



Membership at Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne

We're delighted that you have shown an interest in becoming an official member. This leaflet contains background information about the church and how we regard membership – benefits and responsibilities – and how the process of application works here. There is also an application form to fill in, but if you have qualms of conscience about this seeming too officious or legalistic, then just come and talk to the elders of the church.

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Tuckingmill Baptist Church



Tuckingmill Baptist Church is actually officially called “Tuckingmill *Reformed* Baptist Church”. The meaning of that word “Reformed”, which may not be immediately obvious, is explained below.

First and foremost, though, we would like to think of ourselves as a “Bible teaching, Bible believing church”. We believe in the God who has revealed himself to us in the Bible, and in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. We want to take the Bible on its own terms, letting it define for us what we should believe and how we should live (“the sole rule of faith and practice”, as you might also have heard it summarised). If you want a label, you could call us a “conservative Evangelical” church; if those words change in meaning over the years, we might then have to use different ones, but our intention is to stay true to the Bible, the Gospel, and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Reformed”, then, refers to a particular stream within conservative Evangelical churches. To put it simply, the word means that we take a particular theological line as regards the sovereignty of God in salvation. It’s very similar in meaning to being “Calvinist”, though that word does sometimes raise hackles or give rise to misunderstandings. There is some more about this in the Statement of Faith included later on. This membership pack, though, is not the place to go into the theological details, but we’re willing to discuss the point in more detail if you want. Just ask!

We’re also a Baptist church, an *independent* Baptist church, to be precise. We’re affiliated to a group of “Grace Baptist” churches around the country, but there is no Head Office telling us how we have to run this church. Those calls, we believe, are to be made on a church-by-church basis, led by the Holy Spirit and through the Scriptures.

We believe, then, that the Scriptures tell us that baptism, which is only a symbol of entry into the Christian life, is to happen when someone has become a believer in Christ – so we don't say that we go for "adult baptism", but *believers'* baptism. This is the most appropriate and Scriptural way for someone to declare their new faith in Christ. And regarding it as a specific command from Christ himself, we also think of it in terms of a mark of obedience to Christ.

Although we recognise that many true believers have come, in good conscience before God, to a different understanding on this matter – and not wishing at all to distance or dissociate ourselves from these brothers and sisters in Christ – we think it appropriate that *official* membership of the church be open only to those who have been baptised as believers. We are happy, though, for believers with other convictions on this matter to meet regularly with us, which will still, we trust, be for mutual benefit and encouragement.

The meaning of church membership



Membership of a church is not just like membership of a club, because in some ways a church is better thought of as an organism than as an organisation. So church membership is about a (two-way) commitment, first of all to God, and then to his people – so much more than just a signature on a piece of paper agreeing to abide by a set of rules.

It really can be very similar to a marriage, which is better thought of as a two-way covenant than just a legal contract. Both parties freely give promises to the other. The intention is that life together will be better for both than life separately – although it can also be “for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”.

The image of the church as “the body of Christ” means that a lone Christian, uncommitted to any church fellowship, is as bizarre and useless as a bodiless hand, foot, whatever. It just does not seem to be God’s intention for Christians to fend for themselves when they could (and should!) be part of a church – both the individual believer *and* the church suffer (it is a “dismembered” body!).

So if we’re looking for the reality of the situation, and not just the formality, it is helpful to spell out what this means in terms of attitudes and goals. What promises does a new member make to the church when joining? And what promises does the church (i.e., those already members) make to the new member?

Some churches summarise the expectations of membership in a “membership covenant”, and we may do something along those lines here too. Here’s one, which we might adapt slightly, based on a recent sermon series here, which we might at some time formally adopt:

Membership here - and in any Gospel should - should involve the commitment of the members to ..

- ... devotion - mutual care
- ... doctrine - Biblical teaching
- ... discipleship - growing in your faith
- ... demonstration - Biblical holiness of life
- ... development - growing the gifts God has given you
- ... declaration - sharing the Good News
- ... donation - Biblical generosity
- ... discipline - Biblical accountability

We hope to put together a fuller document running through these various aspects of membership in the near future.

