

West Vancouver Baptist Church



STEPS TO MEMBERSHIP



**450 Mathers Avenue
West Vancouver, BC
V7S 1H3**

Telephone: (604) 922-0911 Fax: (604) 922-0913

Email: wvbc@westvanbaptistchurch.com

www.westvanbaptist.com

WELCOME TO WEST VANCOUVER BAPTIST CHURCH

We are so pleased that you have come to visit with us. Please come as often as you like. Worship at West Van Baptist is literally open to all the world, and at times when you look around at the amazing diversity of our congregation, it begins to look as though all the world has turned up! While worship, like all of our programs, is open to everyone, there are real advantages in becoming a member of the Church. Let us share some of these with you.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: WHY BOTHER?

“Christ loved the Church, and sacrificed himself for her.” (Ephesians 5:25). No greater estimate of the importance or value of the Church is possible. In fact, Jesus died on the cross in order to establish the Church. (Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20). To say that the Church is important is therefore a huge understatement. The Church matters infinitely; it could not matter more.

Of course by “Church” here we mean more than a local Christian congregation. The “Church” for whom Christ died includes all the people of God from all the ages and all around the world. But if the whole Church is infinitely valuable, so is each part of it, including the body of Christians who make up local congregations, like West Vancouver Baptist Church, West Vancouver, BC.

One very obvious way of identifying with our Lord’s love for the Church is by becoming a member of a local congregation. It is true that we do not find “membership rolls” mentioned at any point in the New Testament. Equally, however, there is no statement to the effect that the Biblical churches did not distinguish between members and non-members. The importance they gave to being baptized (cf. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:36-38; 10:47-48) is in fact a strong indicator that they did make such a distinction.

Besides, membership rolls are a huge help to any church in carrying out its mission and ministry. They do that by allowing the church to establish Biblical standards for Christian living, by providing a pool of people who can be considered for leadership responsibilities, by giving a clear picture of how many people are committed to the congregation’s ministry, and hence enabling realistic planning and dreaming for the future. On the basis of the principle that whatever helps us serve the Lord better is to be embraced wholeheartedly, a membership roll certainly does not need further justification.

If you are a true disciple of Christ you are called, like your Saviour, to love the Church and be ready to sacrifice yourself for it. At the very least that will involve being committed to it as a member of a

local Christian congregation. Even if you may not be sure of your longer-term future and you may be moving to another part of the country or world within a few months, membership is still worth serious consideration. It is a very simple matter to transfer your membership to another congregation once you have settled in a new location.

What does membership offer you?

1. It makes a clear statement of your commitment to the local church and therefore makes it that much easier for the members of the church to respond to you in acceptance and love.
2. When you are publicly received into membership, it also provides a moment when you are personally identified by the other members, and it, therefore, helps them to remember you and open their hearts to you.
3. It also serves as a valuable opportunity to reaffirm publicly your faith and commitment to the Lord. We all need such moments in our Christian pilgrimage. The Lord's Supper is an obvious ongoing one, but other "public affirmations" have their place as well.
4. It means that you will be prayed for regularly. The Senior Minister makes it a practice as part of his ministry to pray systematically through the church membership roll on a regular basis.
5. It allows you to be prayerfully considered for specific ministry opportunities within the church. For example, to be a member of the Church Council, or serve on a number of important committees, you need to be a member.
6. Finally, it permits you to play a full part in the ongoing life and direction of the church. As a member you have the right to express your viewpoint and to vote on all matters which are brought before the church. This happens at the

Congregational Meetings, and occasionally at other times. In this process your vote will carry as much weight as that of any other member.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: WHAT DOES IT DEMAND?

Membership at West Vancouver Baptist Church is open to all those who:

- 1. *Have personally trusted themselves to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.*** To test yourself on this all-important issue, ask yourself this question: “If I were to die today and appear before God, what reason would I give for Him to let me into heaven?” The only possible ‘correct’ answer is to this effect, “I do not deserve to go to heaven, because I am a sinner. Nothing that I have ever done throughout my life can earn me salvation. But I believe the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s eternal Son, because of His great love for me, died for all my sins on the cross, and because I am trusting in what He did for me I believe, and am sure, that God will accept me into heaven.” (John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:20; 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9)

- 2. *Have been baptized as believers, by immersion.*** Unless there were exceptional circumstances, Jesus made very clear that all disciples (those committing themselves to Him) should be publicly baptized (Matthew 28:19). Immersion is the form of baptism used throughout the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:22-23, Acts 8:36-38).

