

Why Membership?

The purpose of Bethel . . . The Church @ Franklin Mills is “to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.” We know that this involves a process that varies from one person to another. Through this process, we desire to build a community of believers who experience support, service, and spiritual growth here, so that all of us together can experience a shared sense of belonging and connectedness.

One might assume that, as long as you profess faith in Christ, you do not need any further identification with a local church. Isn't it enough simply to call yourself a Christian and attend services somewhat regularly? What is the point of formal membership?

At Bethel, we believe that there are three reasons why formal membership is an important part of the Christian's life:

While the term “church member” is not found in the New Testament, the concept is certainly present. The apostle Paul conveys the concept of membership in Romans 12:4-5 by telling his readers, “*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of His one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.*” The book of Acts gives us a record of the beginning of the universal church as we know it, and it shows us that almost immediately people began to identify with one local church and serve within it as it grew.

A second reason for formal membership is that it is very valuable to the pastors of the church as they seek to fulfill their God-given task of shepherding. Bethel by its design, is attracting the seeker, the observer, and the uncommitted, and we want this to always be the case. The pastors of the church have the responsibility of identifying those who have not only made a commitment to Christ, but also those who desire to make a commitment here at Bethel. These people are then added to the “core group” of Bethel—that group of people that can be counted on to faithfully serve and sustain the various ministries of the church.

The third and final reason for membership is because it benefits the individual. As the pastors fulfill their responsibility of training men and women to serve, and as these individuals serve faithfully, the Bible says that the body of Christ is built up. The result of this, as the apostle Paul states, is that we become unified, mature, and that we increase in our knowledge of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

All who have trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins are members once and for all in the family of God (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:13-22; 4:3-6; Colossians 1:13-22). This positional membership is eternal and unchanging. As we have already seen above, the concept of being a participating member in a local church is also present in the Bible (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:25-31; 14:12,26; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Timothy 3:14-15). You may be a participating member of several different local churches during your lifetime, but your positional membership in God's family will never change.

Membership at Bethel . . . The Church @ Franklin Mills requires:

- Regular attendance at the church for at least 6 months
- Participation in a membership class *
- That you be baptized as a believer **

* Membership Classes will be advertised in the weekly bulletins several weeks before the start of the class.

**Baptisms are held several times a year and are advertised in the bulletin several weeks in advance.