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Biblical Purpose of Church Membership

Is church membership really necessary? Can't a Christian worship or have fellowship with a particular congregation while still remaining a "perpetual visitor"?



That is a good question. To answer this, we first need to understand what the true church is. The universal church or Body of Christ (Romans 12:5) is composed only and entirely of elect and true believers in Christ. Non-believers are not part of that Body although they may attend the Sunday service and we pray for their salvation. During the time of the early church, *'the Lord added to them daily such as should be saved'* (Acts 2:47). **This verse indicates that salvation is the pre-requisite for being 'added' to the local church. Reformed churches that require evidence of salvation (or baptism for some and the shorter catechism class to be attended) before the acceptance of membership which is the needful, responsible and proper thing to do.**



Mal 3:16 says: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often to one another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name'. Similarly, we infer such a list from Revelation 20:12 with its focus on the Lamb's book of life. So, if the Lord has a 'membership roll' in heaven for the elect, it is surely right for local churches to establish and maintain a list of its true members on earth, to the best of its ability.

Identification with Christ and His Covenant People Membership and accountability to a local church are also strongly implied in Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 5:12. The verse speaks of those 'without' and 'within' the church. All

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such language is meaningless without a clearly defined group and local community of members who are accountable to God within that community.

Why is Church Membership Important? It is firstly a way of publicly identifying yourself with a local group of Christians who worships and serves the Lord together. It is a statement that you are in agreement with their doctrines and practices and that you are a legitimate representative of it, accountable to God and to the church. **While we believe in the universal church, it is also important to belong to the visible church where you are** In the New Testament, there were churches in Corinth, Philippi, Galatia, Ephesus and so on. They were local churches with local membership comprising a local resident Pastor, Elders and Deacons to take care of the church members which is the biblical model.

Church membership determines in a rightful manner who is permitted to play a role/part in the life of the church ministry and be involved in her gospel work. Members have a vital part to play in a church's life, growth, direction and the mutual edification of the flock and even missions and outreaches. They have to profess in their membership initiation that they adhere to the biblical standards, the doctrinal stand and the constitution of that local church publicly.

Membership is, in effect, a way of saying, "I believe in God, and I am not ashamed to be a Christian; and, to demonstrate that, I identify with this particular church where Christ is the head."

So, it is natural and biblical to consider joining the church membership of a Bible-believing church after attending it for a suitable time and finding that you have been ministered by the preaching of the Word, the worship and fellowship.

To be a "perpetual visitor" to a church is like a man who courts or dates a girl in a non-committal relationship without ever wanting to marry her; and continuing this way through many years of serious relationship. That would be strange and irresponsible to say the least.

May the Lord guide each one of us to do what is right and to God's glory in this matter!

Jack Sin



Transfer of Church Membership

Testimony of Salvation from Paul Tan

Growing up in a traditional Buddhist family environment as a little boy, I often followed my grandmother to visit a temple in Geylang. She was a devout Buddhist. She practised the rituals regularly. It had an influence on me as a teenager. But it also led me to question what more is there besides doing things to please the gods. How had that helped her to be a better person?



Moving forward, it was in my NS days that I met Samuel, my platoon mate in our combat engineer course. This was a tough course requiring us to learn building bridges, laying minefields and blowing up buildings. Many training stores and equipment were heavy and numerous. While many of us would 'siam' and carried the lighter ones, not Samuel. He would carry the heavier stores (as we called them) and also helped others who were struggling in their tasks. Well, he sure got my respect for his conduct.

At the end of each training day, Samuel sat at his bed and read his Bible. Some of us passed remarks and made fun of him. He remained a cool dude and was not upset; always smiling and happy to share if we asked him what he was reading.

Months later, Samuel persuaded me to join his YF activities in Glad Tidings church. With time and his sharing of the gospel with me each time after the youth pastor's message, I began to understand slowly God's love for me as a sinner.

I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour soon after. Samuel has been a good testimony for God. For I thought if Samuel having repented of his sins and as a follower of Christ, has shown kindness and patience to others, I wanted to be part of that transformation. These are indeed the fruit of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Gal 5:22-23.