- 3. *Are sincerely committing themselves to meaningful membership with West Vancouver Baptist Church.*** This implies:
 - a. *Regular weekly attendance at Worship*** (unless hindered by circumstances beyond our control). (Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 2:42-47)

- b. Supporting the ministries of the church by systematic financial giving.** Giving to the work of the Lord is a great and joyful privilege. To help us do that systematically, offering envelopes are made available to members each year and can be obtained on request through the church office. A pre-authorized monthly deposit option is also available by filling out the appropriate forms in the church office. Although the church does not insist on tithing (giving a tenth of income) it views the tithe as a realistic, Biblical standard for weekly offerings by members. (Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:8-10; II Corinthians 9:6-7; II Corinthians 8:1-9:15)
- c. Serving in and through the church.** Members are expected to possess a spirit of service, and regular opportunities are available for volunteer ministry within the church and community. Although it is freely recognized that time constraints vary greatly, it is hoped that each member will pray about and find involvement in some other area of ministry apart from the supreme one of weekly corporate worship (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11).
- d. Identifying with the church's convictions.** West Vancouver Baptist Church stands unashamedly within the evangelical tradition. This means we take the Bible as our final authority, and are committed to believing and sharing the "Good News" of salvation from sin and its penalty, for all who personally trust Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Our church affirms the Apostles' Creed, which is a summary of the fundamentals of the Christian faith confessed by all major branches of the Church since the 4th century.

Our church constitution states under the heading "**Statement of Faith**," "This church shall hold and teach doctrines and principles, which Baptist Churches have commonly held important, among which are: Belief

in one God, Creator of all, existing in three equal Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; Belief that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired and, with the instructional help of the Holy Spirit, are sufficient authority in matters of belief and practice; Belief in the sinfulness of man and his dependency upon the mercy of God for Salvation; Belief in the incarnation of the Son of God, and His atonement for sin by sacrifice of Himself, and His shed blood on Calvary's cross, through which believers are freely justified by grace; Belief that the church universal, as the body of Christ, has as its objective to serve Christ as Lord and Saviour; Belief in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the eternal reward of the righteous and the retribution of the unrighteous; Belief that there are two principal ordinances to be observed by the Church, as found in the New Testament: (1) Baptism, the immersion of the believer in water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, whereby he or she obeys Christ's command and sets forth his or her identity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The ordinance is given to the Church to administer and commend to the believer. (2) The Lord's Supper, the partaking by believers of bread and wine, which symbolizes the Lord's body and shed blood, in the remembrance of Him, proclaiming His death until He comes. Believing Christians are invited to participate in this ordinance; Belief in the separation of Church and State and acknowledgement that God ordains the powers that be, for the good order of society."

- e. *Being a witness for Christ.*** The Church is called to be a witnessing community in the world for Christ's sake (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). This corporate responsibility, however, devolves also upon each of us personally. Much of our witness is by the way we live, our values and practical interest in and care for others. But we need also to be available to speak for the Lord when opportunity presents itself. The Holy Spirit is given

to us to help us in such moments (I Peter 3:15; Acts 8:4; Mark 13:11; Luke 21:15).

f. *Living a sincere and consistent Christian life.* God calls us to represent Him in the world. We are to live holy lives (I Peter 1:16). Our church will be judged by how we live before others. This certainly does not mean being perfect. The New Testament explicitly warns against making such claims (I John 1:8-10); but it does mean to live above reproach as far as we may. For example, it is expected that our financial affairs will have full integrity, or that in the sexual sphere, we will abstain from all sexual relationships outside of or before heterosexual marriage. Membership is still open to us even if we have made mistakes in the past in these or other areas of our lives (there would be no Church at all if that standard applied! – we all live daily by the grace and mercy of God). Membership implies, rather, a commitment now to repent of all we know to be wrong and a sincere desire, with the Lord's help, to live henceforth in a way that pleases Him (Matthew 5:16,48; Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 9:27; II Corinthians 5:15).

g. *Maintaining a spirit of love and unity in the Church.* Not all the members will be attractive or lovable. When we encounter attitudes or behaviour which fall below the Lord's calling to us, we should pray for those concerned, that they will be brought to repentance. But we continue to go on loving each other, recognizing that we, too, often fall short. This self-sacrificial love for one another is, Jesus taught, a prime mark of any true company of disciples (John 13:34-35; see also Romans 15:1-5; Ephesians 4:1-4; I Corinthians 13:1-13).

