

What Is A Church Member?

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Preacher: Josh Motta

- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. God to be here with you guys today. As Jonathan said, my name is Josh Mata. I'm one of the pastors over at First Baptist Church Mount Pleasant.
- And my family and I have been here in the area for about a year. So we're still kind of getting adjusted and finding our way. But it's been really great. We've enjoyed being here and very thankful to get to be here with you all today.
- It's been a privilege to get to know Jonathan over the past several months. And it's encouraging to see the work that the Lord is doing here at Seaweed Bay. So, again, thank you for allowing me to be here with you all.
- Would you please stand as we read God's word together? This is 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 through 14. The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth, and he says, For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
- For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit.
- [1 : 2 2] For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. And this is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Join your hearts with me for a moment as we ask God for his help.
- God, we thank you for your word. Thank you for this time together that we get to open it and look at what you say to us. We pray that by your spirit you would draw near and cause us to be strengthened and encouraged, cause us to be convicted, and I pray that each one here would see Christ clearly.
- We pray these in his name and by your spirit. Amen. Well, most Americans are hyper-individualistic.
- I'm sure you would all agree. I know I am. I am an individualistic person. It's the culture we live in. It's the waters that we all swim in.
- It's the air we breathe. It's the air we breathe in America. And individualism is not always a bad thing. It often promotes hard work. It promotes building something from the ground up.
- [2 : 4 1] As individuals, God's given us all specific gifts that we can use for his glory to create art and create music and systems and structures in order to shape our culture and to use our specific gifts for God's glory and for the good of one another as individuals.
- So individualism can be a good thing. But at the same time, there's great danger in a hyper-individualistic culture.
- We often can become too independent. We can become too self-made, too self-reliant, too self-focused.
- And so because this is the culture we live in, there's great danger for the church as well. For decades now, throughout churches in America, we often say things that promote this idea of individualism.

We say things like, oh, you just have to make Jesus your personal Lord and Savior. And that's true. But we say that at the expense of the communal gathering of the body of Christ.

[3 : 58] We prioritize our own personal spiritual growth over corporate church growth and holiness. We treat church membership often as if it's just an optional add-on for kind of the more mature Christians or it's really the next step you take if you're going to grow in your Christian life.

Or often, if we do become members of local churches, we treat the church as if it's just something else we do, right? We have our families and we have our kids and their sports and their school and we have our jobs.

And then we kind of have church on the side as well, you know, if we're not doing anything else on the weekend. So, unfortunately, in addition, many professing Christians in America today view their relationship with church kind of in a consumeristic mindset.

Like we come to church on Sunday as a consumer. It's where we go to get our spiritual gas tanks filled up. And when they're filled up, then we go off for the rest of our week and we don't give much thought to the Lord and to his word and to his people.

People. Often, Americans choose churches because there's a certain thing they like about it. We like the music at this church, so we're going to go there. Or we like the preaching at this church, so we're going to go there.

[5 : 20] Or, oh, we like the children's program or the youth program over here, so we're going to go here or here so that our children can have the best youth experience in town. We often treat the church like consumers.

What can I get out of this? And what's the problem with viewing the church this way? The problem is it's nowhere to be found in Scripture.

God has a lot to say in his word about the church. And so we want to look to his word to hear what he has to say about his church and how we are to live our lives together in local churches.

And so this is what I want to communicate this morning with you all as we look to God's word. I want us to compare the way we think about church with the way God's word tells us to think about church and see where we need to rely in our thinking and our actions.

And so the title of today's sermon is, what is a church member? Jonathan asked me if I would preach on church membership this morning.

[6 : 29] And so if you don't like this, you know, this idea, you can yell at Jonathan, not me. It was his idea. So, but if Jonathan's been doing a good job, which I think he has in his membership classes and in leading you all well, I think a lot of this might be review for many of you.

And so let's think biblically together about what is a church member. Number one, for you note takers, number one, a church member is someone who is born again and baptized.

