THE SECOND MILESTONE · THE FAMILY JOINED

Belonging.

A person comes to Christ personally before God. Joining a church family is a milestone we reach **together.**



A believer and this church family make their promises to each other, and a new member is sent into the life of a disciple.

FROM BELIEVING

If you have trusted Christ and been baptized, you already belong to Jesus Christ and His universal Church. Nothing in this milestone adds to your salvation.

But throughout the New Testament, believers didn't simply belong to Christ in general. They devoted themselves to a particular church, under particular leaders, alongside particular brothers and sisters.

Belonging is our name for that commitment.

WHAT'S INSIDE · HOW THIS DOCUMENT MOVES

01 **Foundation** — Why church membership at all.

02 **Understand** — Why God saves us into a family.

03 **Commit** — The promise that runs both ways.

04 **Begin** — How you join, and what follows.

NEXT **Maturing** — The first rhythm.

Why church membership?

When you trusted Christ and were baptized, you became part of Christ's universal Church: the family of every believer in every place and every generation. Church membership does not add to your salvation. Rather, it is the way you publicly commit yourself to a local church family, where your faith is nurtured, your gifts are used, and the "one another" commands of Scripture are lived out together.

The words *church membership* never appear in the Bible. Yet the New Testament consistently describes Christians belonging to identifiable local churches where they worship, serve, care for one another, and willingly submit to spiritual leadership. Church membership is simply our way of making those biblical commitments visible.

Throughout the New Testament we see four foundations:

1

A known family

When people trusted Christ, they were baptized and "added to their number" (Acts 2:41–42). Churches knew who belonged to the body because they devoted themselves to one another in worship, fellowship, and prayer. Likewise, when Jesus instructed the church to exercise loving church discipline (Matthew 18:15–17), and when Paul called the church to remove an unrepentant believer from fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:12–13), both assumed there was a recognizable church family to which a person belonged.

2

Mutual commitment

The New Testament is filled with "one another" commands that can only be lived out in committed relationships:

- Love one another (John 13:34–35)
- Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24–25)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)

These commands assume more than occasional attendance. They describe the shared life of a committed church family.

3

Shared shepherding

God gives elders to shepherd His people (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1–3), and believers willingly place themselves under that spiritual care. Shepherds cannot faithfully shepherd an undefined flock, and believers cannot meaningfully submit to leaders they have never committed themselves to.

4

Shared mission

The church is described as one body with many members (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Every believer has a role in strengthening the church and advancing Christ's mission. Membership is our public commitment to live out that calling together.

Church membership does not make someone a Christian. Faith in Christ does that. Membership is simply the way a local church says, *"We recognize your profession of faith, and we joyfully commit to walk with you as family."* And it is the way a believer says, *"This is the church family God has called me to love, serve, and grow with."*

02 **Understand** *Why God saves us into a family.*

God gives us a family

We just saw the biblical case for this. Here's what it looks like in practice: God doesn't merely save individuals who happen to attend services in the same building. He saves people into a family, and a family is meant to be known, not just attended.

Therefore... Membership is simply how we make that commitment visible. It is our public promise to walk together as one church family. As members, we commit ourselves to one another's growth, worship, mission, and care.

Why membership matters

Membership isn't simply adding your name to a list. It is a commitment to actively build up this local body. As a member, you invest your **time, talents, and treasure** into the worship, ministry, and mission of this church. You also willingly place yourself under the spiritual care of the elders, who in turn commit themselves to shepherding you faithfully as you grow to become more like Christ.

> *"Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it."*
> 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

Membership is not the destination of discipleship; it is the starting point. From the day you join this church family, you begin walking the pathway alongside others. Together we pursue the life of a Romans 12 disciple through the maturing rhythms of **A.C.T.**: **A**biding in Christ daily, being in **C**ommunity weekly, and **T**elling others about Jesus in everyday conversations. You are more than a name on a roster. You are part of a family, walking together toward Christlikeness.

03 **Commit** *The promise that runs both ways.*

Joining the family

Therefore, membership isn't something we do to people; it's a commitment we make together.

As someone prepares for membership, our elders take time to hear their story, answer questions, and ensure they understand the commitment they're making. This isn't an interview to determine whether someone belongs to Christ; that was settled when they trusted Him. It's the beginning of a shared ownership in one another's spiritual growth.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR

A commitment understood and embraced.

As we listen, we're looking for a commitment that has been understood and embraced, not simply a form that has been completed. Three things give us confidence a believer is ready to make this covenant with the church family:

- ✓ **They understand the commitment.** They can explain, in their own words, why they want to belong here and what membership means.
- ✓ **Their life reflects their profession.** The elders look to see that the person's life is consistent with the gospel and reflects a growing walk with Christ and a sincere desire to follow Him with this church family.
- ✓ **The commitment is mutual.** Both the member and the church willingly make promises to one another, entering a relationship built on shared responsibility rather than one-sided expectations.

When both the believer and the elders are ready, that commitment is made publicly. The new member promises to walk faithfully with this church family, and the church promises to shepherd, encourage, and disciple them in return.

