Coastal Bible Church

Membership

coastalbible.church

Membership at *Coastal Bible Church*

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about church membership.

We invite all prospective members to attend our in-depth church membership class. In the meantime, we hope that as you read this concise booklet, you'll begin to understand the need for church membership and appreciate the way we practice it at Coastal Bible Church.

We also hope the information you find here will help you grasp our core values and theological convictions, so that you can feel confident and informed as you consider becoming part of our church family.

If you have any questions about membership at Coastal Bible Church, or would like to attend our church membership class, please feel free to reach out to us at info@coastalbible.church and we'll gladly be in touch.

Blessings,

The Pastoral Team
Coastal Bible Church

© 2025 Coastal Bible Church. All rights reserved.
Document Version: 1.1 – July 2026

Coastal
Bible
Church

Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®)*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

What Is *Church Membership?*

Church membership is a formal commitment through which we recognise and embrace those who belong to our local church family. Contrary to the so-called 'churchless Christianity' that plagues our day and age, the clear pattern of the New Testament is that all Christians are called to belong to a local church. It is within the community of a local church that we are affirmed in our faith, known, loved, held accountable, equipped for ministry, and nurtured as we grow together in spiritual maturity, and serve one another with the gifts God has given us.

While we gladly welcome those who visit our church from time to time, committing to meaningful church membership ensures that we're best positioned to care for one another, and grow in our discipleship to Christ.

Church Membership in the Bible

In the earliest years of Christianity, those who believed the gospel, and pledged their allegiance to Jesus, joined themselves with a local church. As a matter of fact, this practice began as early as the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:41 we read that *"...those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41 ESV - emphasis added).*

What this verse reveals is that the earliest Christians were identified not only by their public profession of faith in baptism, but by their membership in the church - they were "added" to a body of believers. There was no such thing as private or isolated Christianity, all Christians enjoyed meaningful belonging as members of a local church where they could know, love and serve one another under the lordship of Christ. Likening the local church to the human body, the Apostle Paul wrote: *"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." (Romans 12:4-5 ESV).*

Furthermore, the New Testament repeatedly showcases that in becoming members of a local church the earliest Christians submitted themselves to the oversight of local church leaders. The author of Hebrews wrote: *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account..." (Hebrews 13:17 ESV).* Undoubtedly, it is the Lord Jesus Himself who is *"...the Shepherd and Overseer of [our] souls" (1st Peter 2:25 ESV),* but one of the chief means He has appointed to watch over us is to place us under the care and protection of local church pastors who are called to guide us, teach us, and watch out for our spiritual welfare.

Church Membership & The Keys of the Kingdom

When someone believes the good news of the gospel and comes to saving faith in Jesus Christ, they become part of God's family. Not only are they united to Christ their saviour, but they are also united to His body, the universal church. This universal church is made up of all those, throughout all times, and in all places, who belong to Jesus and are citizens of His kingdom. However, in addition to belonging to the universal church, Christians are called to live out this reality by joining themselves with a local church. In fact, the New Testament teaches that in order to affirm someone as belonging to the former, they need to belong to the latter. In other words, although the making of a Christian is entirely an act of God, publicly affirming a Christian is an act of the local church.

In *Matthew 16:18-19* we read the following:

> *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*
>
> *Matthew 16:18-19 ESV*

In guaranteeing the successful establishment and expansion of His church on earth, Jesus revealed that the tools He would provide to fulfil this end are 'the keys of the kingdom.' At first, Jesus gave these keys to Peter, (and by extension, the other Apostles), but from what we read in *Matthew 18:15-20* it becomes clear that these same keys were subsequently given to local churches. What this means is that Jesus has given local churches the heaven-sanctioned authority to affirm or deny the legitimacy of an individual's profession of faith, as well as the attending authority to admit or bar an individual from membership in the local church. Undoubtedly, no local church is perfectly discerning, and abuses of these keys have tragically been known to happen. However, by Christ's design, local churches have been commissioned to safeguard the doors of the kingdom so that the people of God can be objectively marked out from the world.

Church Discipline

As stated above, local churches have been given the heaven-sanctioned authority to affirm or deny the legitimacy of an individual's profession of faith, as well as the attending authority to admit or bar an individual from membership in the local church. But in addition to these functions, local churches can also, if necessary, employ the keys of the kingdom to remove a member from their fellowship. This is typically referred to as excommunication and is a church's way of signalling to the individual that they can no longer affirm them as a Christian.

