

Welcome To Bethel

Membership Explained



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Church Membership

Why should I become a Church Member?

As a member of our local church fellowship, you become part of a spiritual family – a place where you truly belong. It's a community where you can build meaningful relationships, find mutual support, and serve alongside fellow believers.

Membership offers the opportunity to share life together, knowing that others will be there to encourage you—and where you, in turn, can support and uplift others. You'll be able to use your unique gifts, skills, and passion for God by participating in regular church activities and serving in areas that align with your strengths.

Importantly, as a member, you'll also take part in shaping Bethel's mission and ministry through active involvement in our decision-making process.

We believe it is vital for Christians to gather regularly, grow together, and serve in unity. Becoming a member reflects a commitment to that shared journey and signals a willingness to take on the responsibilities that come with it. At Bethel, only members may lead ministries, and more information about serving as a member can be found in Appendix 2.

In the book of Acts, we see the early Church coming together for teaching, prayer, and the breaking of bread. The book of Hebrews encourages us to "not give up meeting together." Throughout Scripture, it's clear that God designed the Christian life to be lived in community—to encourage one another, serve one another, and grow together.

Membership is not a duty to *fulfil* but a step to embrace. It's an opportunity to deepen your faith, commit to the church family, and serve God with purpose and joy.

Membership Process

Who can become a Member?

Church membership at Bethel is open to anyone who has faith in God—as described in the New Testament—and considers Bethel to be their spiritual home. If you feel called to commit to meeting regularly and serving alongside other believers here, we warmly invite you to take that step.

Whilst it is typical for members of Baptist churches to have been baptised by full immersion – a practice that is common at Bethel – we hold to an open membership policy. However, we have an open membership which means if you've already been baptised as a child, or haven't been baptised at all, you could still become a member. What matters most is your faith in Christ and your desire to grow and serve within this church community.

To be a member you must:

- accept the beliefs of Bethel Baptist Church (at the end of the document is a copy of the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle, together with their core values and "Baptist Distinctives").

- earnestly seek to live your life according to the teachings of the Bible.
- have your Membership application accepted by the Church Members' Meeting.

How do I become a Member?

If you've recently been baptised at Bethel, the key aspects of church membership will have already been covered in your baptismal preparation group. In this case, you simply need to complete the membership application form (which you should have received) and your application will then be presented at the next Church Members' Meeting for approval. If accepted, a member of the Leadership Team will inform you, and you'll be formally welcomed into membership during the next convenient morning communion service.

If you haven't been baptised at Bethel but would like to become a member, speak to a member of the Leadership Team (see Appendix 1) who will connect you with the Membership Secretary. They will give you the application form, and once submitted, two church members will be assigned to visit you for a friendly conversation about your application.

During this visit, you'll have the opportunity to share your personal journey of faith, your reasons for seeking membership, and any previous involvement in church life. They will also explain how Bethel operates, discuss the expectations of membership, and highlight areas where you might serve according to your interests and gifts. Your preferences will then be shared with the appropriate ministry leaders.

Following the visit, the two church members will present a short report and recommendation at the next Church Members' Meeting, where the church will vote on your application. These meetings are an encouraging time of reflection and celebration as we hear how God is working in people's lives.

If your membership is approved, the Membership Secretary will let you know, and you'll be warmly welcomed into membership during a morning communion service.

If you're transferring from another Christian church by a letter of transfer, we will still arrange a visit as described above. This helps us get to know you better and support a smooth transition into the life of our church community.

What is expected of a Member?

Being a member of Bethel is a privilege – it means being part of a spiritual family committed to growing in faith, serving others, and advancing God's kingdom together. But with this privilege also comes responsibility. Members are encouraged to take an active role in the life and ministry of the church because Membership is not just about belonging. It's about partnering together in faith, growth, and service where every member matters, and every contribution helps to build up the church and bring glory to God.

This means that each Member is expected to:

- **Attend worship regularly** and engage in church activities as fully as possible.
- **Maintain a personal life of prayer and Bible study**, nurturing your relationship with God.
- **Participate in communion services**, sharing in the bread and wine as a vital expression of our unity and faith.
- **Serve within Bethel's ministries and activities**, using your unique gifts, abilities, and time where you are able.
- **Attend and contribute to Church Members' Meetings**, playing your part in the discernment and direction of church life.
- **Support the decisions made at Church Members' Meetings**, honouring the collective guidance of the church body.
- **Contribute to the mission and ministry of Bethel**, including through financial giving, as you are able.

How do I cease to be a Member?

