

Belonging to Fivehead Baptist Church

What is a Christian?

A Christian is someone who believes in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, accepts him as Saviour and Lord, commits to following Jesus, and to be led by the Holy Spirit. The Bible describes this as being “in Christ” - a way of saying that the person *belongs* to Jesus.

What is Church?

Church (from the Greek word *Ekklesia*) means a gathering of people. When Christians gather together, there is a church. Church is therefore *people*, not a building or institution.

Jesus used the word “church” on two occasions:

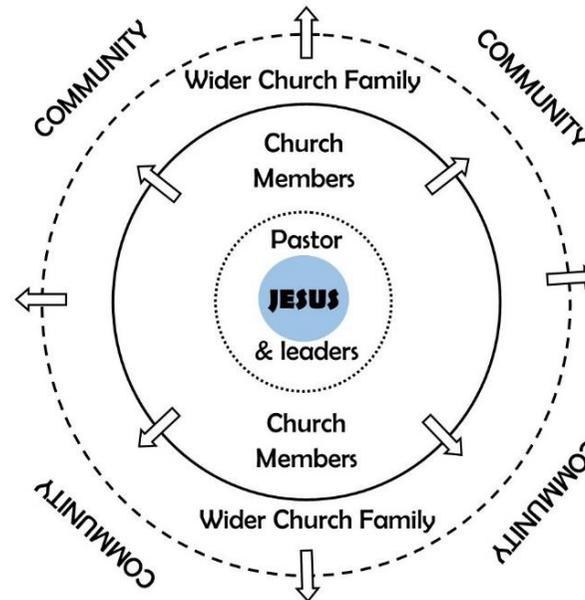
1. In Matthew 16:18 he says “*I will build my church.*” Here he is referring to the **universal church** made up of all Christians in every nation, language and generation who have been baptised into Christ. Paul writes “we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13)
2. In Matthew 18:17 he says “*Tell it to the church.*” In this instance the context shows that he is thinking about the **local church**. The picture in 1 Corinthians 12 also illustrates how we belong together in the local church as members of a body: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (v.27)

What is a Baptist Church?

Baptist Churches are first and foremost Christian Churches. The diagram shows how a Baptist Church is organised and some of the characteristics.

- Jesus is the Head of the Body (the Church) so he is the supreme authority and at the centre of church life.
- Committed local Christians are the members of the body and every person is a “minister”, in that all have a role to play in the church’s mission.
- The local gathering of the members is the church meeting, (where the word “meeting” is a verb rather than a noun) and the members seek to know and obey the mind of Christ.

- The church is outward-looking, seeking to reach out to the community with the Good News of Jesus, and to invite others to join the church.



Unlike some other denominations, Baptist churches are not hierarchical, but rather the members of the local church are responsible for making important decisions such as choosing leaders. The leaders are accountable to the members. The church meeting appoints deacons from among the members to serve and lead the church, and also has authority to call a Pastor (or Minister).

Who can belong to a Baptist Church?

Everyone is welcome to attend worship and church activities and it is hoped that newcomers will quickly feel that they belong as they are embraced by the members of the church. Our church photo board shows the faces of people who belong to Fivehead Baptist Church.

Who can make decisions?

When important decisions are to be made it is necessary to define who can make those decisions. In a Baptist church everyone’s opinion is valued, including children, but a process of decision-making is needed. Day to day

decisions are made by the Pastor, deacons and other leaders, but major decisions are taken when the committed members meet together. Usually, decisions are reached by consensus, but sometimes a formal vote is taken. Any regular worshippers are welcome to attend and contribute to church meetings, but only covenanted, committed Members are able to vote on formal decisions, especially when there are legal responsibilities for the church as a charity. Only Members are eligible to become leaders of the church.

How can I become a Member?

Membership is open to any Christian who wishes to fully belong to the local church and be committed to working together with the other members. As a Member you are expected to meet regularly for worship, especially communion, and to take part in the mission and ministry of the church, as you are able, according to your gifts. Full details are in our Church Constitution.

To become a member, just *ask* any of the deacons or the Pastor, who will arrange for a couple of members to meet with you. This is an opportunity to get to know you, to share about your Christian journey and for you to ask questions about how the church works.

The next church meeting will be asked to affirm you as a Member and you will be publicly welcomed at the first convenient communion service.

Every year, at Pentecost (the birthday of the church) everyone in the church will be invited to take part in a special Covenant Service where we renew our commitment to Jesus and to one another. New people will especially be encouraged to covenant together at this service.

FAQs

Do I have to agree with everyone else in the church?

It’s highly unlikely that you will agree with everyone on every matter! However, we all agree that Jesus is Lord and we seek to work together on that basis. When a decision is made by the church meeting, we all agree to abide by that

decision, but still love and respect each other, including those who differ.

Do I have to be baptised?

As a Baptist Church we teach and practise believer's baptism by immersion. The normal way of joining the church is by baptism. However, if you profess Jesus as Lord, you are welcome as a member.

Why is it important for me to be a member?

Some people say, "I don't feel I need to be a member". True – BUT... the church *needs* committed Members to function for a number of reasons:

- The Body of Christ needs all its parts (members) – including you!
- Members make decisions and are mutually accountable
- Members choose leaders
- Leaders must be Members

So, unless there is a strong core of committed Members, good decisions can't be made and the church will lack leadership.

What are our values?

As a church we seek to be:

- Taught and shaped by what the Bible says
- Outward looking – towards one another, our community, the world
- Pursuing growth in Christian maturity (aiming to see our lives, attitudes & behaviour transformed)
- Open to taking risks (in how we work out what it means to follow Jesus day-to-day)
- A place of healing (physical, emotional or spiritual)
- Open to the work and enabling of the Holy Spirit in the ways He chooses
- Serving using the gifts we have been given
- Loving in word and deed
- Welcoming
- Prayerful (individual and corporately)
- Generous (reflecting the generosity of God in all areas of our lives)

If you can say and mean the following covenant promises, which we reaffirm each year at Pentecost, there is no reason why you cannot be a member of Fivehead Baptist Church:

COVENANT PROMISES

In making these promises to Jesus, to each other and to the world, we become Members in partnership with Jesus and with his local church, Fivehead Baptist Church.

We commit to Jesus

(Spoken to Jesus)

Lord Jesus Christ, responding to your love, demonstrated on the cross, I affirm you as my Saviour and Lord. I commit to following you, wherever your Spirit leads me, and to living my life in relationship with you.

We commit to the people of Fivehead Baptist Church

(Spoken to one another in the church)

I will be family with you, the members of God's family here in Fivehead Baptist Church. Together with you, I will seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the work and witness of this church. I will love and support you, as you love and support me, and as we seek to follow Jesus together and grow as disciples.

We commit to serve our neighbours in the world

(Spoken together to God)

We will join in with Jesus and go out in his love to strangers and friends, enemies and those on the edge of society. In partnership with other churches in our wider Baptist family and in our local area, we want to be Good News to all we meet and to make disciples for Jesus in the world.



Registered Charity number 238649

BELONGING TO FIVEHEAD BAPTIST CHURCH

*Being God's Family here
Helping people
to know Jesus*

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