

Abundant Life Membership F.A.Q.'S

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP AT ABUNDANT LIFE?

We ask that prospective members are practicing, confessing Christians who have been baptized and are willing and able to live out our covenant. Secondly, we ask that you have faithfully attended and worshiped with us for an appropriate amount of time. Lastly, we ask that you go through the *Membership Connection* process to become more familiar with the life of our church. Other than that, there are no other specific requirements for membership. We recommend that you refrain from membership until you are fully ready to commit yourself to the Abundant Life Church family.

WHY DO I HAVE TO BE A CHRISTIAN TO BECOME A MEMBER AT ABUNDANT LIFE?

The basis of our covenant is to lead you into the fullness of joy and our church body into unity before God. That can only be achieved based on Jesus' work in the gospel. The obligations of the covenant can *only* be fulfilled by one who is a Christian. It would be improper of Abundant Life to require one to meet the covenantal expectations while they are not a professing, practicing, and genuine Christian. Finally, out of a sincere love for people, we do not want to give false assurance to an unbeliever by permitting them to be a member of Abundant Life. If you are not a believer in Christ, we still welcome your fellowship and presence in our worship services; however, you will not be able to be a formal member of our church.

WHY DO I HAVE TO BE BAPTIZED TO BECOME A MEMBER AT ABUNDANT LIFE?

Baptism is an outward, public expression of the change Jesus has made in your life. It's one of the two ordinances we believe in (along with communion), in which Jesus participated, and which Jesus commanded of His disciples. Believers throughout the Bible and history model baptism; you've died to sin and risen to new life in Christ. While we don't require your baptism to have taken place at Abundant Life, we do require that every covenant member have been baptized *after* his or her conversion to Christ. If you haven't been baptized, please speak to an elder of Abundant Life and we'll celebrate with you and baptize you. If you have questions regarding a previous baptism, please bring that issue to an elder. If you do not agree with our beliefs on the significance of baptism in a believer's life, we still welcome your fellowship and presence in our worship services; however, you will not be able to become a formal member of our church.

WHY THE "PUSH" TOWARDS FORMAL MEMBERSHIP?

Fully explained in the *Abundant Life Membership Covenant*, we believe that the Scriptures teach and encourage followers of Christ to become formal members of a local church. We want to be faithful to God's Word and help you to do the same. We want to limit Christian nominalism by discouraging the idea that you can be a follower of Christ without being submitted to God, spiritual authority, and other believers. Beyond that, Abundant Life believes there are many benefits to non-Christians by modeling formal membership and having them observe this type of church in their community. It gives them a clearer picture of the Christian life, and of Christ, when believers are submitted to God, spiritual authority, and each other while loving one another and pursuing

holiness. It also shows God's incredible power when believers come together in unity despite differences like age, economic status, ethnicity, and other factors. Finally, it teaches that God calls all people to repent, and that there is an inside and an outside to God's offer of salvation.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO BECOME A FORMAL MEMBER?

If you are not yet a believer or are a visitor, we praise God and rejoice that you are here observing the life of our church. But if you are a Christian who refrains from becoming a member over an extended period of time (generally more than a year of involvement), you do a disservice to Jesus' body and bride, and to yourself; you consume from God's church, but don't commit to it or sacrifice for it. You may even hinder the work of our church family. Practically, if you're not a member you're disallowed from serving in many ministries and ministry positions at Abundant Life. Finally, our elders cannot commit to provide the same level of personal shepherding and support to you; the Bible requires that we take care of our family first (Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 6:10).

WHY CAN'T I BE INVOLVED IN LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY IF I'M NOT A MEMBER?

The activities of public ministry represent Christ (Acts 9:4) and Abundant Life Assembly of God; there are certain areas of public ministry that are specifically reserved for formal members. This is a way to protect those reputations. It helps our churches' outreach to non-Christians by setting an example of the church's distinctness that is compelling to the hearts of those in which the Spirit of God is moving. Secondly, the church family is just that: a family, a committed body. Anyone in leadership and serving in ministry must be committed and covenanted to the family. As a leader, you are asking others to submit to you. This would be inappropriate if you are not rightly submitted to God and the spiritual authority He has graciously provided for you. As a matter of protecting our family, we want to make sure the leaders and those who serve in ministry teach sound doctrine and share our ministry philosophy. Furthermore, the Bible would caution our elders from putting you in a position of leadership if you are not willing to commit and invest in our church family (1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 20:28).

HOW DO I KNOW IF CHURCH LEADERSHIP IS UPHOLDING THEIR END OF THE COVENANT?

We do our best to keep you informed of leadership decisions, direction, etc., but if you have a question, you are always free to ask an elder directly. The best way to do this is simply to ask in person, or through an email to the addresses provided to you as a member. We have an open book policy regarding finances, and if there's something you don't feel like you know, we're happy to talk to you about it.

WHAT IF I FEEL LIKE CHURCH LEADERSHIP ISN'T UPHOLDING THEIR END OF THE COVENANT?

If you feel like an elder of Abundant Life isn't fulfilling their covenant with you, it is your right and responsibility to first lovingly and humbly express your concerns to that leader, as well as to the other elders who will handle it according to the biblical mandate for charging an elder (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Timothy 5:19-20). If the elder is unwilling to change and pursue a solution, or to pursue faithfulness to the covenant, then you are freed from your covenant membership obligations and are free to seek membership elsewhere, based on the church's disobedience. Eldership will then seek to handle the issue and decide the steps of reconciliation, discipline, or removal of that elder or leader.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M FULFILLING MY END OF THE COVENANT?

We designed our covenant with the hopes that it would be used as a tool towards growth in both personal and corporate holiness. With this in mind, it is not a document meant just to be signed and then forgotten about. We encourage that you periodically read and pray through what you have covenanted to. It would be helpful to make it part of your family devotions and use as a guideline for prayer; reminding you and your family what you have promised before God and committed to. This would help the Holy Spirit speak to you about areas where you are not fulfilling your end of the covenant. Additionally, we encourage you to be in regular discipleship relationships with other same-sex folks; ones whom you trust and who can push and exhort you in the areas of Christian life where you need growth. Our elders will do their best to make sure our covenant members are upholding their covenant and will lovingly reprove, rebuke, and exhort (2 Timothy 4:2) you when they are made aware of an area where you are not fulfilling your end of the covenant. Regarding the financial giving aspect of the covenant, our Trustee Ministry sends annual giving statements to each covenant member. Finally, if you ever have a question about your end of the member covenant, feel free to bring it to the elders of Abundant Life.

IS THERE AN AGE LIMIT FOR COVENANT MEMBERSHIP?

There is no minimum (or maximum) age for becoming a member at Abundant Life.