



PATHWAYS TO MEMBERSHIP AT FIRST CHURCH

Thank you for your interest in becoming a formal part of First Church. We welcome all visitors to participate in the fellowship and ministry of the church, but we do encourage membership for those who desire to be a part of this family of faith for an extended period of time.

Membership is essentially an expression of our commitment to walk side-by-side in life and ministry in this particular fellowship of believers. Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior and has a desire to serve him may become a member. To initiate this process please contact the church office or our Senior Pastor.

A new member's class is offered periodically to acquaint those interested in membership with the teachings, history and life of the Christian Reformed denomination and of First Church. This class is not required but is suggested for those who want to become a member.

Because there are many journeys to becoming a member and different details involved with each journey we have created a detailed description of most situations. Please contact our pastor or the church office if you have questions about any particular detail.

Joining a Church for the First Time

If you have recently come to Christ and desire to become a member of our church simply talk to our pastor to express your desires or contact the church office by the most convenient means. This also applies if you are a Christian, but have not previously attended church or have not attended for a very long time. After you express your desire to the church, the process is to have a formal but relaxed conversation with our pastor and several elders (elders are members of our church in leadership) to discuss your faith, your life, and your desire to become of member of First Church. After this conversation, you will profess your faith (see below for an explanation) and be baptized (if you have not been baptized before) on a Sunday morning. If you have been baptized before, but have not been active in your faith, you will simply be asked to profess your faith (see the reasoning of this below).

Transferring from another church that does not keep membership records

If you are transferring from a church that does not keep membership records, we ask that you ask your former church for a letter indicating that you were a member or attender in good standing. If your church is unable to provide such a letter, please discuss this with our pastor or indicate this in your note to the council. After you express your desire to become part of the church, the process is to have a formal but relaxed conversation with our pastor and several elders (elders are members of our church in leadership) to discuss your faith, your life, and your desire to become of member of First Church. After this conversation, you will be welcomed as a member of the church on an appropriate Sunday.

Transferring from another Christian Reformed or Reformed Church

Members of other Christian Reformed churches who desire to become a member of First Church are asked to write their current church council requesting a transfer of membership to First Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. You will be contacted as soon as the church office receives the appropriate letter from them. Feel free to email or call the office (452-4370) to find out the status of your transfer. After this membership has been received and processed, you will be welcomed on an appropriate Sunday.

Some Details about Profession of Faith and Baptism

Profession of Faith

Profession of Faith is the process in our church by which people who have been baptized, but want to become full members of the church and have a desire to become more active in their faith and full members of the church can profess their faith to the church and become members. This is also the pathway for young people who are members of the church to become "full" members of the church. Normally, young people do not take communion until they have made profession of faith, although this is gradually changing in our denomination and our fellowship.

Baptism

Baptism is the ceremony in which water is either sprinkled or the person is immersed in water to signify their dying and rising with Christ. It also signifies God's promises to us as well as our promises to God. Our church baptizes infants as a sign of God's promises to our children and adults who trust Christ as their savior and desire to follow him and have not been baptized before. Another way to say this is that we "recognize" any baptism done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit done in a Christian church. In our church adult baptism includes a profession of faith. Infants who are baptized are able to make a formal profession of faith at an age of understanding as described below.

Baptized Members who desire to make Profession of Faith

Anyone who has been baptized, but has not made profession of faith, but desires to do so, should speak with Pastor Bill or write a note to council and send it to the church office. This process also consists having a formal but relaxed conversation with Pastor Bill and several elders to discuss your faith, your life, and your desire to become of member of First Church. If the interview is successful, profession of faith will be scheduled for a Sunday morning and the person will be welcomed to full membership.

Young Members who desire to make Profession of Faith

Younger members (generally 8th grade and younger) who desire to make profession of faith are encouraged to select a spiritual mentor they trust and respect from First Church. The church leadership is also willing to help find a mentor. The mentor will lead the young person through a devotional book meant to cover the basics of the Christian faith (We are currently using "I Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith," which is available from [Faith Alive](#) along with a [mentors guide](#)). Following some months of mentoring the mentor will recommend the young person for membership if appropriate. After this recommendation, the young person will meet with the pastor and several elders along with their mentor to discuss their faith, life, and desire to become of member of First Church. After this conversation, profession of faith will be scheduled for a Sunday morning and the person will be welcomed to full membership in the church (this is an age restriction on serving as an elder or deacon).

Once again, thank you for your interest in the process of membership. If you have any questions at all please contact our pastor or call the church office. We would be happy to help in any way possible.