Whatever our judgement call as regard our own official “church covenant”, this is the level of commitment that we should

show in our “fellowship” together. Anyone applying for membership needs to realise that this is what they are publicly committing themselves to do, irrespective of whether they have formally signed their name to it on a piece of paper.

But we also need to take this further, and consider the responsibilities of the church to those joining. These would include the provision of the following:

The provision of care

The provision of opportunity to learn and worship together

The provision of opportunity to serve and grow

The provision of loving discipleship and discipline

The provision of leadership

But (and a big but!) bear in mind that it is *people* who are providing these things, and they are just other imperfect believers. Just as we hope our own shortcomings will be handled firmly but lovingly by fellow Christians, so must the shortcomings of the church itself be. Do not expect perfection from this church, or expect the grass to be so very much greener anywhere else!

There are a variety of resources which develop these thoughts in much greater depth, and we intend to include references to some here in future editions of this leaflet. We also hope to produce some further notes of our own in the near future, and which will be available separately. But what we have included here should, we hope, already give you a good idea of how we regard membership at TRBC.

It is not trivial. It is far more than merely a formal affiliation to an organisation. Instead, it is an outward expression of a deep and meaningful commitment of the people of God to each other, in the name of Jesus Christ, and according to the pattern laid down for us in the Bible.

Statement(s) of faith



Our official doctrinal statement of faith was based on the **Baptist Confession of Faith** originally published in **1689**. But it is apparent that some of the contents of that reflected the theological disputes of their day much more than our own, and some matters of legitimate Christian conscience were over-specified. While still holding firmly to the doctrinal position of “the 1689”, we also warm very much towards its more modern “**We Believe**” reworking. And we would also be very happy to indicate our total assent to conservative evangelical statements of faith such as those of **UCCF** or the **FIEC**.

We can provide you with copies of these if you would like to check them out for yourself. Just ask!

Our official church constitution currently summarises things as follows:

a. The Church basis of faith shall be, in general terms, the Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, but recognising the liberty of Christian conscience before God with regard to the disputable matters concerning:

- i. The understanding and observance of the Sabbath, (chapter 22.7-8).*
- ii. The taking of oaths and vows, (chapter 23).*
- iii. The identity of the Antichrist, (chapter 26.4).*

b. We reserve the right to exercise our conscience, before God, and in the light of the Scripture, in determining the most appropriate practice in our Church with regard to certain sections of the 1689 Confessions of Faith such as fasting when appointing Elders, (but not Deacons), (chapter 26.9). and that only ordained ministers may preside at the Lord’s Supper, (chapter 30.3). Also modes of baptism other than immersion might be used in the baptism of believers, (chapter 29.4).

Membership - qualifications



Once again, from our official church constitution, the conditions of membership are:

- 1) *A profession of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ expressed in baptism*
- 2) *A personal living faith in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*
- 3) *A belief in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and their final authority in all matters of faith and practice.*

Entrance into membership:

- 1) *Matters relating to entrance into membership shall be the responsibility of the Elders, but opportunity shall be given to the members to express their opinion on any who apply for membership.*
- 2) *Applications to enter associate membership of TRBC, (which will not include the right to attend or vote at Member's meetings), while retaining primary membership elsewhere; will be approved in appropriate circumstances at the discretion of the Elders. Similarly, members may be able to enter into membership of another Gospel church, while retaining their primary membership of TRBC at the discretion of the Elders.*

A document like this can't contain the answer to every question you might have. So speak to one of our elders for some clarification, if that will help.

And a document like this, or the system it describes, can't produce spiritual life. We don't do this because we like rules for their own sake, but because we believe that the Scriptures - and therefore the Spirit of God - are about making us *disciples* of our Lord Jesus Christ. This, we trust, is a good way of fostering that discipleship in our "fellowship" - our life together - in him.

Application Form



Your name:

Your address:

Other contact details (phone, e-mail, etc.):

If you are or have been a member or a regular attender at another church, please give the name and contact details of someone appropriate at that church to whom enquiry can be made:

Please state briefly when and how you became a Christian:

Have you been baptised as a believer? If yes, please tell us when and where:

Why do you want to become a member of Tuckingmill Baptist Church?

Are there any matters relating to church membership that you would like to discuss?