A church member is someone who is born again and baptized. It's pretty self-explanatory, right? The church, Christ's church is made up of Christians.

It's made up of Christians. And what is a Christian? A Christian is someone who's responded to the gospel. A Christian is someone who's repented of their sin, turned away from it, and trusted in Christ for salvation.

That's what, that's who a Christian is. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. Christ came and died on the cross, was buried.

[7 : 34] Three days later, rose again, came back to life, conquering sin and death. And his call is for all of us to repent of our sin and trust in him for salvation in order to reconcile us to God.

So if you've never done that, if you've never turned from your sin, repented of it, and trusted in Christ for salvation, I urge you this morning, do so. If you don't know how to do that or what that means to be saved, to give your life to Christ, talk to Jonathan, talk to Treg, talk to me, talk to a Christian friend who knows you.

We'd love to help you understand what it means to follow Christ. And so that's the first step in being a church member. It's being a Christian, following Christ, giving him your allegiance.

Next, a church member is someone who is baptized. So born again, becomes a Christian, and then is baptized. When the early church was forming in Acts 2, shortly after Christ had ascended into heaven, the apostle Peter is preaching to people in Jerusalem, and he tells his hearers, repent and be baptized.

Be baptized. So baptism, we could say, is like the front door into the church. If the church is a building or if the church is like a house, to get into the house, you've got to go through the front door, right?

[8 : 55] And so baptism is like the front door into the church family. And baptism is how a new Christian identifies with Christ and his church.

And so when we're saved, when God saves us, he reconciles us to him, right? But he also reconciles us to one another. And so when we're baptized, we're reconciled, we're identifying with Christ, and we're identifying with Christ's family, the church.

And so baptism is sort of like how a person says, I'm on that team. I'm on Christ's team. I'm with him and with the church.

It's like you're putting on the team jersey. You're saying Christ is my Lord and his people are my people. And when baptism happens, there's actually two parties speaking.

It's the individual saying, I'm trusting Christ. And it's the church saying, we see it. We agree. Yes, you are trusting Christ. Therefore, we are giving you the ordinance of baptism.

[9 : 56] And so it's essential that we, to the best of our ability, make sure that those who are joining the church, those who we are welcoming into membership, are actually converted by God.

It might sound crazy. It might sound simple. But unfortunately, again, churches all over the West have not done a great job of this.

And therefore, we've seen a lot of bad fruit in churches. And so that's why here at Seaweed Bay and at the church I'm serving at, at First Baptist, we do what we call membership interviews, where we want to hear from those who are wanting to join the church.

We want to hear a clear understanding of the gospel. It doesn't have to be, you know, like a, you know, a presentation that maybe a seminary professor would give.

Just a simple understanding of the gospel. Who is Jesus? What did he do? How are we saved? And then a credible profession of faith. We want to hear that you actually are trusting in Christ, that he has actually saved you.

[11 : 05] Because unfortunately, I'm sure you all know, and I know I do, and we know many people, friends and family members who are confessing to be Christians, yet their lives don't look anything like the life of a Christian should look.

I have family members that live that way. They say they're Christians, yet they don't seem to care about God. They don't seem to want to grow in his word.

They don't want to obey him. They don't gather regularly with the church. And this is really a trend all over our country.

Their lives don't match their professions. Yet they think they're Christians. And many of them think they're Christians because churches along the way have unfortunately taught them that to be a Christian, all you have to do is pray a prayer.

All you have to do is walk down the aisle and sign a card and say, yep, I'm a Christian, and then you're good. Get baptized maybe, and then go on and live your life however you want to live. It doesn't really matter if you're fighting sin.

[12 : 09] It doesn't really matter if you join yourself to a local church. You just got to pray this prayer, and presto, you're a Christian. This dangerous idea has been identified by pastors and theologians as easy-believe-ism.

I don't know if you've heard that term before, easy-believe-ism. It's easy. Just pray this prayer, and you're a Christian. And like I said, this has produced a lot of bad fruit in churches around America.