Excommunication is ultimately aimed at restoration, with the hope that the individual will repent, be re-affirmed in their faith, and be welcomed back into the fellowship of the church. To guide us in how church discipline should be carried out, Jesus provided us with a step-by-step template in *Matthew 18:15-20:*

> *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*
>
> *Matthew 18:15-20 ESV*

As members of a local church family, we're called to keep one another accountable in our walk with Jesus. Accordingly, if a member is conducting themselves in a manner that is unbecoming of a Christian, and they stubbornly refuse to respond to the stages of correction outlined in *Matthew 18:15-20*, the church is authorised to remove the individual from the membership of the church. Practically, this will mean that the excommunicated individual will no longer be welcome to partake of the Lord's Supper, (though they may still attend our Sunday morning church service), and they will be excluded from participation in the activities of the church *(1st Corinthians 5:1-13).*

However, it must be emphasised that at every stage, including the final act of excommunication, church discipline is always intended to restore the individual, with the hope that in time they will repent and be restored into church membership. Church discipline must always be approached with a posture of grace, humility, and patience, as well as with the recognition that *Matthew 18:15-20* is a guideline template to be utilised with situational wisdom and tact.

Our Commitment *to Each Other*

Responsibilities of Members:

Members promise, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to:

- → Gather on the Lord's Day for corporate worship, and participate in the community life of the church *(Hebrews 10:24-25).*
- → Pursue personal growth in obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ *(Matthew 28:20).*
- → Use their gifts, time, and resources to serve their fellow members *(1st Corinthians 12:12-31).*
- → Joyfully submit to the eldership team *(Hebrews 13:17).*
- → Financially contribute to the church *(Galatians 6:6; 1st Corinthians 9:7-14 & 1st Timothy 5:17-18).*
- → Foster a spirit of love and unity within the church family *(John 13:35 & Ephesians 4:1-3).*
- → Participate in, and be subject to, church discipline as required *(Matthew 18:15-20 & 1st Corinthians 5:1-13).*

Responsibilities of Pastors:

Pastors promise, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to:

- → Uphold the qualifications for office *(1st Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9).*
- → Proclaim the good news of the Gospel concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ *(1st Corinthians 2:1-2).*
- → Faithfully teach the Bible and its implications for our lives *(2nd Timothy 3:16 - 4:5).*
- → Shepherd the members; continually praying for them and faithfully bringing God's Word to bear on their lives *(1st Peter 5:1-4; Acts 6:4 & Acts 20:28-32).*
- → Equip the members for Christian ministry *(Ephesians 4:11-16).*
- → Oversee the church with eagerness, and integrity *(1st Peter 5:1-3).*

OUR CORE VALUES

Who We Are
We are a local church that is:

Anchored in God's Word

We're committed to faithfully teaching the Bible and its implications for our lives. It is in the Bible that God has revealed Himself and His gracious story of redemption, and it is from the Bible that we are to derive our doctrine, practices, and ethical instruction.

Invested in God's People

We're committed to nurturing and building up one another. Though our pastoral team has a unique role to play in this regard, (shepherding the flock, equipping the saints for Christian ministry, and labouring to present everyone mature), we wholeheartedly embrace that building the body of Christ is a family effort.

Engaged in God's Mission

We're committed to the Great Commission. We long to see the advance of the gospel, and strive to make disciples of all nations to the glory of God.

The Coastal Bible Church *Statement of Faith*

Coastal Bible Church aligns itself with the theological convictions of the historic Reformed Baptist tradition. However, from our diligent study of the Scriptures, and in keeping with the reformation principle *'semper reformanda'* (always reforming), our statement of faith builds upon, and demonstrates points of departure with, this tradition.

Accordingly, we have adopted, in large part, the *Revised New Hampshire Confession from 1853,* and have made modifications of our own formulation, or adopted the modifications of others, as we deemed necessary. The modifications can largely be identified by our use of square brackets; acknowledging that other changes can be discerned throughout. Moreover, the language has been modified at points to reflect British English as opposed to the American English of the original document.

Though we consider it desirable for the members of Coastal Bible Church to affirm our statement of faith in its entirety, we gladly, in the spirit of evangelical charity, receive people into membership who differ with us on the condition that they can:

01. Willingly sit under the teaching ministry of the elders without being divisive or contentious.
02. Affirm the *EFCA Statement of Faith* (outlined on pages 19-21).

However, it ought to be noted that members who find themselves unable to affirm the Coastal Bible Church Statement of Faith in its entirety will most likely be unable to hold the office of elder. Moreover, their ability to lead other teaching-based ministries of the church may be limited - this will be determined by the elders on a case-by-case basis.

I. Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible [the 39 books of the Old Testament, and the 27 books of the New Testament] was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

II. Of the True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is [YAHWEH], the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honour, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, The Father, the Son, and the Holy [Spirit]; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

III. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that Man was created [in the image of God, and free from sin]; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; [having inherited a corrupt nature], positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defence or excuse.

IV. Of the Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the Mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honoured the Divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven; and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour.

V. Of Justification

We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is Justification; that Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favour with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

VI. Of the Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own [inherent] depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

VII. Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with Divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.

VIII. Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all sufficient Saviour.

IX. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the Gospel; that is is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

X. Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means – especially, the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

XI. Of the Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XII. Of the Harmony of the Law and Gospel

We believe that the Law of God, [though containing instruction unique to the Old Covenant, reflects] the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts, arises entirely from their love of sin: to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, [as revealed in the law of Christ], is one great end of the Gospel, and of the Means of Grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

XIII. Of a Gospel Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptised believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its only scriptural officers are [Elders] or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. [We believe that Elders or Pastors have been granted authority, under the headship of Jesus Christ, to provide oversight, to shepherd the flock, and to teach the Word of God in the corporate assembly for the building up of the body. Although both men and women are together recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond, we believe that the office of Elder or Pastor is reserved for biblically qualified men only – biblically qualified women may hold the office of deacon].

XIV. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy [Spirit]; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; [the pattern in the New Testament is that Baptism is a] prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

XV. Of the [Lord's Day]

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day [and ought to be set apart, in all ordinary circumstances, for the corporate assembly of God's people for worship].

XVI. Of Civil Government

We believe that Civil Government is of Divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honoured, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

XVII. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

XVIII. Of the World to Come

We believe that the end of this world is approaching; that at the Last Day, Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.

The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) *Statement of Faith*

Current EFCA Statement of Faith adopted in 2019.

Evangelical Free Church of America. (2019). Statement of Faith. https://www.efca.org/sof

1. God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

2. The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavour should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

3. The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

4. Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

5. The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

6. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

7. The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

8. Christian Living

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

9. Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

10. Response and Eternal Destiny

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

NEXT STEPS

Where To From Here?

** The elders of Coastal Bible Church strongly believe that all Christians are commanded to be baptised. We believe the recipients of baptism are to first understand and profess personal faith in Jesus and His finished work on the cross, and that the correct method of administering the ordinance of baptism is by full water immersion – by conviction, we do not practice infant baptism at Coastal Bible Church. However, on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the elders, an individual may be admitted to church membership if they play host to firm convictions about the validity of the baptism they underwent as an infant and can defend said convictions theologically – we have in mind specifically 'covenantal infant baptism'. Although admitted, the elders will continue to teach and pray toward a change of mind.*

Step 1

Attend a Membership Class

Step 2

Organise a membership interview with one of the pastors

This interview is essentially designed to ascertain that:

- → You're a Christian
- → You've been baptised*

Moreover, the membership interview is an opportunity for you to ask any questions you have about church membership, or about our church generally.

Step 3

Fill out a membership application form

If your membership interview is successful, the interviewing pastor will invite you to fill out and sign a membership application form. Please note, that if your membership interview is unsuccessful, you will not be harshly dismissed. The interviewing pastor will gently explain the reasons for his decision, and will gladly walk alongside you to help make church membership a possibility for you at a later time in the future.

Step 4

Presentation to the congregation

At the next members meeting, you will be invited to stand before the congregation to make the following vows:

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope save in his sovereign mercy? *(I do)*
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the son of God and saviour of sinners? *(I do)*
3. Do you receive and rest upon him alone for your salvation which he has offered in the gospel? *(I do)*
4. Will you strive, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to regularly gather with God's people, walking in God's ways, promoting the mutual care and growth of the body of Christ, committing yourself to be a faithful steward of your gifts, time and resources, and to advance God's kingdom in this local church and beyond? *(I will)*

The congregation will then be invited to make the following vow:

5. Will you, the members of Coastal Bible Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to carry out your God-given role to share the burdens and the joys of life and service with these new members of our church family? (We will)

Once you've had a successful membership interview, filled-out and signed a membership application form, and made your vows to the congregation, you will be officially received as a member, and can begin to enjoy all the benefits of family life at Coastal Bible Church.

Once again, If you have any questions about membership at Coastal Bible Church, or would like to attend our church membership class, please feel free to reach out to us at info@coastalbible.church and we'll gladly be in touch.

Blessings,

The Pastoral Team
Coastal Bible Church

Notes:

Notes: