles.

Membership at Trinity Fellowship also involves participating in congregational government: that is, giving input to church leaders and voting on important issues. Each year we ask church members to reaffirm their commitment. This recommitment reads, "I hereby publicly renew my commitment to the Lord God, to seek Him and serve Him with all my being. I also recommit myself to the body of believers at Trinity Fellowship Evangelical Free Church, to support them and our work together for the Lord by my prayers, attendance, contributions, and the faithful use of my God-given spiritual gifts, the Lord being my helper." Membership is something that we hope you pray about and consider carefully. If you are interested in membership or taking the Getting Acquainted class, please contact the church office (231.796.2600).