So this is, in part, one reason why it's so important that we take church membership seriously. It's because people's souls are at stake.

We don't have time to play around with the souls of men and women. And so, a church member is someone first who's truly born again, baptized, but then remember, a believer, a Christian, is not someone who's just baptized and then left alone to kind of be over here on the side and figure out this Christian life by themselves.

No, a new Christian is baptized into a family. There's no orphans in the family of God. You're baptized into a family. You're added to a body, and that body is called the church.

[13 : 32] And so, number two, number two, a church member is part of a local body. A church member is part of a local body. Look with me at Acts chapter 2.

If you have your Bibles, turn there. We're going to go. We were in 1 Corinthians, and we're going to come back to 1 Corinthians, but go to Acts 2, and we're going to read this together. This is as the early church was forming.

The apostle Peter is preaching in Jerusalem. Acts 2, verse 37 is where we're going to be, and I'll read 37 and 38, and then we'll jump ahead a little bit.

So, Acts 2, 37. Peter, again, he's preaching to these people. Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 37] And then down to verse 41. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And so these new Christians, they hear the gospel, they repent and believe, and then they're baptized, and then notice what they don't do. They don't all just go home and have a quiet time in their own bedrooms and close the door and just, Okay, I'm a Christian now.

It's just me and Jesus. That's not what they do. What do these early Christians do? It says they were baptized, and then they were added to the number that day.

So they were added to a group that must have been established, a group where these people knew, here's the group of Christians. Everyone else is not in this group.

Here's this group. These new Christians are added to this group, and then they do something. They devote themselves to the preaching, the teaching, and the fellowship.

[15 : 46] Sounds like church membership to me. And so we see this idea of church membership here in the early church in Acts 2. They were added to a group of people in this local church.

Imagine you're driving down Highway 17 after you leave here, and you're driving along, and you look kind of further down the road, and you see something that looks kind of gross.

You're like, Oh, man, what is that? Is that roadkill? I can't tell. You get closer and closer, and you come upon it, and you notice it's actually a severed human leg on the ground. What do you do?

Do you just keep driving? Oh, whatever. It's nothing. We're in Allendah. Anything goes out here. Human leg on the ground. No.

Nobody would do that. You'd be crazy to do that. What do you do if you see a severed leg on the ground? You pull over. You stop. You look around. Where's the body? This leg has to be attached to a body.

[16 : 54] This is not okay. You're calling the police. You're calling your husband or your wife. There's a human leg on the side of the road. This is not okay. Brothers and sisters, when we see someone claiming to be a Christian, yet not joining themselves to a local church, we should have the same reaction.

The Bible has no category for a lone ranger Christian. On the contrary, all over the New Testament, there's biblical illustrations for what the church is, and every illustration is a singularity making up a group.

Scripture talks about church as stones in a temple. Scripture talks about the church as members of a family, sheep in a flock, members of a body, single entities making up one larger structure.

And so to be a Christian is to be a member of the body of Christ. And to be a member of the body of Christ, the way Scripture talks about it, is to be a meaningful member of a healthy local church.

And so back to where we were in 1 Corinthians 12. I'm going back there. 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 through 14.

[18 : 29] This is what we read at the beginning. I'm going to read it again. This is the Apostle Paul writing to a church in Corinth, and he's talking about unity in the body of Christ. And he says, Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one spirit we are all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. For the body does not consist of one member, but of many.

And so Paul here is arguing that the local church is the body of Christ here on earth. Now, some people read passages like this, and they say, Oh, well, he's just referring to the universal church, to the church throughout all time in history, so I don't really have to join a local church.

But if you keep reading, it actually becomes quite clear. He, the Apostle Paul here, is talking about the local church, because in verse 28 he says, God has appointed in the church, that word church just means gathering, so in the church gathering, he's appointed apostles, prophets, teachers, and he goes on and on about all these different roles within local churches.