There are various reasons why someone may wish—or need—to conclude their membership at Bethel. We approach each situation with understanding, grace, and care. There are several ways membership may come to an end:

- **Transfer to Another Church:** If you are moving to another Baptist church—either locally or further away—we can arrange for your membership to be transferred. The receiving church may wish to meet with you before confirming your membership, after which they will contact us to formally complete the transfer and remove your name from our membership register.
- **Written Resignation:** If you are not transferring to another church but would still like to withdraw from Bethel's membership, you can do so by submitting a written request to one of the Ministers, the Church Secretary, or the Membership Secretary. Depending on your reasons, someone from the leadership team may wish to meet with you for a pastoral conversation. All resignations are shared with and noted at the next Church Members' Meeting.
- **Bereavement:** The passing of a church member is respectfully acknowledged and recorded at the next Church Members' Meeting.
- **Church Members' Meeting Resolution:** In rare circumstances, and after careful consideration, membership may be concluded through a formal resolution passed by the Church Members' Meeting. This is typically only pursued when other pastoral steps have been taken and it is believed to be the most appropriate course of action.

How do we track our Membership?

Bethel Baptist Church maintains a comprehensive list of all current members, including the date they joined and the route by which they became members; such as coming to faith, baptism, submitting a membership request, or transferring from another church. We also

keep a record of former members, noting the dates and reasons for their removal from the membership list.

The membership list is reviewed regularly. If a member has not been attending services or activities without an obvious reason, such as illness or other legitimate circumstances, someone from the church will reach out to understand the situation and encourage renewed fellowship. If a member has been absent for 12 months or more (excluding cases of illness or being housebound), their situation will be considered at a Trustees' Meeting. At that point, their name may be brought before a Church Members' Meeting for a decision regarding removal from the membership list.

This process is undertaken with care and respect, aiming to maintain a healthy and engaged church community while offering support to those who may be distant for various reasons.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) Declaration of Principle:

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried and rose again the third day'.
3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

BUGB 5 Core Values

A Prophetic Community

Following Jesus in confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy. Challenging worldly concepts of power, wealth, status and security.

An Inclusive Community

Following Jesus in transcending barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture; identifying with those who are rejected, deprived and powerless.

A Sacrificial Community

Following Jesus in accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice. Seeking to reflect the generous, life-giving nature of God.

A Missionary Community

Following Jesus in accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice.
Seeking to reflect the generous, life-giving nature of God.

A Worshipping Community

Following Jesus in engaging in worship and prayer which inspire and undergird all we are and do. Exploring and expressing what it means to live together as the people of God, obeying his Word and following Christ in the whole of daily life.

What makes a Baptist?

These are the Baptist distinctives as published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The Lordship of Christ

'Jesus is Lord' is the distinctive confession of faith. As individuals and as Churches, Baptists seek to make Jesus Lord of every aspect of their lives.

The authority of the Bible

Baptists believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that the Holy Spirit through the scriptures shows us God's way for living. As radical believers Baptists seek to root their lives in the revelation of God's truth.

Believers' baptism

Based on the New Testament, Baptists claim that baptism is for believers only. Baptism is only for those who are able to declare 'Jesus is Lord'. As a symbol of Jesus' claim on their lives, Baptists practise baptism by immersion, in which candidates symbolise their desire to 'die to self' and to live for Christ.

A believers' Church

Baptists understand the Church as a community of believers gathered by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ for worship, witness and service. Central to Baptist worship are prayer and praise, listening to God's word in preaching and gathering around the Lord's Table.

The priesthood of all believers

In the Baptist model of a believers' Church every Member has a role to play, whether in teaching, faith-sharing, evangelism, social action, pastoring, guiding, serving, prophetic insight, praying, healing, administration or hospitality.

The Church Meeting

In a Baptist Church, one expression of the 'priesthood of all believers' is the Church Meeting. This is the occasion when Members come together to prayerfully discern God's will for their life together. In Baptist Churches the final authority rests not with the ministers or deacons but with the Members gathered together in Church Meetings. It is the Church

Meeting which, for instance, appoints leaders, agrees financial policy and determines mission strategy. Church Meetings tend to take place mid-week, normally on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Associating together

Baptist Churches have always come together in regional, national and international 'associations' for support and fellowship. Based on the New Testament, Baptists believe that Churches should not live in isolation from one another but rather be 'interdependent', both as Baptists and as part of the Church Universal.

