

WHY ACC HAS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Sometimes you hear the question, "Why should I join a church in membership?" That is a good question. After all, if you can become a Christian without joining a church in formal membership, (and you certainly can do that), why should you bother? The church isn't a country club, after all! And there is no command in the Bible that membership is required to be a good Christian...in fact, it isn't even mentioned in the Bible at all!

There are three important reasons we see for encouraging regular attendees at Alderwood Community Church to become members.

1. Decision Making

There are significant areas of decision making that require us to identify the group of people who are the core of ACC. These areas include:

- The establishment and approval of an annual budget,
- The calling of a pastor,
- The establishment and revision of our Constitution and Bylaws,
- The purchase of land or buildings for this ministry, or other large capital expenditures.

Without an identifiable membership, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to safeguard the integrity of our doctrinal distinctives, or to expect our core families to accept full responsibility for financial commitments. Any group of people could deliberately come in and disrupt the orderly decision-making process, and ACC would be powerless to stop them.

2. Accountability

Membership is a way of helping people commit themselves to a relationship of accountability to the rest of the body. When people join in membership at ACC they are placing themselves under the care and guidance of the eldership, and are saying in a personal way, "I am willing to be accountable to the leadership." Hebrews 13:17 says "Remember your leaders, who spoke the work of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

If it would happen that a member falls into sin, or begins to stray from sound teaching, the leadership then has the responsibility, the authority, and the **permission** to counsel that believer back into right fellowship with God. The process of church discipline, as outlined in Matthew 18, can be followed, even to the point of explaining the situation to the church membership.

If a person has not joined in church membership, however, then "telling it to the church"

would risk incurring a lawsuit for libel, or defamation of character. Several courts have already made decisions in favor of people who fell into sin, were disciplined by their church, but who sued their church for libel and invasion of privacy. They won, because they either had never become members, or had withdrawn their membership before discipline.

3. Representation

The philosophy of ACC states that only church members may hold positions of leadership and teaching at ACC. Other areas of work are available, but in those areas of ministry which are the most visible and representational roles, we must have people who have committed themselves to our goals, our philosophy of ministry, and our doctrine, and have placed themselves under accountability to the leadership.

Our church members are people who are ready to participate in the areas of decision making at ACC. They are people ready to represent and talk about where we are going as a church. Their commitment to our values helps build trust in the families which allow us to instruct their children in Christian education, to lead them in worship, and teach them from God's Word.

The commitment of church membership also serves as an indication that people are willing to use their talents and God given gifts to help the family of believers at ACC to grow into the strong, unified body that God has designed for us.

--Alderwood Community Church
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