And so he's pointing out to a particular body of believers. And so if you, if you are a Christian who has been baptized, then you are part of the body of Christ.

[19 : 55] How do you live out your membership in the body of Christ? You live it out by joining, committing yourself to a local church body. It's not enough to just say, I'm a Christian, I'm part of the universal church.

Because you can't, you can't see the universal church. The universal church is made visible in local churches. And so the local church right now on this earth embodies what we will experience in all eternity with the universal church.

So your membership now in a local church represents your membership in the universal church in eternity. You know, people often say, I'm sure you've heard it again, this goes back to our individualism.

People often say, man, I don't, I don't need the church. I just, it's all about Jesus. I don't need the church. I just want to live a Christ-centered life. Friends, the Christ-centered life is the church-centered life.

Because the church is the body of Christ on this earth. And so God, in his infinite wisdom, has chosen for the body of Christ on this earth right now to be for you and for me, to grow in godliness, to worship him.

[21 : 15] Not just in individual Christians having their own personal quiet time in their prayer closet, though you should do that. I'm not saying don't do that. Do that. But in the local church gathered is where Christ is honored and glorified and we are raised up as followers of Christ and grow in our love for him and for one another.

And so, the reality is, is that all 43, all 43 covenant members of Seaweed Bay Baptist Church make up this particular local body of Christ.

Right here, gathered at 6194 Highway 17, Allendal, South Carolina. All 43 members of this particular body need one another. You all need one another.

If you're a member of this church, God has ordained in his infinite wisdom that the other 42 members of this church would be here right now to help you on your way to heaven.

Our relationship with God is personal, but it's never private. It is personal, but it's never meant to be private. You are, as the Apostle Paul states, members of the body of Christ.

[22 : 35] So, since we've established that a Christian should be a member of a local church, let's then now think together, well, what do you do? What are you to do as a member of a local church?

What's your responsibility? And so, I want us in our remaining time to think biblically about what do we do? What are the roles and responsibilities of a church member?

Number three, number three, and there's four points total, so we're on number three. Church membership is an office and a job.

Church membership is an office and a job. What do I mean by that? First, church membership is an office in that it's an elected position.

it's an elected position. Just like the president of the United States cannot make himself be the president of the United States, so you and I cannot just make ourselves members of the church.

[23 : 35] Church membership is saying, I'm a Christian! Christian! And then it's the rest of the church saying, we agree! We've heard your profession of faith, we've heard your understanding of the gospel, and so your life seems to match your profession and so then we affirm you and welcome you into the membership of this church.

And why do we need that? Why do we need this affirmation from one another? Well, if you're like me, we're often self-deceived, aren't we? I'm often self-deceived in lots of ways.

I think I look good, you know, my wife is like, hey, fix this, fix your collar, fix your hair, you got some little dandruff back here, wipe that off, it looks bad, you know, I think I look good and I need someone else to point out and say, Josh, you don't look good, fix yourself, right?

I'm often self-deceived and so if I'm self-deceived in these little ways, man, I can be self-deceived in my spiritual life as well. I can think I'm doing good, I can think I'm thinking rightly, I can think I'm obeying God's word, but then when I maybe tell somebody my plans or when I speak this way or that way, I have brothers and sisters come to me and say, hey, Josh, that's not right, that's not the way a Christian lives, that's not, that's sinful, right?

I need other people to speak into my life and judge whether or not I'm actually confessing the true gospel. Am I believing the true gospel? I need other Christians to look at my confession of faith and say, yes, that's the true gospel, biblically.

[25 : 13] Or if I'm living the way a gospel professor should live. Josh, hey, you're not living like a Christian, you need to stop doing that, you need to stop thinking that.

And the reality is, and this is where I think a lot of churches miss it, Jesus gave the local church the authority to affirm and to disaffirm people's professions of faith.

We don't have time to go into it right now, but when Jesus gives Peter the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16 and then in Matthew 18 he gives the whole church these same keys to the kingdom, he is saying to the church, to local churches that you church have the authority to affirm someone's true or false profession of faith.

