



**Richview Baptist Church  
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**



# Table of Contents

**Why Membership? .....3**

**How To Apply .....4**

**About Membership at Richview .....4**

**Statement of Faith .....6**

**Church Covenant .....9**

**Membership Application .....10**

# Why Membership?

## What is it?

According to the Bible, church membership is a commitment every Christian should make to attend, love, serve, and submit to a local church.

## Where is it in the Bible?

- Scripture clearly commands Christians to submit to a particular elder body (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17). It also commands an elder body to care for specific people (1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts 20:29-30). This implies that Christians belong to a particular church.
- The New Testament explicitly refers to some people being inside the church and some people being outside (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). This is much more than a casual association.
- The church in Corinth consisted of a definite number of believers, such that Paul could speak of a punishment inflicted by the majority (2 Corinthians 2:6).
- In Acts 2:37-47, we see that there is a numerical record of those who have professed Christ and been filled with the Holy Spirit, and an acknowledgement that the church was tracking the growth.
- In Acts 6:1-6, we see elections take place in order to address a specific problem and accusation.
- In Romans 16:1-6, we see what appears to be an awareness of who is a church member.
- Not only does the New Testament speak of the reality of church membership, but its dozens of “one anothers” are written to local churches, which fill out our understanding of what church membership should practically look like.

## Why is it important?

Biblical church membership is important because the church presents God’s witness to himself in the world. It displays his glory. In the church’s membership, then, non-Christians should see in the lives of God’s changed people that God is holy and gracious and that his gospel is powerful for saving and transforming sinners.

“Local church membership is a question of biblical obedience, not personal preference.” (Matt Chandler)

*(adapted from material at 9Marks, <http://www.9marks.org/>)*

## How To Apply

1. Read over the material in this package.
2. Complete the application on page 10.
3. Contact a pastor or elder to request an interview.
4. After the interview, the elders will consider approving your membership.
5. The church office will contact you to arrange a Sunday during which you will be welcomed into membership during the morning service.

## About Membership at Richview

### About Membership

Membership establishes a relationship of mutual commitment between the Church and its members, and follows the Scriptural example of believers joining a Church (Acts 2:41, 47). Membership entails a responsibility to attend the Church, financially support its ministry, and to accept a ministry role within the Church appropriate to one's gifts. Another word for membership is partnership.

### Qualifications for Membership

There are two qualifications for membership: personal faith in Jesus Christ, and believer's baptism (unless baptism is medically inadvisable).

There is no age restriction to membership. However, only members eighteen (18) years and older are eligible to participate in meeting of members of the Church.

### Admission to Membership

Responsibility for interviewing and approving applicants for membership rests with the Board of Elders. Following a decision by the Elders, the newly appointed member will be publicly welcomed at the first available opportunity.

It will be the custom of this Church that all members present will reaffirm their Membership promise at the induction of any new members, using this time to evaluate how well they have lived out their commitment and to thoughtfully consider how to fulfill their promise even more.

### Accountability

According to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 and Titus 1:10-11, believers are in a relationship of accountability to the leaders and fellow members of a Church. Galatians 6:1 teaches that the goal of Church discipline is gentle restoration.

The Board of Elders will be responsible for restorative Church discipline, according to the procedure in Matthew 18:15-17, and in accordance with its policies and procedures.

## **Membership List**

New members will be added to the Membership list. Deletions will be made in the following cases:

1. At the death of the member;
2. At the written request of the member;
3. In accordance with the section on Accountability above;
4. In the case of inactivity or prolonged absence without cause. Before making this decision, the Elders will make every effort to restore the member to active involvement in the Church.

Deletions involving iii) accountability and iv) inactivity or prolonged absence must be approved by eighty (80) percent of Elders present at a duly called Board of Elders meeting.

## **Blessings of Membership**

Membership in this Church includes the following privileges:

1. Attendance at, appropriate participation in, and voting during Church business meetings;
2. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the Church (as one's gifts, graces and calling make appropriate);
3. Reception of the committed oversight and care of the Elders and Deacons of the Church;
4. Reception of the committed care and discipline (as needed) of the membership of the Church.

## **Expectations of Members**

There are also expectations of every member; specifically, to:

1. Participate in the life of the Church whenever possible;
2. Continue to grow spiritually by practicing spiritual disciplines like Bible reading and prayer;
3. Serve within the church and the world using one's spiritual gifts;
4. Support the Church financially and generously;
5. Support one another spiritually and practically;
6. Submit to the oversight of the Elders of the Church

# Statement of Faith

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we affirm the following as a summary of what we believe to be basic truths about God and his works.

## Section A - The Bible

Throughout history God has revealed himself in a variety of ways, and God has preserved the substance of this revelation in the Bible. When we say "the Bible," we mean the sixty-six books of the Old Testament and New Testament. These books were written by divinely chosen authors as they were prompted and guarded by the Spirit of God. Although those writers were genuine authors and in most cases not just secretaries taking dictation, the work of the Spirit was so complete that everything written in the biblical books taught the truth without any errors.

