

“QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS”

Session Eleven - “Belonging to the Church”

Why membership? Why is it important to go to a church? Why can't a person be a Christian without involving themselves in a local faith community? Why do churches have membership? Why can't people just “come” to church without joining? What are the rights and responsibilities of membership?

When Christ calls us to follow him, he calls us not only to believe in him in an abstract way, but to participate in the Family of God, the family we become a part of when we become a Christian.

We are Called to Gather Together

- *(Matthew 18:20) For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”*
- *(Acts 2:1) When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*
- *(Acts 2:42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*
- *(Hebrews 10:23-25 NIV) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

We are Called to Be a Family

- *(Ephesians 2:19-20) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*
- *(1 Corinthians 1:9) God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- *(Mark 3:33-35) And Jesus replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”*
- *(Galatians 6:10 NRSV) So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.*
- *(Ephesians 3:14-15 NIV) For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

We are Called to Demonstrate God's Love Together

- *(John 13:34-35 NRSV) I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*”
- *(John 17:20-23) “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

We are Called to Be a Body

- *(Romans 12:4-5) For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.*
- *(1 Corinthians 10:17) Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*
- *(1 Corinthians 12:13-14) For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.*
- *(1 Corinthians 12:27) Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*
- *(Ephesians 4:1-6) As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

We belong to One Another

- *(Romans 12:4-5) For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, **and each member belongs to all the others.***

A Membership Covenant

Having received Christ as my Lord and Saviour and being in agreement with my church's statements, strategy, and structure, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

1. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH

- By acting in love toward other members
- By supporting the leadership of our church

2. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH

- By praying for its growth
- By inviting the unchurched to attend
- By warmly welcoming those who visit

3. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH

- By discovering my gifts and talents
- By being equipped to serve through study and participation
- By being willing to serve others

4. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH

- By attending faithfully
- By living a life which reflects God's involvement with me
- By giving regularly

How much should I give?

(1 Corinthians 16:1-2 NIV) Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income...

(2 Corinthians 8:12 NIV) For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada – A Brief History

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is the name of a Protestant Christian church, of Presbyterian and reformed theology and government, serving in Canada under this name since 1875. According to the Canada 2011 Census 472,000 Canadians identify themselves as Presbyterian. Church records indicate approx. 100,000 members and 75,000 adherents in regular attendance as of 2016. Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has approx. 1100 ministers and 835 congregations. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is founded on the teachings of the New Testament, both in its theology and its form of church government. The word “Presbyterian” refers to the governance of the church by Teaching Elders (ministers) and an equal number of Ruling Elders (persons ordained to rule, but not to a sacramental ministry). Its theology is called “reformed,” meaning that it belongs to the body of churches that the Reformation gave rise to in seeking to recover the teachings of Scripture.

Presbyterianism accompanied the earliest explorers and settlers to Canada, drawing its ministers and membership first from France and later from the British Isles. The Scottish influence was pre-eminent from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

In 1875, various Presbyterian bodies joined together to form The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1925, approximately 60 percent of the membership joined Methodists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada.

Canadian Presbyterians have a long history. We are:

- part of the Old Testament story of God’s covenant relationship with the world
- part of the 2,000 years of witness to Jesus Christ
- part of a distinctive Reformed and Presbyterian history

Presbyterians get their name from the Greek word “presbyteros” meaning “elder.” This word occurs many times in the New Testament and also in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It refers to members of the community who are respected for their experience and faithfulness. The word may also designate a particular office of leadership. A Presbyterian church is one governed by elders who are elected by members of the congregation. Although elders are ordained for life, congregations may choose term service for elders.

Presbyterians also claim the names “Reformed,” and “Protestant.” Our denomination came out of the Protestant Reformation, a major religious movement that occurred in the early and middle years of the sixteenth century. At that point in history, the Christian Church had divided into two main branches - the Eastern Church (Greek and Russian Orthodox) and the Western Church (Roman Catholic). In the sixteenth century, church leaders began to protest the corruption of the Church

and seek its reform. They were called “Protestants” because they were “bearing witness’ (Latin *pro plus testare*: to bear witness) to what they regarded as New Testament Christianity.

The chief leaders in the reformation movement were Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli and Cranmer. These leaders were intense, courageous, zealous, and assertive. They believed that people were put right in the sight of God by God’s grace alone. They said people received God’s grace by faith and not by anything that they had done. These Reformers believed that all people had access to God through prayer and the Bible. They believed that God’s forgiveness could be received directly without the intervention of a priest. The Reformers also claimed the “indwelling” of Christ in the believer and stressed the sovereignty of God. They will always be recognized for their hope and confidence in the power of a loving God and for recovering the concept of the “priesthood of all believers.”

Today Canadian Presbyterians consider themselves to be both “Reformed” and “reforming.”

Presbyterians In Canada

The roots of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are Scottish (our mother Church was the Church of Scotland which is Presbyterian), but of course, many people have come, and continue to come, into our denomination from other branches of the Christian Church.

Many Presbyterians in Canada have their churches named after Reformers, particularly John Calvin (a Frenchman) and John Knox (a Scot who was influenced by Calvin’s teachings). John Calvin (1509-1564) has often been called the “father” of Presbyterianism. Calvin lived in Geneva, Switzerland. From there, Presbyterianism spread through Europe. Calvin, like other reformers, worked hard to develop a church where everyone, not just the clergy, shared responsibilities. Schools were established to provide education for both clergy and laity. John Knox (1515-1572), after studying with Calvin in Geneva, returned to his native Scotland to establish Presbyterianism. It soon spread to Northern Ireland, the United States and Canada. In 1875 several groups of Presbyterians formed a union and called themselves The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Our Church has been independent since then.

Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has about 1,000 congregations with members coming from many national and racial backgrounds. There are congregations that worship in English, French, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Hungarian, Spanish and Portuguese, Arabic, and numerous African languages.

Excerpt from Living Faith - Chapter Seven - God's Church

7.1 The Church

7.1.1 The church is Christ together with his people called both to worship and to serve him in all of life.

7.1.2 The church is one. It is one family under God whose purpose it is to unite all people in Jesus Christ.

7.1.3 The church is holy. It is set apart by God through the Holy Spirit to be a chosen people in the world.

7.1.4 The church is catholic. It is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian Faith.

7.1.5 The church is apostolic. It is founded on Christ and the apostles and is in continuity with their teachings.

7.1.6 The church is in constant need of reform because of the failure and sin which mark its life in every age. The church is present when the Word is truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and as it orders its life according to the word of God.

7.3 Worship

7.3.1 The church lives to praise God. We have no higher calling than to offer the worship that belongs to God day by day, Sunday by Sunday.

7.3.2 Through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, in praise, prayer, teaching and fellowship, God sustains the life of the church. We worship God as Lord offering ourselves in the service of Christ, rejoicing that we have been brought from darkness to light.

7.3.3 Worship draws us into the work of Christ. Even now he intercedes for the world to which he came and for which he died. In union with him, the church prays for the healing and the salvation of the world.

7.3.4 Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God for ever and ever!