And so church membership is an office. you also have a job to do. Church membership is also a job. It's more than just voting on a budget, it's more than just voting on a building, it's voting on welcoming and sending out members of the church.

That's the most important job you have as a church member. And so, how do we talk about this? So, church members are, your job as a church member is to guard the what and the who of the gospel.

[26 : 36] your job as a church member is to guard the what and the who of the gospel. So, what do I mean by that? Well, first, you are to guard the what of the gospel.

God cares about the purity of his church, therefore, it's the job of you, church members, to make sure the true gospel is being preached from this pulpit. So, if Jonathan gets up here and he starts preaching a false gospel, he starts denying the Trinity, fire him.

And he just amen-ed, so, don't forget it. If the gospel is not preached, the true biblical gospel is not preached, it is the job of the church to point that out, to make sure good, true doctrine is being taught in classrooms.

Where am I getting this? Galatians 1, 6, the Apostle Paul, he's writing to the church in Galatia, and he says, I am astonished that you, and that you there is plural, I am astonished that you all, church in Galatia, I'm astonished that you all are deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who would trouble you and who want to distort the gospel of Christ. And so, there was a false gospel being preached in this church in Galatia and the Apostle Paul goes to them and he says, he doesn't, notice what he doesn't do, he doesn't go to the pastors of that church or the leaders in that church, he goes to the whole church and he says, whole church, stop believing a false gospel, it's your job to make sure the true gospel is preached here.

[28 : 16] And so, he calls out the entire church for abandoning the true gospel. He holds the entire church accountable because it's the job of the whole church to protect the what of the gospel, to make sure the true gospel is being preached and proclaimed and taught and believed.

And so, it's the job of church members to guard the what of the gospel, it's one of the most important things you'll do. Second, other most important thing you will do if you're a member of this church is to guard the who of the gospel.

Guard the who of the gospel. By that, I mean, you're guarding who are true gospel professors. You see, in the church in Corinth, there was a church member who was living in serious, outward, and unrepentant sin.

We see this from 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. The apostle Paul says to this church, it's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not tolerated even among the pagans for a man has his father's wife and you're arrogant.

Wants you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. So again, there's this member of this church, he's living in great sin, serious sin, outward sin, unrepentant sin, he's not repenting of it.

[29 : 44] And Paul does not just call out the pastors and the elders. He calls the entire church and all the members of the church. Calls them out for allowing this man to remain a member of their church.

And what does he tell them to do about it? He tells them to remove this man from among them. We keep reading in that same passage, 1 Corinthians 5, he says to the church, when you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are church, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

And so, what he's saying is the whole church, when the whole church is gathered, they have a job to do and that is to remove this man from their membership. This is what we know as excommunication or church discipline.

Remove him from your membership. don't consider him a brother in Christ. It doesn't mean he can't come into the building, it means he can't be a member of the church. Why? What's the point?

Is this to embarrass this man? Is this to, for us to be holier than thou? Is this exclusivity just for the sake of being exclusive and pushing him out because he's not godly enough?

[31 : 05] No. Verse 5, they are to remove this man so that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord. So the apostle Paul is commanding this church at Corinth to remove this man from membership, to excommunicate him so that he doesn't go to hell.

So that he realizes, oh wow, I used to be a part of this group of people called the church. They used to be affirming my profession of faith to be true, but because of the way I'm living, it doesn't look like I'm really a Christian and so they've put me out of their group.

I'm not part of the church anymore. And what's the point? The point is that man is supposed to realize this is a weighty thing. This is a big deal. Being a part of the church was better than being part of the world.

It's so that this man would feel the weight of his sin. He would recognize the weight of his sin and that it's infinitely better to be in Christ and in the church than cast out into the world.

And the goal is repentance. The goal is restoration so that his soul would be saved, the scripture says. And so, biblical, restorative, church discipline protects the reputation of Christ because you don't have people in the church who are claiming to be Christians yet living like the rest of the world.