Though I attended church for many years, I felt more like a Sunday Christian. My faith had not deepened and my understanding of the Bible superficial. In fact, my attendance in church before Covid19 was quite irregular. Well, God works in mysterious ways. I met John Wong whom I came to know while studying in Japan. We came together to SHBPC in early July 2020 after the circuit breaker as I wanted to attend a church service in person. Over the 3 years of worship in SHBPC, I have a deeper understanding of the Word and developed a greater interest in studying the Bible. I enjoyed the hymns that are sung during the worship services too which was not in my previous church.

Though I faced many challenges in my Christian walk, I am thankful to God for His work in transforming me and my daily life to be more Christlike, that our hope and joy in Christ may draw our neighbours to hear and accept the Good News of the Gospel. Praise and Glory be to God.

Paul Tan



Almon John Alarcon Siason's Testimony

Psa 1: 1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

When I was 14 years old in March 1976, an American missionary Mrs Harriet Houston shared the gospel with me, and I acknowledged my sins before the Lord and received Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I was later baptized the same year at our local hometown church, the Bacolod Evangelical Church of Philippines. I come from a poor family - my father has a Baptist lineage, and it was after 27 years that my mother came to Christ from her Roman Catholic background. I had a mixed miserable life with lots of ups and downs through my journey from the very beginning. I earned my degree in our local catholic school, the Bachelor of Science in Architecture, through thick and thin and humble struggles.

In my adolescent years, I used to take the money from my mother's piggy bank. I was very good in cheating in my studies and making up stories with lies and more lies. Though I was hardworking, I enjoyed coveting things that were not mine. I was always active in our school and enjoyed up making stories which were not true. It was one day when I attended our local CYF that our Sunday school teacher, Mrs Harriet Houston shared with us the total forgiveness of sins through Christ and how to have a new life in Christ. Secretly, I was struck in my heart and that moment became the turning point in my life. Even though I am still not perfect, I am sure that Jesus Christ has forgiven my sins and will cleanse, protect and keep me safe in Him. I decided from that time that Christ is my Saviour, and no one can snatch me from the love of my Saviour.

I had to earn a living from a young age to help my very hardworking mother and so worked during the day and studied at night or vice versa as the schedule permitted. There were seven kids in my family - an eldest sister, the rest are boys, and I am the third from the eldest. My younger brother after me was a policeman who died of severe sickness. A younger brother was a civil engineer who became a Pastor in our local hometown in the remote area. I was an ambitious young professional who worked in foreign lands - Hong Kong, China, Indonesia and the Middle East. Both my parents are now in heaven, but I now have my parents-in-law to love and cherish.

I met my sweetheart in 2001 in our hometown during the prayer meeting in our local church., She is a daughter of a decent Christian family, whose father is a Pastor. We were married here in Singapore on 2 Dec 2017. Pastor Davy Sim solemnized our wedding with the help brethren from our previous church, Mount Calvary Baptist Church and Pastor John Khng and Pastor Sherwin Tebilin (Filipino Pastor).

I came to know the congregation of Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church through my brother in our Gideon ministry, John Wong in Dec last year. From then, I felt that God is calling me to join this church. I brought my wife Lily to worship here

with the SHBPC congregation. My wife and I have been blessed to learn God's Word more in depth through the sermons, Bible studies and catechism class. We have also found peace and love amongst the brethren. Coming to this church is not a coincidence but sovereignly planned by our Almighty God. We have decided to join SHBPC as a member to continue growing in the Lord and serve my God with the brethren here. I love to sing the hymns and my wife loves to play the piano, so whenever there is an opportunity, we will serve the Lord in music and other areas of ministry. My heart's desire is to seek and labour for the Lord at SHBPC, in the cleaning of the church premises and floral arrangements. I love the Sunday school catechism class after the morning service, the happy refreshment breaks, the joyful lunch fellowship and all the activities and fellowship with the brethren. I thank God for Pastor Jack Sin & Angie, Dn Yue Kay, Pr Mok and many other brethren who are very hardworking in tending to the flock which I now belong.

Let us continue to join our hearts in Christ and uphold one another in prayer in whatever circumstances God has placed us in. I will joyfully serve our Good Lord Jesus Christ here till He welcomes me into His glory. Amen.