4. *Have been interviewed by two Council members.* This interview is a meaningful opportunity to share our experience of Christ in a loving, supportive context, and to talk through our opportunities to serve Christ through West Vancouver Baptist Church.

5. Have been approved for membership by the Church members. This usually occurs by having your name published in the worship folder for two consecutive Sundays.

6. Have been welcomed into membership. This normally takes place during a Sunday morning worship service.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

If you are interested in becoming a member of West Vancouver Baptist Church we would encourage you, first of all, to pray about this until you are confident that the Lord is calling you to take this step. It is our conviction that the Lord leads to us those whom He wants to worship and serve here, and we trust Him to bring new members to the Church on a regular basis. Assuming that you have this sense of direction, the route to membership varies a little depending on where you are starting.

If you are already a member of another Baptist Church, and have been baptized as a believer by immersion, the process of transfer of membership is very simple. Just indicate your desire for membership on a Welcome Card any Sunday, or phone the church office and make the request. The church will make contact with your former congregation to ask for a letter of transfer. You will be invited to an interview with two Council members who will also pray with you and answer any questions you may have about West Vancouver Baptist Church. Your name is then presented to the congregation through the Worship Folder for two consecutive Sundays and you will be warmly welcomed the following Sunday. Your membership is described as “Membership By Letter of Transfer.”

If you are a member of another denomination but have already been baptized as a believer by immersion, the process is similar. Again all you have to do is indicate your wish on a Welcome Card, or phone the office. It will be recommended for you to attend a regularly held Membership Class so you may become aware of our Baptist distinctives. An interview will be held with two Council

members. Your name is then presented to the congregation through the Worship Folder for two consecutive Sundays and you will be warmly welcomed the following Sunday. In this case your membership is described as by “Christian Experience.”

If you have been baptized by immersion but not had membership in another congregation, you will be encouraged to attend the regularly held Membership Class which will give you a richer understanding of what membership involves and an opportunity to learn about the people, programs and functioning of this church. An interview with two Council members will follow. Your name will then be published in the Worship Folder for two consecutive Sundays and you will be warmly welcomed the following Sunday. Your membership will be by “Christian Experience.”

If you have not been baptized as a believer by immersion, you will be directed to the Membership Class where the Bible’s teaching on baptism and the church will be studied, and arrangements made for a baptismal service following the conclusion of the classes. You will be interviewed by two Council members. Your name will be published in the Worship folder for two consecutive Sundays and you will be warmly welcomed the following Sunday. Your membership will be by “Christian Experience following baptism.” The Membership class does not require a pre-commitment on your part to be baptized and join the church. You may still be uncertain at this stage; the classes are designed to help you sense what is right for you, and to answer any questions you may have. The classes are actually very special opportunities for meeting with a rich variety of other folks who are probably at a similar stage in their spiritual journey as you are. Membership classes consistently result in friendships, which continue long after the classes have finished.

West Vancouver Baptist Church:

In West Vancouver for over 80 years.

West Vancouver Baptist Church is a very special congregation. Those of us who are part of it are excited, proud, and thankful for it. It has borne witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in West Vancouver for over 80 years. It has the most marvellous diversity of people within its membership, of all colours, nationalities, social and economic backgrounds, age groups, family experiences, and levels of spiritual maturity. We believe the Lord has wonderfully enabled and blessed us over these years, as many hundreds of people before you have met the living Christ here and committed themselves to serve Him within our growing church family. If you know the Lord, or are on the way to finding Him, we do pray you will seriously consider becoming a member at WVBC, either now or in the future. We would love to have you as part of the family!

If you have any questions about any of the above, or about membership, please get in touch with us. We are always pleased to respond to questions and enquiries.

*With thanks to First Baptist Church, Vancouver, for permitting use of their material.