[32 : 29] so it protects the reputation of Christ and it protects the souls of people because you're no longer allowing them to be a member of your church if they're living in serious, outward, unrepentant sin.

Notice I say unrepentant. The church is not a place for non-sinners, right? Because none of us would be here. The church is a place for repenting sinners.

sinners. And so, this keeps, this excommunication keeps from, a church from giving false assurance of salvation to someone who's not truly born again.

On the positive side of this coin, right, it's hard, we don't like to think about excommunication, church discipline, but on the positive side of this same coin, brothers and sisters, biblical church membership should be of great encouragement to you if you're a Christian.

Because if you think about it, to be a member of a church is to say that the other, all the other members of that church are welcoming you into their membership. They're agreeing that, yes, Josh really does seem like a Christian.

[33 : 35] He really is repenting and believing. He really is following the true gospel. So we're welcoming him into our membership. Brothers and sisters, this should give you great assurance of salvation. When you have a group of people who are allowing you at the table in communion, allowing you to take the bread and the cup, it should be of great encouragement to you.

And so every member of a local church has a God-given biblical responsibility to guard the what and the who of the gospel by sending and receiving church members. And so all this, then, do you know what this means for us?

It means, in order to guard the what and the who of the gospel, it means we must know the gospel and know it well. And it also means we must know one another well, know one another deeply.

So first, we must know the gospel well. We can't guard this gospel if we don't know this gospel. We can't hold one another accountable to sound doctrine if we don't know sound doctrine ourselves.

So my encouragement to each one of you, brothers and sisters, is to keep growing in biblical literacy. Keep growing in your understanding of the Bible and of God and his word. Keep studying scripture together.

[34 : 53] Keep reading good books together. Keep coming here on Sunday morning. Y'all are all doing a great job of that today. Keep listening to the Bible being preached and taught and discussed so that you can sharpen one another.

So know the gospel well. Second, you must know one another well. Remember, you are one body. You need each other. That passage in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul goes on.

He says, the eye can't say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. And so God's word here calls us to be unified as a body, to know one another well, to love one another deeply.

A great way you can do this is simply by practicing the one another commandments in scripture. There's over 30 one another commandments in the New Testament.

[36 : 03] Over 30 of them. And most of those examples, the author is writing to a local church and he's telling them how to live their lives together. Be at peace with one another.

Honor one another. Submit to one another. Pray for one another. Build up one another. Confess your sins to one another. And the list goes on and on and on and on of these one another commandments.

And so this one anothering should be happening all the time in our local churches and that's a great measuring stick for us in our own lives to look at and say, man, how am I doing at that? How am I doing at being at peace with one another?

Am I pursuing peace or am I sort of a divisive and gossipy type person? Am I praying for the other members of my church or do I really not think about them much throughout the week? Am I confessing my sins to each other or do I want to just hide and act like I have it all together?

Guess what? None of us have it all together. We all need to be confessing our sins to one another. I need people to look at my life and call me out when I'm in sin. So, if we're saying that church membership is a job, if we have a job to do as a church membership, it would be nice to have a job description, wouldn't it?

[37 : 15] Right? Who would take a job without having a clear job description? I don't think any of us would. That'd be crazy. So it'd be nice to have a clear job description if I'm going to sign up for a job. And this leads us to our fourth and final point.

The church member's job description is your church covenant. Your church covenant is your job description. So in your church covenant, you'll find just about everything that we've talked about in this sermon listed out.

And I actually have your church covenant here, Seaweed Bay Baptist Church. I have it here in my hand. And so I'm going to read a few of these points of your church covenant, the things that you have promised before God and before one another, the way you're going to live out this thing called church membership together.

From your church covenant, it says, we have, by God's grace, been led to repent of our sins and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We've been baptized as believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and have joined ourselves to this body.

We now, in dependence on his spirit, gladly and reverently make this covenant together. So there was that first point I made earlier. A church member is someone who's been born again and baptized.

