

# Show Me Your Glory

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH FAIRFIELD

May 2018

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## Accounting for the Flock

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*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12*

First Baptist Church is made up of many members. A member is a person that professes faith in Christ as Savior and have joined through baptism, statement of faith, or letter from another church. The current enrollment for First Baptist Church is 912 members. Of that number, 205 are active members that are either here regularly or homebound. That number does not include the category of regular attenders which includes children that have not yet professed faith. When reporting the number every year as part of the Annual Church Profile, we are reminded of the absent church family. In this issue, we will be sharing Biblical truths of why church membership matters.

### **Every Member Has Value and Matters**

Every member, and this extends to our homebound members, has a place here at FBC. One of the most basic but most important ways to serve is through prayer. Jesus tells us, “my house is to be a house of prayer,” so we start with prayer. It is something every single member can do and ought to do. Think about when you go to the doctor, the first thing they want to do is check your vital signs; the vital sign of a Christian is prayer.

Another way we serve one another is through a ministry of presence. Just by coming to church on Sunday morning you start to fulfill the gift of encouragement of others. Think about the faithful ones you have known over the years, who despite their physical infirmities continue to encourage others by being present in worship.

Throughout the Bible we are commanded through the “one another’s.”

- Serve one another—Galatians 5:13
- Love one another—John 13:34, 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 4:7, 11; 2 John 5
- Be at peace with one another—Mark 9:50
- Bear one another’s burdens—Galatians 6:2
- Encourage and build one another up—1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Pray for one another—James 5:16

Even though this list is not exhaustive of the “one another’s”, these are all things as members of this body of believers we can and should do. While we may not physically be able to serve as we once did, we can be faithful in prayer and encouragement.

### **Why We Should Care About Membership**

Personal response to the gospel is the key to the family of God, the Bible assumes that a Christian will belong to a church. We are brought into the family of God through the gospel and with that comes the expectation that we will join a local expression of that family.

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Being a member promotes unity around the gospel and serves as a formal recognition of your commitment to Christ and to the body of Christ. Church membership is subtly present within all of scripture. One of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to Christ and His church is around our church covenant. Church membership guards the gospel and gives us a community to live out the ordinances of the church like baptism and Lord's Supper. Additionally, we bind ourselves to the church through a covenant.

### **What is a Church Covenant?**

Covenant is an Old Testament term describing the agreement between two parties into union together. Our Church Covenant states in the first paragraph:

*Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.*

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:26-27:

*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

As members of the church we are making commitments to watch over one another as our covenant continues:

*We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in*

*feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.*

### **Corporate Worship**

We are called to corporately gather around the preaching of the word and encourage one another in singing hymns and spiritual songs.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:17*

By not attending corporate worship we could be conveying a message of "I don't need you in that way."

### **Under Shepherd**

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17*

This verse should demonstrate to us that this leadership takes place within a church. The elder leader/pastor of the church serves as the under shepherd called to preach and teach the flock.

We are to grow in holiness and this happens within the context of the local church under the teaching and preaching of the Word.

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## The List

As a church we are guilty of becoming lax in some of the record keeping of our membership roll. Sometimes when children who have professed faith here become adults and move away, we might assume they have joined a church and changed their membership. If they have joined a church that does not require a letter, we have no real indication of that.

*We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of his covenant and the principles of God's Word.*

Our covenant reminds us that we as believers are called to be member of a local expression of the church. If we have family or friends that have moved from the area we should be encouraging them to join a fellowship where they are. As we see the list on the insert you will find two categories of the inactive members. The first section is the larger one and it represents those who have left the church over the years and have not indicated their uniting with another church. The second section is more personal for some of us, it contains members of our biological families that are no longer participating here. Very few of us are exempt from names on that list. This list is not designed to be an instrument of shame or failure, it should be an encouragement to be in prayer for all the fellow Christians that are no longer actively participating in worship and service with us.

### What to do next?

1. Pray—As you read over these names, pray for them and pray for the conversations that will be forthcoming.
2. Pray again—Pray about your role in contacting those you know on the list and how God will use you in this process.

3. Inform—If you have **specific** contact information for anyone on the list please pass it to the office.
4. Intent—Personal contact will be forthcoming with the church members to establish the current state of their relationship to FBC.
5. Pray—There can never be too much prayer for this process. Pray that this will be an opportunity to encourage believers.

We have a responsibility to church members to watch over them, encourage them, and to reconcile relationships. We anticipate that this process will be a lengthy one and we will approach it with all grace and humility. It is not an attempt to quickly remove names for convenience, it is a prayerful opportunity to minister to each other.

### Work Out Wednesdays

We are entering into the time of year that we forego the traditional Wednesday night discipleship classes and instead focus on visits and evangelism. This summer, from May 23rd through August 29th, every Wednesday night at 6 p.m. we will gather in the fellowship hall. Some will be sending cards of encouragement and invitation, others will be going out on visits. We will be meeting the first two weeks to have short training sessions on how to best conduct these visits. There is something for everyone, so please plan on joining us.

*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



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Sermon Broadcast on WFIW 1390 at 10:45 each Sunday**

**Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us**  
Dorothy Thrupp (1836)

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
Much we need Thy tender care;  
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use Thy folds prepare:  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.

We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,  
Be the guardian of our way;  
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,  
Seek us when we go astray:  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray;  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.

Thou hast promised to receive us,  
Poor and sinful though we be;  
Thou hast mercy to relieve us,

**Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:**

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Early let us turn to Thee;  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Early let us turn to Thee.

Early let us seek Thy favor,  
Early let us do Thy will;  
Blessed Lord and only Savior,  
With Thy love our bosoms fill:  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still;  
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.

We know that God is our Shepherd. We know why we trust. And because we have that trust, we ask that God be faithful. We acknowledge our dependency and our emptiness, and ask that God would provide. We ask not in doubt, but in faith. Every verse of this hymn contains a promise we have from God, and a prayer we make because of that promise. This is how we are called to live our lives as followers of Christ – in prayer, because of faith. Thrupp's text is a beautiful example of how we might live out that calling.