

Membership Roadmap

We're excited you're thinking about membership! There's something powerful about walking with a body of believers as they walk with you. Below are guidelines to help you take this step in your walk with Jesus as you commit to this incredible community of Christ followers.

What is the Church?

The Church is not a building. It's a community of Jesus-followers connected in his name. While we gather in local communities, we believe these communities belong to a greater community of believers that transcends time, geography, nationality, and every other distinction humans create. We believe these communities are God's chosen instrument to bring his salvation and goodness to a lost and dying world.

The New Testament compares the church to a person's body:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 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.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

This drives the idea of membership. The Bible uses the metaphor of a human body to describe how we as believers are organically intertwined with Christ and each other. Each of us plays an important role in God's purpose. This body is nothing short of the body of Christ. We are "members" (or parts) of that body.

Misconceptions about church membership

Today membership often means belonging to something or having special access or privileges somewhere. Become a member of a fraternity, and you can go to their parties. Become a member of the Elks Lodge, and you can go to their Friday night fish fries. Become a member of Sam's Club, and you can buy a 5 gallon bucket of olives.

That is not what membership is about at Fellowship of Faith.

Membership at FOF is not about belonging or having special rights and privileges. A non-member is just as welcome as a member. Anyone can call FOF home the moment they walk in the door. Every ministry we offer is available to non-members.

What is membership at FOF?

A few things...

1. Being a host

Jesus said he came to serve, not be served (Mark 10:45). Membership at FOF means doing the same. To become a member is to shift from guest to host. A member is one who strives to give more than receive, feed before being fed, and serve rather than be served.

When someone has a party, who does the planning and all the work? Who does the set up and the clean up? Who foots the bill? Who sacrifices their night to make sure others are having a good time? The host.

Likewise, who is the honored party? Who is served, fed, given special treatment, and all the necessary attention to make sure they're well-treated and having a good time? The guest.

At FOF, non-members are our guests. Members are people sold on the idea of serving our guests like Jesus. Wanting to be like Jesus means doing what he did. If Jesus came to serve, at some point a believer is going to want to live the same way.

2. Partnering with a movement

To join a church is to unite with a movement of God among a particular group of people. We believe the Church is God's agent for bringing his restoration to a broken world. His call is not for us alone and Fellowship of Faith exists for something bigger than itself.

Membership means living for something more than ourselves and pouring our lives into the vision and mission God has for Fellowship of Faith. This entails discipleship – seeking to be a fully-devoted follower of Christ while simultaneously making disciples of him.

3. Expressing love by commitment

There often comes a moment when a person wants to marry someone they love as opposed to continuing a lower-commitment dating relationship. Love desires commitment and life yearns for full investment.

Membership is a way of showing love to God by committing to the people he loves, creating accountability with them and expressing desire to partner with what God is doing among them. Walking with God means walking with your brother and sister in Christ.

4. Other random bits

Because of this commitment, FOF leaders often take a more active role in helping members on their discipleship journey. Members at Fellowship of Faith can also vote at voters' meetings, serve as elders, and serve on our board of directors.

Why become a member of FOF?

1. Because you're pickin' up what we're layin' down

Members resonate with FOF and where we're going. It's the leap when you want to be a part of something bigger than yourself. Become a member if God is calling you to take an active role in where FOF is going. Become a member if you want to commit to FOF's journey.

2. Because you're ready to give back

You want discipleship, not consumer spirituality. You want community, not convenient relationships. You want commitment and accountability, not self-serving autonomy. You want your life to fit into God's plan more than God to fit into yours.

3. Because you're ready to stop dating and put on a ring

Being a member of Fellowship of Faith is about committing to relationships. First it is committing to the relationship you have with God. You can do this, however, at any number of churches. So membership is about committing to a relationship with *this* community of people who call themselves Fellowship of Faith.

What's expected of a member?

A member is someone who strives to live as a devoted disciple of Jesus and seeks to make disciples of him. This includes embracing his Biblical truths within the context of the mission and vision of Fellowship of Faith. It's articulated in our Membership Covenant to which we ask all members to adhere.

1. Reconnect

We believe the way of Jesus does not go alone and that we are called to be in fellowship with each other. Membership means doing life together. We want to be an Acts 2 Church, where—

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

***I covenant to:** Worship regularly. Connect with others frequently in small groups. Partner with others to further God's work in this church and our world.*

2. Reaffirm

We desire to conform our lives to the teachings of Jesus, clinging to the orthodox, historic Christian faith. We hold the Bible to be inspired by God, governing what we do and believe. We see the writings of the early Lutheran reformers as a guide for better understanding these truths.

***I covenant to:** Deepen my understanding of these teachings and reaffirm them as the governing source of my life and worldview.*

3. Restart

Membership means radically turning our lives over to God. We believe we are loved by God. And though we are broken, God yearns to redeem and restore every aspect of who we are. We believe the only way to truly discover the depths of what God is calling us to is by stepping out of our comfort zones and taking leaps of faith. Following him is extreme and the life of faith is an adventure. It is a journey of discovering and re-discovering a deeper life with him every single day.