[38 : 25] So there that is in your church covenant. Next, you say in your covenant, we will, and I'm not reading every word, but you say, we will pursue unity. We will walk together in Christian love as we care for and watch over one another.

Seeking one another's spiritual good at all times, we'll pray for, encourage, and warn, and rebuke, and admonish one another as the occasion may acquire. And so there it is again in your church covenant.

You're covenanting to pursue unity, to watch over each other's souls, to encourage, and rebuke, and admonish where it needs to happen. And again, in order for this to happen, you must know one another well.

You must be vulnerable with one another. You must be willing to let people into your lives. I heard a quote last week from a pastor and I loved it.

I thought it was great. He said, church membership is where the phrase, it's none of your business goes to die. Church membership is where it's none of your business goes to die.

[39 : 32] I love that. It's none of your business. No, it is your business if you're living together in covenant unity in a church. And so, back to your church covenant, you say, we will gather regularly.

We will share Christ. We will put each other's needs before our own. We will commit to holiness. We will follow God's design for his church, supporting and upholding the preaching of the Bible.

So there it is. You're guarding the what of the gospel. You've covenanted, church, Siwi Bay, you've covenanted to guard the what of the gospel because you say, we will uphold the preaching of the Bible. And then you say, we will uphold the right administration of believers' baptism in the Lord's Supper and when necessary, the exercise of church discipline.

So there it is. Right there in your covenant, you're guarding the who of the gospel. You're going to uphold baptism, the Lord's Supper, and exercise church discipline where it needs to happen.

And so with all of this in mind, with all of these things in mind that we've talked about, about church membership, we come to a biblically informed definition of the church and of church membership.

[40 : 42] And that's, it's simple. It's that church membership is all about a church taking spiritually, spiritual responsibility for you as the individual and you, individual Christian, taking spiritual responsibility for the rest of the church that you are a member of.

That's what we mean by church membership. We mean taking responsibility for one another. And so brothers and sisters in Christ, this, this, this is biblical church membership, what we've talked about this morning.

It's, it's a living organism. It's, it's a particular family of believers. It's, it's the body of Christ. It's a group of people who've been saved by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone and, and whom God has plucked out of the world, the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light.

Church membership is redeemed saints from all different walks of life, rich, poor, young, old, black, white, and every color in between submitting our lives to Christ as our Lord and to one another.

Not because we're naturally drawn to one another, but because we're members of one body, the body of Christ. It's a group of people who've covenanted together to protect the gospel and to give gospel affirmation to one another.

[42 : 03] It's a group of people who've promised to help one another as we sojourn together on this earth, rejoicing when things are good, weeping when things are bad, sharing one another's burdens, and cheering for one another until we all cross the finish line when Christ returns.

And so Christian, the journey through this life is dangerous. Sin seduces us from the right and the left. Satan tempts us day and night, our own minds and hearts try to lead us astray.

The world convinces us that true happiness and flourishing is found out there, and you can't resist these temptations. I cannot resist these temptations on my own, and God knows that.

God knows that, and so in his infinite wisdom, he's given us local churches while we sojourn through this life to help one another on our way to heaven.

So you need one another as you look to Jesus, the chief shepherd who laid down his life for us, the sheep. Let's pray together. God, we thank you for Christ.

[43 : 11] We thank you for the gospel. Thank you that Christ saves sinners like us. And God, we thank you that in your wisdom you have seen fit to gather your people into local churches.

Thank you for this local church. Thank you for Seawee Bay Baptist Church. Thank you for Jonathan and Treg, pastors of this church. Thank you for others who lead and serve in this church family.

Thank you for every member here. We pray that each one would see their job of a church member, the job they have to encourage one another, to love one another, to point one another to Christ.

God, we pray that you would continue to bless this local church family. may they grow in godliness. May you continue to shape them into the image of your son until we all see you face to face.

We thank you for these things. We pray them in the name of Christ and by the power of your spirit. Amen.