

Banchory Christian Fellowship Church



Membership Information

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4 : 15-16 (ESV)

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Please use this space to write notes or questions:

1) Introduction

"What's the big deal about 'church'?" someone might say. "Isn't the important thing that I'm a Christian? Does it really matter whether I join in or not? If I do join in, do I have to become a member as well? And why should I join this church in particular?"

If any of these questions interest you, then the aim of this booklet is to help you in your thinking. It does not pretend to cover all the issues in depth, far less to answer every question you might have about church. It does however seek to inform and to encourage further enquiry.

As a relatively young, non-denominational church (more on that later) made up of folks from a variety of backgrounds, we are conscious that new-comers will be curious and perhaps apprehensive about what the church is like. What do we believe, how do we operate, where do we hope to go in the future?

Hopefully, we can answer some of your questions and give you an opportunity to discover what we are like, or at least what we aim to be like.

2) What is The Church?

So, what is the Church? It is possible to answer that question in two ways, or to view it from two different angles. We can, as it were, put on the wide angled lens and look at the Church in its' broadest sense, at what theologians refer to as "The Church Universal". We can also switch to a zoom lens and look at it in its more focussed expression as found in the local church. We can then ask the more practical question of, "What is involved in being part of the local church?"

a. The Church Universal.

"Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the saviour" Ephesians 5:23

*"we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.... Now you are the body of Christ,
and each one of you is a part of it"
1 Corinthians 12:13&27.*

“There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope when you were called-one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and in all” Ephesians 4:4,5

“I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” Matt. 16:18

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy....and to present her to himself as a radiant church” Ephesians 5:25&27.

“He is the head of the body, the church” Colossians 1:18.

All of these references, and more, refer not to any particular local church or denomination, but rather to the “Universal Church”. This term encompasses all true Christian believers in all times and places as well as the Christian church spread throughout the whole world.

When someone becomes a Christian (Ephesians 4) they become a member of this church that is, they become part of the body of Christ. As such they have a responsibility to relate not only to the head (Christ) but to other parts of the body. The whole of the New Testament, indeed the whole of the Bible knows nothing of the “lone ranger” or solitary Christian deciding to go it alone.

Some folks are quite happy to acknowledge this and indeed to get excited about it (it is exciting!) but are not too bothered about identifying with or committing to a particular local church because they feel that the important thing is that they belong to ‘*The Church*’, i.e. being a Christian is more important than belonging to a church.

b. The Church Local

While the head of the Church should be Jesus (Ephesians 4:15), the ‘*body*’ is always expressed within the context of the local church. Indeed, if we switch from the wide angle to the zoom lens, we quickly discover that the overwhelming majority of references in the Bible to the church refer to a local, living, loving collection of people who are committed to Christ and committed to each other.

Appendix: Statement of Faith

Part I; What We Believe

- The divine inspiration, authority, sufficiency and reliability of the Bible.
- The unity of the Godhead expressed in the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, providence and redemption.
- The perfect Deity, virgin birth and human nature of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The necessity of forgiveness and regeneration in consequence of the disobedience and fall of humanity.
- The death of Christ on a cross as the only perfect and effective sacrifice for sin and His subsequent burial, resurrection and ascension into Heaven.
- The need for personal faith in Christ in order to restore the relationship between God and humanity.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and in ministry and worship.
- The universal Church as the body of Christ, consisting of all those with a personal faith in the redemptive work of Christ; and the local church made up of the fellowship of true believers.
- The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this world.
- The resurrection of the body and the judgement of the world, the eternal blessedness of true believers and eternal punishment of those who reject God’s offer of salvation.

Part II; We Believe in the Following Ordinances

- The baptism of believers by immersion at their request and on confession of faith in Christ.
- The observance of the Lord’s Supper by all those with an active faith in Christ.

exists and it has been rightly said that if you do find the perfect church don't join it, you'll only spoil it!

As far as the New Testament is concerned there are two types of churches. First of all, there are false churches which are not biblically functioning communities and do not hold to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The correct response to such churches is to have nothing to do with them (e.g. 1 John 2:19). The other type of church in the New Testament is a group of imperfect people trying, with the enabling of the Holy Spirit, to be a biblically functioning community. The correct response to this type of church is to commit yourself to it.

Throughout the book of Acts, the word "*church*" is used again and again in connection with specific local congregations (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; 15:3; 20:17). This is continued in the letters of the New Testament which in part can be viewed as pastoral responses to the particular problems of specific churches (1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). The local church is a body from which you can be excluded and in which therefore you can be clearly included.

