

## Join the family

### What is Church Membership?

In the UK today, all Baptist churches are independent registered charities and therefore governed by Charity Law. From this standpoint, it is the membership of a church that determines who may legally take part in the decision-making processes.

Church membership, however, is above all an expression of faith and belonging. When we join a church, we are making a statement about the reality of our faith and our commitment to Jesus. We are also recognising that whilst we all belong to the global family of Jesus, Vale Community Church (VCC) is our own local church family. So with all its weaknesses and failings, VCC is where I belong.

Membership of the local church should be one of the most fulfilling aspects of Christian discipleship. For some people it is a natural progression to move from commitment to Jesus, expressed in believer's baptism to commitment to Jesus in membership of a local church.

Just as becoming a Christian calls for a step of faith, so a commitment to the responsibilities of church membership may involve trusting God and his people to lead you into one of the most fulfilling aspects of Christian discipleship.

### Are there Qualifications?

Although we are a Baptist church committed to the Biblical practice of believers' baptism, this is not a requirement for church membership, as we understand baptism to be a declaration of faith, rather than a means of attaining faith. Of course, we encourage all our non-baptised members to give serious consideration to their own baptism.

VCC is a member of the Baptist Union and Evangelical Alliance. We therefore assent to the statements of core belief of both organisations. Members of the church would also need to be in sympathy with these statements of belief.

### What is the Process?

If you would like to become a member, please talk to one of our Ministers, Steve or Jo or to the Church Secretary, Heather Travers. They will arrange for two of our members to visit you to discover how you became a Christian and to briefly talk about what it means to be a church member. Normally they will bring your application to the next church meeting. After your application is accepted, we will publicly welcome you into membership at the next service that is convenient.

## Family life

- Life Groups (or small groups) are a vital part of life at VCC given the size of our congregation. They allow for the possibility of getting to know a small and manageable group of people and, through them, to get to know others. Please talk to one of our Ministers if you wish to join a group.



- Pastoral care is overseen by Liz Edwards, one of our Leadership Team. Please let us know if you would like a member of the Pastoral Team to visit you.
- From time to time, the church runs courses including the well known 'Alpha' course. These are open to all and they complement the regular teaching programme of the church, which is organised by our Ministers.

- You don't have to go to church to be a Christian any more than you have to go to a doctor when you are ill. However, common spiritual sense suggest to all of us that going to church and taking part in the life of God's people is somehow the right thing for a Christian to do.

## What difference would it make

Being a member means you have taken a significant step of commitment to the church and identification with the church family. That is a practically meaningful way of obeying Jesus' command for us to love one another.

- It means that you have shown you are committed to the whole church, not just your group of friends.
- It means that you know that the other church members are committed to you in Christian love.
- It means that you have put yourself under the pastoral leadership and care of the Minister and Leadership Team: you know they are committed to serving you, to promoting your spiritual health, to helping you when times are hard.
- It means that you can take your part in the decisions which shape the church's direction such as new leaders, new staff, budgets and other significant matters, through the Church Meeting.
- A defined membership enables the leaders and other members to know that you are committed to the church.
- A defined membership enables you to take your part in the decision-making of the church. This provides a proper check so that the Ministers and Leadership Team cannot exercise unlimited authority or act without consulting the wisdom of the church membership.
- A defined membership also allows church discipline to be exercised.

## What is expected of me

First, we want to say that as you become a member we are committing ourselves to you! Specifically: to your pastoral care, to helping you to grow spiritually and to use your gifts for the glory of God and the building up of the church.

The New Testament teaching on church commitment means that we expect members to:

- Make every effort to come along on a Sunday.
- Care for others in the church. We want VCC to be a community of love and mutual care.
- Be involved in a small group midweek. This is very important to develop the kind of supportive relationships that are part of our vision for church life.
- Be involved in serving in the church. We want you to use your gifts for the common good.
- Maintain a lifestyle in line with the teaching of the Bible. We are called to live holy lives to please God and bring honour to Jesus.
- Give regularly. VCC relies on the generous giving of its members.
- Respect leadership. We try to keep a biblical balance between the requirement that leaders be allowed to lead, and that they must be humble and approachable.
- Keep the peace in the church and resolve relational tensions biblically.
- Pray for the church. We hope that church members pray daily for VCC, especially our leaders.

## Contacts

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## The Bible says

*Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

*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!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.*

*1 Corinthians 12:14-2*

## Vale Community Church

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# Becoming a Member



## Vale Community Church

...knowing God...loving others...sharing Jesus