Almon John Alarcon Siason

Testimony of Lily Joji Mislang Seguiro

I was born in a Baptist Family. My father is a Pastor and my mom is a teacher. I have one younger brother. Although we are a Christian family, we are not perfect. No family is perfect. It is God's grace that makes our family closer one to another. My mother, our Sunday school teacher when I was young, made a big impact on my spiritual life and also my younger brother.



My father shared the gospel with me, and I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour and Lord in 1996 during our youth church camp. After accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, It made me more closer to Him and grateful that the Lord has forgiven my sins as a sinner and will be always be with me.

I met my husband in the Bible study in Philippines and I am grateful that the Lord answered our prayers (yes, no, wait). I thank God that I have a good life - I have my church, friends, family and John. When I came to Singapore at the age of 24. Singapore became a spiritual training ground to me. The Lord moulded me to think less of myself and think more of the Lord. I witnessed God's guidance in my life.

My husband and I came to know SHPBC through Brother John Wong - praise the Lord for him. We decided to worship and serve the Lord in SHBPC. In these 6 months, I grew and understood the Bible more as the Word of God is expounded much clearer than in the previous churches I attended. The members are welcoming and warm towards us.

As I continue my spiritual journey, I am learning that it is better to trust in the Lord than in men. The Lord never fails His Children. Now, in my trials I learn to be still and come to the Lord in prayer. I claim God's promises and the comfort of God in the Bible.

My life verse is Prov 3:5-6. *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not in thine own understanding. In all that ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy path.”*

Lily Joji Mislang Seguiro

Session Interview of the
3 candidates for
Transfer of Membership
- Paul Tan,
- John & Lily
Almon.



Lunch Fellowship at Grantal Mall on Sun 16 Jul 2023.



Reaching out and getting to know a new visitor - Vivian Chan.

LORD'S DAY PROGRAMME FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023
DISCOVERING AND APPLYING THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES
- STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES OF 1, 2 AND 3 JOHN

JULY

- 2/7 MISSIONS SUNDAY:
Fellowship with God in the Light (1 John 1:1-10)
- 9/7* Christ, the Propitiation for Sinners (1 John 2:1-11)
- 16/7 Beware of a Secret Affair with the World (1 John 2:12-29)
- 23/7 Hope & the Purification of Life (1 John 3:1-10)
- 30/7 Loving God from the Heart (1 John 3:11-24)
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AUGUST

- 6/8 Warning to Falsehood & Deception (1 John 4:1-6)
- 13/8* The Supreme Love of God & Our Response (1 John 4:7-21)
- 20/8 The Victory of Faith over the World (1 John 5:1-9)
- 27/8 Knowing God & the Practice of Prayer (1 John 5:10-21)
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SEPTEMBER

- 3/9 Walking in Love & Truth (2 John 1-6)
- 10/9* The Doctrine of Christ & Biblical Separation (2 John 7-13)
- 17/9 A Case Study of 3 Characters (3 John 1-12)
- 24/9 GOSPEL SUNDAY:
In Search of Peace with God (Rom 5:1-8)
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Memory Verse

1 John 3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Lord's Day Sunday Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "**Hope and the Purification of Life (1 John 3:1-10)**", the new quarterly series on "**Discovering and Applying the Johannine Epistles – Studies in the Book of 1, 2 and 3 John**".
3. Pastor will preach next Sunday on "**Loving God from the Heart (1 John 3:11-24)**".
4. Sunday School classes will follow the after the worship service:
 - Westminster Confession of Faith – Pastor
 - Studies in 1 Chronicles – Dn Kwong Leen
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on Basic Theology, and the Parables of Jesus. Join us for a time of profitable learning. [Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode:625551]
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. [Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode:218178]
7. **Church Family Day** will be held on the morning of **National Day Wed Aug 9** at the Rifle Range Nature Park. Meet at **8.30am, Beauty World MRT Exit A**. Do register with Paul Tan (hp:9731-4733).
8. We need willing hands and hearts to assist in the weekly cleaning of the premises. Do let Dn Yue Kay if you are available to serve in this area.
9. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.