The Church then is the body of Christ, worked out in the context of a local collection of Christians committed to Christ and to each other.

If you have stayed with us so far (and I hope you have) then perhaps you find yourself asking the following question;

c. What is involved in being part of the local church?

Let me suggest a few things. You may of course be able to add to this but at its minimum being part of the local church should involve:

I. Reciprocal relationships

It is clear from the New Testament that church is so much more than a bunch of individuals simply meeting for a church service once a week. Christians are not to be isolated, but to develop accountable relationships where love can be visibly shown (John 13:34, 35; Romans 12:5; Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:24). In committing to a local church, we are grasping hands with each other to know and be known. We are agreeing to help and encourage each other. There is nothing better than the local church when it is working right!

II. Mutual ministry

In Romans 12:3-8 Paul describes the church generally, but in particular, the church at Rome, as a 'body'. In this body all the members belong to one another and the body works by all of them doing their part. Therefore, everyone should have a part to play in their local church. When Paul writes to the church in Corinth he again stresses that each one has a particular gift to bring in the service of the whole/

body/church (1 Corinthians 12-14) The word “ministry” comes from a Greek word (diakonia) meaning service. In the New Testament teaching, every Christian is a minister. Every Christian has a responsibility to serve, support and admonish one another. Each believer is therefore encouraged to discover their spiritual gifts, develop them and use them in some form of Christian service within the body of Christ.

III. Commitment

If we read Romans 12 or 1 Corinthians 12 and only think about ‘me doing what I think I’m gifted to do’, then we haven’t read them very well and have missed a really important point. Paul says that *"each member belongs to all the others"* and again *"the body is a unit though it is made of many parts"*. Everyone playing their part only works if there is some level of mutual commitment.

Think about it... when a couple get married they do need to talk about their roles in marriage. It is good to do that, but it does not make for a healthy relationship if on their wedding day the woman makes her vows for life, but the man only promises to play his part while he feels like it!

Both on a spiritual and practical level it is not right to expect to be given a role to fulfil in the church if we are not prepared to accept the responsibility and commitment that goes with it. That is why we have formal Church membership. In formally identifying with a particular church we let the leadership and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer and service, as God has gifted and enabled us. We allow fellow believers to have greater expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we do not see ourselves as “mavericks” but rather as the responsibility of this local church. Joining a church also increases our sense of ownership of the work of the church as we move from being observers or consumers to joyful proprietors.

IV. Giving

Along with Church membership, one other way that we demonstrate our commitment to one another is through the giving of our time and resources

- Insight into a person’s understanding of what is involved in church membership in terms of time, money and the use of spiritual gifts.
- Assurance of the candidates understanding of and identification with the church’s overarching purpose.
- To encourage each member to be a full part of the life of the fellowship as God enables them.
- To ascertain what gifts and areas of service they feel they may be used in.

What are the responsibilities of church membership?

These can be summarised in the words of the following old covenant:

“We confess our faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and our sincere desire to serve Him faithfully in the fellowship of His Church.

By the power of the Holy Spirit we will order our lives according to scriptures and we will endeavour to set an example at all times and to witness to others that they may believe.

We promise to make diligent use of all the means and opportunities for spiritual growth.

We promise to promote the Lord’s work at this church by our prayers gifts and service, to preserve the unity of the Spirit, to encourage one another to love and good works and in all things to give our Lord Jesus Christ the pre-eminence.”

5) Conclusions

We hope that this has helped you to think through some of the issues involved in joining a church like Banchory Christian Fellowship Church. Of course you don’t join a church because you are perfect and you’re only going to bring benefits from your commitment there. Neither do you join a church only if it is perfect. No such church

d. Our Future

Our future is bound up with our vision statement. That is ultimately what we are about today and if God continues to prosper us, that is what we intend to be about 5 years, indeed 50 years from now.

4) Membership Matters

What are the requirements for membership?

In short, because we are a Christian church, anyone who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and shows evidence of the reality of that in their lives is welcome to join.

Membership is however a serious commitment and not a mere formality. The workforce of the church is drawn from the membership. It is important therefore that we are able to stand together on the essential matters of the faith, as expressed in our Statement of Faith (See Appendix 1) and agree on the overarching purpose of the church as expressed in its vision and values.

How does someone become a member?