The membership promise · made on both sides

At the heart of membership is a promise that runs both directions, what Scripture and older generations of the church called a *covenant*. We describe it as a mutual commitment between the new member and this church family. You commit to the life of a disciple. We commit to discipling you toward it. A one-sided promise is just a form. What we make together is a promise that holds both ways.

THE MEMBER COMMITS TO

Gathered through application + elder interview

- › Profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and pursue a growing walk with Him.
- › Affirm and uphold the Values and Doctrinal Statement of Ashe Alliance Church.
- › Submit to the authority and spiritual leadership of the elders.
- › Invest my gifts, time, and resources to advance God's Kingdom through this church.
- › Be discipled, and aim beyond my own growth toward multiplying, reproducing faith in others.

ASHE ALLIANCE COMMITS TO

Spoken aloud and given in print to every member

- › Shepherd, pray for, and care for you as part of this family, and pursue you in love if you drift.
- › Teach you the Word faithfully and connect you to a discipling relationship where you can mature.
- › Help you discover your spiritual gifts and find a place to deploy them in service.
- › Equip and send you to multiply: to make disciples in your home, workplace, and neighborhood.
- › Lead and protect you with godly oversight, and walk with you through every season.

One promise. Two commitments. It holds in both directions.

Becoming a member · here's what to expect

Joining a church family should never feel rushed or confusing. We want every person to understand the commitment they're making, have their questions answered, and be welcomed well. Here's what you can expect as you take this step.

1. **A conversation.** If you're considering membership, start by grabbing coffee with a pastor or elder. This informal conversation lets you ask questions, hear our heart for church membership, and discern whether God is calling you to belong at Ashe Alliance Church. There's no pressure to act on it. It's just a chance to get to know one another better.
2. **The membership application.** When you're ready, you'll complete the membership application. This gives us an opportunity to hear your story of coming to faith, learn about your walk with Christ, understand your agreement with our Values and Doctrinal Statement, and begin learning how God has gifted you to serve.
3. **The elder conversation.** At least two elders will meet with you to hear your story, answer any remaining questions, and talk through the commitments of membership together. Membership is a promise made in both directions. You publicly commit yourself to this church family, and the church publicly commits to shepherd, encourage, and disciple you. Both made before God and one another. This isn't an interview to pass; it's the beginning of a shepherding relationship we hope will last for years.
4. **Prayerful discernment.** Following the conversation, the remaining elders will be informed, and everyone will pray together. Once we are confident that the commitment is clear and the timing is appropriate, we happily recommend you for membership. If you need additional time, we will continue to support you until you feel ready.
5. **Confirming the membership commitment.** Once the elders agree and you confirm the timing is right, the church office will email you to confirm your membership.
6. **Public reception.** During a Sunday worship gathering, we bring you to the front, introduce you to the church family, pray over you, and have the church joyfully receive you as a member of Ashe Alliance Church. We will send an announcement in our weekly newsletter the following week.

This milestone doesn't mark the end of the journey. It marks the beginning. From here, we begin walking the pathway rhythms together.

What happens in the next 30 days

Membership is not the finish line. It is the beginning of life together. When someone joins our church family, we don't simply add them to a roster. **Within the first 30 days we help them build two things: a discipling relationship, and a place to serve.** A third continues well past the first month, and it usually begins with the person who was already walking with them.

> *"And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, but encouraging one another."*
>
> HEBREWS 10:24-25

Connected to relationships

No believer is meant to grow alone. Every new member is connected to one or more discipling relationships: a Life Group, a D-Group, a Bible study, or a Paul-Timothy mentoring relationship. Somewhere they can be known by name, encouraged, challenged, and cared for through whatever the year brings.

Serving with purpose

Every believer has been gifted by God to strengthen His church. We help new members discover how they are gifted and where they can begin serving in a way that fits both their gifts and their passions. We match the gift, not the gap, because a well-placed member serves for years.

Walking beside you

Wherever possible this is the believer who first walked with them to Christ. That relationship is the natural one to continue: reading Scripture, praying, answering questions, worshiping and serving together. Where that person isn't available, a mature member steps in. Either way, one believer invests personally while the church family surrounds them both.

This first month is the bridge from Belonging into the **rhythms of Maturing, Ministering, and Multiplying.** *Membership is not the destination of discipleship; it is where the journey together begins.*

Your turn *Name your next step.*

Where are you today?

If you're not a member yet

Membership starts with a conversation, not a form.

- [ ] Schedule a coffee with a pastor or elder.
- [ ] Start the membership application.
- [ ] Ask the question you've been holding back.

If you're already a member here

Membership is not the finish line. Check where you actually stand.

- [ ] Connected to a discipling relationship: a Life Group, a D-Group, or a Bible study.
- [ ] Serving somewhere that fits how God has gifted me.
- [ ] I know who my main discipler is.

My next step

ONE CONCRETE ACTION, AND A DATE

WHAT I'LL DO

BY WHEN

A QUESTION I STILL HAVE · BRING IT TO YOUR COFFEE CONVERSATION

Small and dated beats sincere and vague, every time.

Belonging here is more than adding your name to a membership roll. It is entering a family that promises to walk with you through every season of life, through the mountain-top Sundays and the valleys no one else sees. This is what God's family does. Welcome home.

"So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household." EPHESIANS 2:19