The missionary task

Compelled by the Holy Spirit, Baptists seek to be missionary communities. Baptists believe that all Christians have a duty to share their faith with others. William Carey was a Baptist who is known as the father of the modern missionary movement. Along with this emphasis on evangelism, however, Baptists recognise that mission includes social action and involves promoting justice, social welfare, healing, education and peace in the world.

Religious freedom

Religious freedom for all has always been a keystone of the Baptist way. Within Baptist Churches, tolerance for differences of outlook and diversity of practice is encouraged.

Church Leadership

The following provides answers to frequently asked questions on the governance and the leadership of Bethel Baptist Church.

Who are the leaders of the Church?

Bethel Baptist has a Leadership Team made up of the Minister(s), Elders, Deacons, Treasurer and Church Secretary. Together they are Trustees and hold the legal duty to ensure the Church complies with Charity Law as well as give the church vision and direction. They work together to discuss church business and to ensure that the buildings are available as needed and that the staff team are supported in their work. How they are appointed, and for how long is governed by the Church Constitution (Appendix 4). The Leadership Team is answerable to the church meeting in all aspects of policy and practice.

What are the specific responsibilities of Elders?

The Elders, collectively with the Minister(s), are primarily responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They also give spiritual support and advice to the Minister(s), meeting regularly together to discuss pastoral issues. Elders seek to ensure that the congregation is spiritually healthy and that the spiritual gifting God has given Bethel is used to build His kingdom in Whitchurch, Cardiff and beyond.

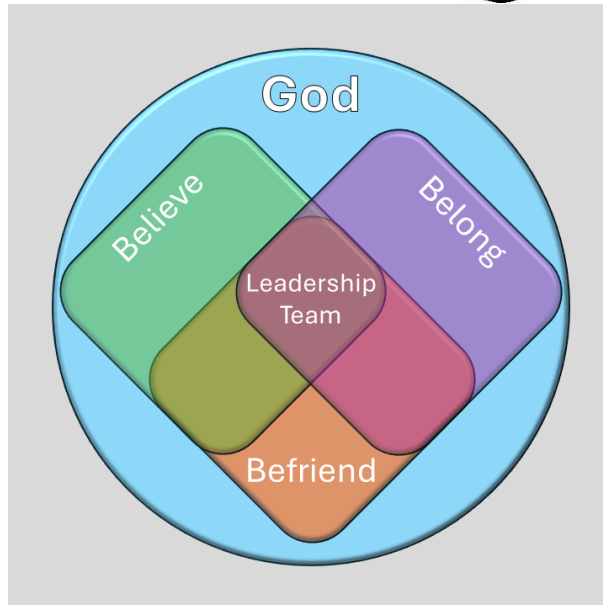
What are the specific responsibilities of Deacons?

The Deacons are primarily responsible for the practical aspects of the church life, but with the Elders and Minister(s) also minister spiritually as they are gifted. They are an essential part of Connection Groups (see below) which oversee the life of the congregation and seek to ensure that the congregation at Bethel is served and able to serve.

Connection Groups and teams

At present, the activities of the Church are broken down into 3 Connection Groups and two practical groups:

- Believe - Connection with God
 (Sunday services, youth & kids materials, etc)
- Belong - Connection with each other
 (Social activities and events, pastoral care, etc)
- Befriend - Connection with others
 (Outreach events and activities, etc)
- Governance - Overseeing policy and process, finance, administration
- Serving - Delivering usable buildings



Each group includes members of the Leadership Team working alongside church members to ensure that our ministry aligns with Bethel's vision and values. These groups meet every two months to pray, discuss vision and direction, and plan initiatives that help bring the whole church closer to God's purposes.

The groups take primary responsibility for specific areas of church life that cover all ages and stages of faith. They also collaborate closely with the other groups to foster unity and coordination across the church's ministries.

It is encouraging to see more people stepping forward to get involved and share in the important work of leadership, strengthening our community and mission together.

How does the Church make decisions?

The Leadership Team meets regularly to seek God's guidance through prayer and to provide direction and oversight for the life of the church. When important matters arise, they bring their recommendations to the Church Members' Meeting to ensure everyone's voice is heard.

As appointed leaders, the Leadership Team carries the responsibility given by the membership to make decisions and take action for the good of the church. Nevertheless, certain significant decisions must be brought before a Church Members' Meeting and approved by a majority vote, as specified in Section 13 of the church constitution (see Appendix 4).

Church Finance

How is the Church funded?