Membership classes are held on a quarterly basis for those interested in exploring membership further. Once someone has indicated a desire to join, two of the Elders of the church will interview the candidate and recommend to the fellowship that the applicant be received into membership.

The purpose of the interview is to gather:

- Some background biographical material
- A statement of the person's personal relationship to Jesus Christ and walk with Him.

(Hebrews 13:16). Banchory Christian Fellowship Church is financially independent - our only source of income is the giving of those who come on a Sunday. It is not that we just want you for your money. Instead it is a sign of our commitment to the Lord, and to each other - how can we claim that we want people to know Jesus if we are not prepared to give of our time and money to this end? We believe it is important that every Christian recognises that stewardship is a form of discipleship and that giving is a part of our worship (Philippians 4:18). Giving is 'putting your money where your mouth is!' Therefore, as a Church, we also give from our resources to help support Missionaries and Charities across the world. The more you give, the more we give!

V. Teaching and leadership

Christians are not perfect people, if you haven't discovered this about us yet, you soon will! This means that we all have to be encouraged to mature spiritually, 'to grow up into Christ' (Ephesians 4:11-16).

God has given to the Church teachers and leaders in order to bring us to maturity. A local church must therefore have in place those with gifts of teaching and leadership. Whilst all of us are called to study the Bible for ourselves, those with the specific gifts of teaching and leadership are required to fulfil their roles too. Therefore, we are taught centrally from the Bible and also given clear direction, in accordance with God's Word.

Teaching and leadership must go hand in hand to try to ensure that the church is led according to God's design. Submitting to the authority of leaders is not a popular concept these days, if indeed it ever was. It is however one that runs throughout the entire New Testament. The abuse of power and discipline are reprehensible and destructive, but not more so than the abandonment of godly leadership and discipline.

The leaders of this church are not perfect. However, they have been called by God, affirmed by the members of the church and given a task to do. As members our job is to support them and to willingly follow their guidance (e.g. Hebrews 13:7, 17).

3) Banchory Christian Fellowship Church

So, if these things are true of our involvement in the local church in general, what about this church in particular? How did we get here, what is our vision, what are our values, where do we hope to go?

a. History

We originated as a church 'plant' from Deeside Christian Fellowship Church, which meets in the Milltimber area of Aberdeen. A small group who had been living in the Banchory area and attending Deeside Christian Fellowship Church approached the leadership and asked them to pray with them about the possibility of planting a church in Banchory. Banchory was at that time beginning a process of substantial expansion and housing development.

In the summer of 2000 the step was taken to begin a pilot series of services, which began with approximately 30 people and with 3 children making up the Junior Church. Over time God has graciously prospered the work and in June 2003 BCFC was inaugurated as a separate church. As the work continued to grow the church called their first full time Pastor in December 2004 followed by a full-time Associate Pastor in 2013. By 2011 the church had moved into the purpose built accommodation we occupy today.

b. Our Vision

At Banchory Christian Fellowship Church our vision is to see, *"the making and maturing of committed followers of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father"*.

You will notice that our vision statement is Trinitarian, Bible-based, Christ centred, Spirit-enabled and God glorifying. Our ultimate end for the fellowship, the community in which we are placed and the wider world is nothing less than this. This statement provides us with some guidelines towards a balanced approach to mission and ministry.

c. Our Values & Distinctives

- *We are evangelical in our theology:* We unashamedly offer Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of the world.
- *We teach the Bible and seek to apply it to our daily lives.*
- *We recognise and support the ministry of all believers.*
- *We seek to be open and welcoming to newcomers and to those outside the church.*
- *We aim to grow in numbers as people come into a personal relationship with Christ.*
- *We seek to grow in Christian maturity as we become more like Christ each day.*
- *We are non-denominational:* We stress the autonomy and self-governance of the local church according to the Scriptures.
- *We recognise Elders as those responsible for the spiritual governance (1 Tim 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2, 1 Thess. 5:12) and teaching of the church (1 Tim 3:12; Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 5:17).* The Elders are collectively the doctrinal guardians of the flock and the overseers of the spiritual life of the church and are responsible to God for the feeding and care and ministry of the people. Deacons serve as officers within the church in a way that is complementary yet distinct from that of the Elder. Specifically, they have responsibility for overseeing the practical aspects of church life.
- *We practice baptism of believers upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ:* While not a requirement for membership we encourage all potential members to reflect upon the church's understanding of the biblical teaching on believer's baptism.