Strictly speaking, this inerrancy of the Bible, applies to its books as originally written, but we can be confident that we have the original text of the Bible in the copies and translations we possess today because God has preserved those writings. In any attempt to define what we ought to believe or how we ought to live, only the Bible can be used as a final authority. Traditional interpretations of the Bible and confessions of faith are useful guides, but they are always open to correction based on further study of the Bible. Any cooperation with others who profess to be Christians must be based on a shared commitment to the unique authority and complete truthfulness of the Bible. (Matthew 5:17-18; John 16:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

## Section B - God

There is one, and only one, God, who is the creator of this universe. God, who is a God of love and justice, has always existed and will always exist. He is the ultimate authority over all persons and things, and he answers to no higher being or principle. In biblical terms we affirm that he is "holy," which means that he is in every way unique and in a category all his own, free from all the limits and imperfections experienced by creatures. In both the majesty of his being and the moral purity of his nature and action, he is uniquely perfect. Although God is one in his being, he exists eternally in three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The idea of the Trinity is a mystery beyond our full comprehension, but we are compelled by the witness of the Bible to affirm it. (Genesis 1-2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

## Section C - Christ

The supreme revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The Son of God is a fully divine person of the Trinity who has existed eternally. In order to save human beings he added to his divinity a full and perfect human nature and became Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a Jewish virgin, Mary. He lived a sinless life in obedience to God the Father, and his obedience culminated in his death as a payment of the penalty for the disobedience of sinful humans. God vindicated him when he raised him bodily from the dead, and he ascended to heaven where he is free from the limits of this world. He now intercedes for us who believe in him and preserves us in our relationship with the Father

while we await his personal return. (Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:1-18; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

### **Section D - The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is a fully divine person, not just an impersonal force. The Spirit makes the work of Jesus Christ effective in us by convincing us that we have sinned against God, that we therefore fail to meet God's standard for human life, that we are subject to God's judgment for that reason, and that Christ is the answer to our need. Christ gives the Spirit to indwell all those who believe in him, and the Spirit gives to believers a new spiritual ability to understand God's Word and live in obedience to it. By indwelling us he sets us apart as God's children; he continues to transform us into faithful followers of Christ; and he will in the end make us fully like Christ. (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

### **Section E - Satan**

Satan (also called the Devil) exists as an evil, personal, spirit-being who opposes the work of God in the world. He originated rebellion against God and continues to use his real but limited power to oppose all that would serve the glory of God and the good of humanity. (Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1:6-12; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

### **Section F - Humanity**

Human beings were created by God to be like him in every way. This is necessary in order to be in relationship with him. They serve as God's visible representatives in the exercise of responsible dominion over the created world. Our first parents sinned by disobeying an explicit divine command and thus brought ruin on the human race. The Bible describes this ruin in terms of "death": spiritual, physical and eternal death. Spiritual death involves corruption at the core of our being, so that human beings are by nature totally incapable of pleasing God. Physical death is the destiny of all humanity. And ultimately eternal death involves permanent separation from God as the destiny of all those who refuse to repent and respond to God's offer of grace. (Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-3)

### **Section G - Salvation**

Although God could have left all human beings in their sin and guilt, in love, he freely and graciously chose to deliver us from our ruined condition. He provided his eternal Son to become human in order to save us. Christ's saving work focused on his death, in which he bore the penalty which is justly ours, thus satisfying the demands of God's moral law and turning away the wrath of God which is poured out on unrepentant sinners. God signified his approval of Christ's work by raising him from the dead and exalting him as Lord in heaven. On the basis of this work of Christ on our behalf, God accepts as perfectly righteous all those who trust in Christ who died and rose again. We come to believe in Christ because God does a special work of grace to overcome our sinful disposition and draw us to himself. Then God continues this work of grace, so that all who have been drawn to faith in Christ will be preserved in faith and salvation and will enter into the perfect conditions of eternal life in the age to come. (John 6:35-40; Romans 3:19-26; 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:18-23)

## **Section H - Future Things**

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally, bodily, and gloriously, just as he promised and his apostles affirmed. In the end, Christ will raise from the dead all who have ever lived, and he will declare God's perfect judgment concerning every person. Those who have been saved will live eternally in the perfect, renewed creation, and those who have been unrepentant will exist eternally in the conscious punishment of hell. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20-22)

## **Section I - The Church**

The universal Church, the community of believers in Christ, is manifested in local Churches throughout the world. A properly ordered local Church is a loving community of persons who have confessed their faith in Christ by being immersed in Christian baptism, and who by their baptism have committed themselves to one another as well as to Christ. Together they seek to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to build up each other as growing followers of Christ, to transmit the Christian faith to succeeding generations, and to worship God as his people called to be a distinct society in this world. Each local Church is called to acknowledge Christ as Lord and Head of the Church and to use its divinely given abilities and opportunities to make Christ known in its community. Each Church needs to be served by two kinds of leaders: some who carry out a ministry of teaching and governing (known in the Bible as Elders, overseers, or pastors), and some who lead in the practical implementation of ministry (known in the Bible as Deacons). (Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

## **Section J - Symbols of the Gospel**

Among the things commanded by Christ, there are two visible symbols of the gospel, which he instituted for observance by his followers until he returns, one as a sign of Christian initiation and the other as a means of ongoing nurture.

Baptism is the immersion in water of a confessing believer, designed to occur at the beginning of Christian experience as the formal means of response to the gospel and initiation as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The act is a powerful symbol of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, with all that this implies about our death to our old life and our spiritual rebirth. (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-4)

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal in which believers together partake of bread and wine as a tangible reminder of the body and blood of Christ, which were offered up for our salvation. By this act of eating and drinking, the whole community of believers proclaims the Lord's death until he returns. (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)

## **Church Covenant**

Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes disciples of Jesus Christ; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this Church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

Each of us will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other Church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

# Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby apply for membership at Richview Baptist Church. I profess faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, have been baptized by immersion (unless immersion is not medically advisable), and agree with the Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, and Policy Statements. I commit myself to live in obedience to Scripture, and to be subject to the authority of the Church as expressed in the Church Constitution, By-Laws, and Policy Statements.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## To be completed by the interviewing Elders

- We recommend that further preparation is required before the candidate is accepted; OR
- We have interviewed the applicant, and are satisfied that he/she has fulfilled all the qualifications for Membership at Richview Baptist Church. We recommend the applicant for membership.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*After approval by the Board, please submit the original to the Registrar and a copy to the Board Secretary.*