***I covenant to:** Restart my life every day—repenting of my sins, recommitting to live as God wants, and making myself accountable to the leaders and members of FOF in my faith journey while I am a member here.*

4. Re-give

We believe all that we are and all that we own ultimately comes from God. A life of faith means giving back to him. Membership means giving the first of what we receive in proportion to what God has given us. It is about embarking on a way of life where we continually become more generous and more sacrificial with our time and money—towards our church, our families, and the needs of others in this world. We find this a challenge. We find this a joy!

I covenant to: Give generously. Give sacrificially. Give the first of what I receive in proportion to what God has given me.

5. Reignite

We believe the Church is God's agent for bringing his restoration to a broken world. His call is not for us alone and Fellowship of Faith exists for something bigger than itself. As each of us are called to be disciples, so each of us are called to make disciples. Membership means pouring ourselves into this call.

I covenant to: Be a witness. Make disciples. Ignite the mission and vision of FOF.

Who can be a member?

Anyone who believes in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, agrees with our foundational theology, resonates with FOF's mission & vision, and commits to live out our membership covenant.

How do I become a member?

1. Immerse into the life of FOF

Worship regularly, connect with others, grow spiritually, serve, give, witness.... If you want to be a member then start living the membership covenant now. We ask people to actively connect and practice our membership covenant for at least 4 months before membership.

2. Attend a Faith Step Workshop

These half-day workshops help you navigate baptism, membership, 1st communion, and confirmation for yourself or your children. They are typically offered on Saturday mornings several times per year.

By attending you are not making a commitment to become a member (or take any other faith step). It's simply a great, no-pressure way to explore the basics of where we're headed as a church and what it means to be a member here. Check the FOF Baptism & Membership webpage for dates.

Faith Step Workshops are for everyone, regardless of prior church background.

3. Schedule a 1:1 chat session with one of our pastors

This is a way to get to know you personally, walk through the membership covenant, answer any questions you have, and help you connect.

4. Fill out a membership covenant

Available at Faith Step Workshops and on the FOF Baptism & Membership webpage.

5. Make it known at a Faith Step Sunday

This is the day a ruckus is raised to cheer on those becoming new members. FOF celebrates these special Sundays several times per year (dates posted on the FOF Baptism & Membership webpage).

If you haven't been baptized, we'll baptize you. If you have been baptized, you'll renew and recommit your life to Christ. We'll ask you to introduce yourself, share why Jesus is important to you, and why you want to become a member of FOF. Once you do, expect a lot of cheering, whooping, and hollering for you and those taking this step with you.

Do I need to be baptized?

Yes. If you haven't been baptized, we'll baptize you as part of becoming a member. If you have been baptized, you don't need to be baptized again.

The process for being baptized (or having your child baptized) is part of the Faith Step Workshop. See The FOF Baptism & Membership webpage for details.

Do I need to be confirmed or make a public profession of faith?

Yes. This all happens as part of the Faith Step Sunday.

We'll ask you why Jesus is important to you, why you want to follow him, and a few yes/no questions based on the Apostles' Creed. Your explanation doesn't have to be eloquent or long. One to two sentence answers are fine. Just speak from the heart.

Because we believe it's important to re-commit to Christ and profess our faith regularly, we ask everyone to make a public confirmation of faith even if they've done so before.

Does becoming a member make my family members too?

If you have young children living with you that come to FOF, they can become baptized members at the same time as you so long as they've been baptized or are baptized on the Faith Step Sunday.

Older children and spouses need to participate in the same process as you if they wish to become members.

Do I go through the same process if I'm already a member of another LCMS church?

Yes. Everyone goes through the same process regardless of church background.

How long does my membership last?

Membership at FOF is not for life. Membership lasts only as long as one remains active at FOF and faithful to the membership covenant. People who become inactive, stop carrying out our membership covenant, or who are living contrary to Biblical standards may be removed from membership at the discretion of our elders.

How Do I know if I'm ready?

Membership is an amazing thing, but it's not for the faint of heart. Here are some ways to test the water—

- 1. Spend some time getting to know us.** Get involved and see if FOF is a community you want to commit to.
- 2. Read "Getting to Know Us."** It's attached to the end of this packet and includes our mission, values, and foundational theology.
- 3. Come to a Faith Step Workshop.** It doesn't obligate you to become a member and will help you see more clearly what membership is about.
- 4. Talk with a pastor.** Ask them direct questions. Let them share their own experience.

If FOF is a place you have come to call home and a people you want to walk with, then becoming a member might be the next step for you. Membership is an incredible way to grow in your relationship with God and with others. We hope you'll commit to this incredible journey!

Getting to Know Us

Fellowship of Faith began as a dream by a group of people who set out to experience what it would mean to be a part of a community that was honestly striving to follow Jesus in our world today. We're still striving to live out that dream, and though far from perfect, we know God continues to redeem.

So much of membership entails getting to know our church – what we believe, where we're headed, and what we're trying to do. The following few pages are meant to give you a deeper insight into the mission, beliefs, and values that are the fiber of FOF.

Our Mission

Make disciples who make disciples...

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus constantly invites people from all walks of life to follow him. These people are called disciples. A disciple is not someone content to simply know what Jesus taught. A disciple is someone who wants to be who Jesus is and follow him. A disciple is someone radically pursuing a deeper relationship with Jesus.

Being a disciple is not an advanced spiritual condition. It often means being very green. And it's a process of spiritual formation. It can be messy. It can be hard. It can be confusing. Which is why we think church should be about people helping each other on this journey.

We believe Jesus invites us into this, but not for our benefit alone. We believe each of us is called to pour into others as we were poured into by someone else. Thus creates an endless stream of disciples making disciples making disciples until Christ comes again.

Our Values

Our values are our DNA and the fiber of who we are. They strike at the heart of how we think Church should be. Our values are our hills to die on. We would rather cease to be a church than depart from these. While they don't always describe us, they are what we want to define us.

A genuine community

At Fellowship of Faith we never want to be a sea of nameless faces. One of the primary reasons this church began in 1999 was because a group of believers wanted to become a church where people live together in the way Jesus describes. We want to be an Acts 2 church, where—

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Wholly devoted to God

We believe we exist for the glory of God. People and churches are driven by all sorts of things — money, prestige, traditions, fads, fear, and the path of least resistance. We believe that each of us can so easily fall into these patterns. Recognizing this, we continually strive to honor God first and let all the rest follow.

A desire to be real

We believe the church needs to be a place where people can be honest about life's joys, passions, and struggles. Because of this we strive to communicate God's truth and share our experiences in open and honest ways. We believe it is important as a community to be honest about our shortcomings, authentic in our lives, and sincere in what we teach. We want to be humble as a church and express our faith in a way that is genuine.

A willingness to take risks

We believe the only way to truly discover the depths of what God is calling us to do is by stepping out of our comfort zones and taking leaps of faith. We want to be willing to do whatever it takes to be obedient to him. This means we'll try new and creative things if we think it can unleash a movement of God.

A missional spirit infused into the fiber of everything we do

We believe God yearns to redeem and restore every aspect of who we are and all of his creation. We believe the Church is meant to partner with God in bringing his restoration to our world. God's call is not for us alone and Fellowship of Faith exists for something bigger than itself. We don't see this mission as one component of the church. We see it as every component.

Foundational Theology

This is what we believe about God, life, the universe, and reality.

FOF is blessed to be made up of believers from all kinds of backgrounds. This brings a richness and variety of ways we explore God's truths. And yet we stand united on these foundational teachings.

God

We believe that there is one true and divine being, eternally existing in three persons —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — each of whom possesses all the attributes and characteristics of deity. We believe he is the creator and preserver of everything, and that he is operating throughout history to fulfill his purposes.

Salvation

We believe history is an epic story. God created this world to be good and to exist in fellowship with himself. Humanity defied God and continues to rebel against him, thus tainting and destroying what God originally intended.

This corruption, called sin, separates us from God and renders us unable to be in fellowship with him. This fall which took place at the beginning of human history and continues today is the cause of all that is vile and wrong in the world, leaving us in dire need of salvation from God.

We believe out of his great love for us, God intervenes in history to restore his creation and bring us back into fellowship with himself. Salvation then, is wholly the work of God and is not the result of any intrinsic goodness or merit on our part.

Jesus

We believe that Jesus is God himself, who came to earth as a human being, in order to accomplish this salvation. Unable to save ourselves or ever get right with God on our own, we believe Jesus accomplished all that we could not do by giving his life as a sacrifice on a cross. We believe three days later he rose from the dead, and later ascended into heaven from where he promises to return again.

Human Destiny

We believe that just as Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, so he will return again to judge the world, raise the dead, and bring about the final fulfillment of all the promises we have from God. For those in Christ, this means eternal life in communion with God as he initially intended. For those who continue to reject God's salvation, this means judgment and separation from God and his goodness for eternity.

Life

We believe that all those who come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ are a new creation. We believe God seeks to transform us into the likeness of his Son and restore us to what he always intended us to be. This means a life marked by the presence of God's Spirit. As redeemed children of God we therefore seek to live lives of love, marked by holiness, obedience, and devotion to him.

Church

We believe the Church is not a building, but a community of Jesus-followers who meet in his name. While we gather in local communities, we believe these communities belong to a greater community of believers that transcends time, geography, nationality, and every other distinction humans create. We believe these communities are God's chosen instrument to bring his salvation and goodness to a lost and dying world.

The Bible

We believe the Bible is the true and inspired word of God, and is without error in the original manuscripts. It is the authoritative source which governs all we do and believe.

The Historic Faith

We desire to conform our lives to Jesus, clinging to the orthodox, historic Christian faith. We believe that the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds are accurate summaries of the Bible's teaching and apostles' testimony of who Jesus is, and who he is not. We think of the creeds like a roadmap to help guide us through what the Bible teaches. They're like CliffsNotes that summarize some of the Bible's major teachings.

We also hold to the writings of the early reformers contained in the Book of Concord as a guide for our doctrine and practice. The Book of Concord is a collection of documents put together by 16th century evangelical reformers to express the gospel and other pertinent teachings of the Bible in greater clarity. You can check out the creeds and the Book of Concord at www.lcms.org.