



SUTTON COLDFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH

Making Sense of Life Together, Sharing the Love of Jesus

Membership





Membership at Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church

Thank you for considering becoming a member of Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church. In this leaflet we've tried to answer the most common questions about membership, please let us know if you have any further questions we can assist with.

What is membership?

We welcome all to our church and hope that they feel a part of things from the beginning. Some come for a while to observe and receive, gradually we hope they feel able to participate and contribute, as well as, receive. Yet, as we explain later in this leaflet, we need a group of people to feel responsibility and ownership of what we do, to be members or 'partners'.



What does a member do?

A member seeks, where possible, to:

- Share their life with others in the church, offering and receiving support and care as well as praying regularly for the church and its members.
- Regularly join with the church in worship and communion.
- Seek God's will for the church and participate in Church Members' Meetings.
- Share in the responsibility for the financial needs of the church.
- Offer their God-given gifts for His service.
- Seek to share their faith in action, word and invitation throughout their lives, seeking to live with integrity and authenticity as a disciple of Jesus.

We do not expect everyone to serve in the church; some serve Christ beyond the walls of our building. However, we do need a big team in our work and there are lots of different ways to serve and be involved. Do speak to a leader about how your gifts could be used.



How old do members have to be?

The minimum age for membership is 16 years old because we believe people have to be old enough to understand the implications of the commitment they are making.

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What must members believe?

Members need to have accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. For Jesus to be our Saviour means that we have confessed our sin, and in repentance, believe that Jesus died in our place on the cross. For Jesus to be our Lord means that we seek to live lives in obedience to him and his words as recorded in Scripture.

We also expect members to share our values as a local church. We are a Baptist Church and members of the Evangelical Alliance of Churches, believing in the authority of the Bible as the word of God. Copies of the statements of faith of these two groups are available.

We recognise that Christians legitimately have different understandings of scripture and so we do not expect agreement on every other detail of faith.

We expect members when they join to be broadly comfortable with how we do things and to be in agreement with our vision as a church. We believe in the need make disciples together by seeking to **Make Sense** to a broken world, we believe in God's wisdom for every day **Life**. We value working **Together** and recognise that we need the different gifts that we all bring. We seek to **Share the Love of Jesus**, in our church and beyond into our community and the wider world. This love is overwhelming, costly and challenging in its grace and mercy. We are committed to making Church a place where all can come each week and meet God.

Do members have to be baptised as a believer?

No, though we expect members to have made a public declaration of faith in a church. We want Baptism to be a personal choice not a requirement, but we believe membership follows the willingness to publicly declare to those we know that we want to follow Jesus. If a prospective member has been part of another Church then we would normally out of courtesy contact that church. If that person has made a public commitment in that church, such as confirmation and they feel this is all God has asked them to do, then we do not seek Baptism. We do, however, expect all members to believe in the value of believer's Baptism for others. Because we see baptism and confirmation as different, we do baptise people who have previously been confirmed and sometimes this happens long after membership. For those who have not been a member of another Church, for new Christians, or those for whom our Church has been their only Church we would normally expect Baptism before membership. Our constitution requires that Elders and ministry staff have been baptised as a believer.



How long does membership last?

Membership is for as long as a person remains an active part of our church. Thus, those who have not attended any activity for more than a year, except because of ill health, will be asked whether they wish to continue in membership. If over a further period no reply is received then the church may remove names from membership. In extreme circumstances where a member's actions fall far short of the behaviour of a Christ follower, and where there is no repentance, the Leadership Team may recommend to the Church Meeting that a member be removed from the member's list.



What is expected financially from a member?

We do not have any rules about giving. We ask that you prayerfully consider the needs of the church, and make your contribution as you can. We recognise that the Bible suggests we give a tenth of our income, we recognised some contribute to other causes or have other financial limitations. The church itself gives away 25% to needs outside the day to day running of the church.

It helps us greatly if giving is regular. If you are a UK taxpayer we are able to claim Gift Aid your giving.

A leaflet explaining why we give, how our giving is spent and how to give is available online or by contacting the Church Office.

Why do Baptist churches have membership?

Membership is not particularly a biblical idea; it's a way some churches have of recognising and defining their core supporters. We need to do this because;

- Our conviction is that all Christians are ministers of God, therefore final authority in decision making comes from Christians coming together to discern the will of God not from a few leaders deciding. Therefore our big decisions are made by coming together and voting at the Church Members' Meetings
- To stop a few people getting together and pretending to be the Church, votes can only be taken when at least 17.5% of the whole Church membership is present. This means we have to define who the whole Church is – that's where membership comes in.

Are there extra benefits of being a member?

No - all the benefits of being part of the church are free to members and non-members alike. We see membership is an act of service and commitment and believe we grow and receive through such service.

How do I become a member?

A request should be made to a member of the Leadership Team who will arrange either a visit or a meeting to discuss your story of faith and our understanding of what membership means. A recommendation is then taken to the Church Members' Meeting who then agree the recommendation. At a later service you can be publicly welcomed and introduced to the church if you want.

Why might membership be deferred?

The Leadership Team may suggest an applicant waits to become a member under the following circumstances;

- The applicant is uncertain of what a Christian is or whether they are a believer
- There has been no public declaration of faith
- Participation in church life has been less than a year
- The applicant has strong reservations or criticisms of church life
- The applicant has a lifestyle that contradicts the central values of Christian morality
- There is an unresolved breakdown in relationship with a former church





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