One of the hallmarks of Baptist churches is that they are primarily self-funded through the generosity of their members and those who attend services. To make the most of these contributions, the church claims Gift Aid wherever possible, allowing donations from authorised taxpayers to be increased by recovering the tax already paid to HMRC. This benefit is available only to taxpayers and requires written consent (see Appendix 3). Together, these form the principal source of the church's income.

At Bethel, additional funds are raised by hiring out the church hall and by applying for grants to support specific projects. However, these sources typically account for less than ten percent of the church's total income.

Planning the Church budget

Each year the Treasurer proposes a budget developed with the Leadership Team and Connection Groups. This seeks to forecast our likely income and expenditure to ensure our budget is balanced – that is that we don't spend more than is received.

Once developed and agreed by the Leadership Team it is presented to the church meeting as the responsibility for accepting the budget lies with the church members. During the meeting members can question assumptions, seek to amend the budget or reject it. However, it is a responsibility of the members to ensure there is a budget that delivers the aims of the church constitution.

Use of Church finances

The Treasurer is responsible for the day-to-day control of the church finances – and has a small team that works with them. They approve any purchases in advance so that we don't run out of cash in the bank and advise on the use of reserves for urgent and unexpected works. If the costs are significant then the Treasurer will bring the issue to the attention of the Leadership Team for decision. The Leadership Team may decide that the matter needs to be brought to the Church Member's meeting, depending on the item and the cost.

Giving to the Church

There are several ways in which you can regularly support Bethel financially. To maximise your giving, you can register to give to the Church via Gift Aid (*appendix 3*). This means that for money that the Church can show you gave, the Church can claim back the tax you have paid at the rate applicable.

You can give by any of the following ways:

- Standing order (*appendix 3*)
- Salary sacrifice (arranged via your employer)
- Contactless giving at rear of the Sanctuary
- Cheque payable to Bethel Baptist Church
- Cash through the offering box at the back of the sanctuary

Occasionally we have “Gift Days” to raise money for specific projects. We also have ways of giving to specific things such as Tear Fund, Mission Wales, Home Mission

Future Planning (Reserves Policy)

We are aware of the need to plan for future large expenditure and to put money aside for it. This has been split into 3 areas:

1. Salaries, etc. would have to be paid for several months if the Church closed.
2. Larger capital expenditure will be required e.g. new boiler, painting of Church/manse, replacing large equipment.
3. Potential new projects/ministries.

A policy has been agreed regarding these areas and appropriate monies are kept in our savings account to cover them. A copy of the policy can be obtained from the Treasurer.

Supporting Mission

The Church seeks to fulfil its purpose by engaging in evangelism and mission.

Locally

The Church sponsors and supports events for people of all ages who live, study, work or visit in Whitchurch. These events provide for the social, recreational and educational needs of people as well as giving them opportunities to encounter and explore the Christian faith. Some examples of these events are Bethel Tots, Bethel Kids, Bethel Youth, Bethel Teens, Free Food Market, Schools work, Crafty Chatters.

Citywide

The Church supports and works in evangelism, mission and social action with Baptist and ecumenical partners as well as parachurch organisations such as Cardiff Foodbank, Street Pastors.

Nationally

As a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and of the South Wales Baptist Association, the Church contributes finance, personnel and resources to collaborative mission enterprises regionally and throughout Great Britain through the Home Mission Fund. We benefit from being able to draw on the resources and expertise of the Baptist

Union and local Association. Members are also encouraged to maintain and share news of their involvement in other parachurch and ecumenical agencies that undertake similar mission service.

Globally

The Church engages with and supports financially the work of BMS World Mission. The Church has a special link with specific BMS workers as well as maintaining a prayerful interest in the whole range of BMS work. Individuals or groups who feel called to serve in world mission can be offered opportunities to do this and be trained appropriately by BMS. Through Tear Fund members of the congregation are given opportunities to give money and prayer support to projects that alleviate the suffering of needy peoples throughout the world. Members are also encouraged to maintain and share news of their involvement in other parachurch and ecumenical agencies that undertake similar mission service.

Useful Websites

Bethel Baptist Church

<https://www.bethelcardiff.org.uk/>

Baptist Union of Great Britain

<https://www.baptist.org.uk/>

South Wales Baptist Association

<https://www.southwalesba.org.uk/>

Cardiff Foodbank

<https://cardiff.foodbank.org.uk/>

Cardiff Street Pastors

<https://tinyurl.com/4tzvacyw>

Home Mission

<https://tinyurl.com/yhkve5mx>

BMS World Mission

www.bmsworldmission.org

Tearfund

www.tearfund.org

Appendices

1. Application for Membership
2. How Can I Serve?
3. Church Constitution