



CHALMERS

CHURCH EDINBURGH

Partnering with Chalmers



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REACH - BUILD - TRAIN - SEND

Partnering with Chalmers

We are really pleased that you are interested in partnering with Chalmers Church. This booklet is designed to give you information on what the Bible says about why that is important and what that will look like in this particular local church. We would encourage you to read it through and then talk further with one of the elders. You can contact them by emailing the church administrator on fiona@chalmerschurch.org

What is the church?

The church is the body of all true believers in Jesus Christ across the world and throughout all of history. It is all the people who have been saved by Jesus' death on the cross, through faith in him alone. These Christians are united in him through the sign of baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6) and are brothers and sisters in God's family. The Lord Jesus is in charge of his worldwide church, he is the great Shepherd of his flock and he rules his church through his Word – the Bible. God's plan is that through the church he will accomplish his mission to win the nations and bring glory to himself (Ephesians 3:1-21).

What is the local church?

The word that is translated as 'church' in the New Testament, is the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means 'gathering'. The first church met in Jerusalem and in their gatherings there were regular things that they would do together. They would be taught God's Word, share in the Lord's Supper of bread and wine (as they remembered Jesus' death and what it meant), pray together, worship together, and look to meet each others' practical needs. We read about this in passages like Acts 2:42-47, where we hear that the people were *devoted* to these things.

As the church obeyed the mission of Jesus and went out across the world, it was no longer possible to gather as one big church under the Apostles' leadership. So, they began to establish local churches in each place that the gospel took hold. Each local church had their own designated leaders (called elders) and their own defined members that they were responsible for leading.

We see an example of this in 1 Peter 5:1-5, where Peter tells elders to be “*shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care ... eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*”. And in the same passage he tells the flock, the church members, “*to submit yourselves to your elders*”.

This shows that every Christian is expected to be a member of both the global church and a local church. In the local church, there is a special relationship between the leaders and members. The leaders are to shepherd and humbly serve, being a godly example, and the members are to humbly submit to their leadership and follow their example. Peter goes on to remind us of God’s promise that he “*shows favour to the humble*” (v5), and that this kind of humility and commitment is the kind of local church that glorifies God.

The church then, is not like a club we can opt in or out of as we choose, nor is it a service provider where we are the consumers hoping to have our needs met – as if we can just move on to another if we feel like it. No, the church is a beloved family, to which both leaders and members commit and submit their hearts and lives to each other for the long run. In this family relationship, we partner together in the cause of the gospel.

What does partnership with Chalmers Church look like?

Church membership is what we call this devoted relationship where we sacrificially give ourselves to each other in love. If you have faith in Jesus Christ as your saviour, are repentant of your sin and have been baptised, then we would like you to consider partnering with Chalmers by becoming a church member. (If you have not yet been baptised and would like to be, then please speak to one of the elders).

Membership is part of our formal structure as a church, and it requires that we believe the same things in the core of our faith. Later in this document you will see a statement on what we believe, and what our values are as a church. It’s important to make sure we are aligned on these matters.

But in addition, being a member means *actively partnering* with the rest of the church family. The following pages lay out 5 key areas of church life in which we will partner together as members.

5 ways to partner with Chalmers

— Joining

If we are to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to get to know one another. The Bible teaches that meeting together regularly is to be a priority, as Hebrews 10:24-25 says *“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.”*

We encourage people to commit to the following areas of church life on a regular basis:

1. **Sunday Services.** It's really important that we come together each week as one big church family, to hear God's Word taught and worship together. We know there are times when life gets busy, but we want to make Sunday services a priority.
2. **Small Groups.** They are excellent opportunities to study the Bible, to get to know other people, and they provide a great source of personal support. They are also really helpful as we spur one another on to tell others about Jesus. Especially in a church the size of Chalmers, we have found that small groups are vital for the encouragement we need as Christians.

— Praying

Praying together has always been an activity of the Lord's people. In Acts 12:12 we read that Peter *“went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.”* And Paul asks the church of Corinth to pray together in 2 Corinthians 1:11 *“You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.”*

We know that we are frail, weak, and sinful. Our best efforts for the gospel as a church will be fruitless unless we depend on the Lord in prayer. It's critical that we gather together to lift our prayers to him, so we ask our members to partner with us by praying at home, and by coming to the monthly prayer meeting if they are able.

Serving

Peter writes *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"* (1 Peter 4:10).

God has gifted each Christian, in order that they may serve the church. Serving is part of ordinary Christian discipleship, and we want to encourage you to use the gifts God has given you in order to serve him at Chalmers.

There are lots of ways to serve. Inevitably, there are some things which just 'need to be done', and it's great that so many just pitch in and help where there is a need. However, we would like to work with you so that you find the ministry which best suits your gifts, your experience and training, and your passions. We want people to own their ministries, to commit to them and be excited about them – even when it's hard work!

Caring

Life is often hard. Sin, sickness and suffering are ever present realities for all of us to one degree or another, and we need help. As an act of his grace, God has given us each other. As a church family, he calls us to *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* (Galatians 6:2)

We encourage members of Chalmers to partner together to watch out for one another, and offer compassionate, spiritual and practical help to those in need.

Giving

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9).

We believe that giving is a joyful response that flows from the heart of a person transformed by the grace of Jesus. As we understand what Christ has given to us, we respond by sacrificially giving to the work of the gospel so that others may discover his grace too, in Edinburgh, across Scotland, and throughout the world.

We ask our members to prayerfully consider what they should give, and, as Paul says, to *"give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

About Chalmers

Vision

First and foremost our concern is for God's glory. This is something we take seriously and are passionate about. To this end, there are four main objectives reflected through the life of the church:

- Reaching others with the life-changing, good news about Jesus Christ
- Building committed disciples of Jesus Christ
- Training gospel workers
- Sending out and supporting gospel partners

All of this is underpinned by our commitment to the Bible, the simple gospel and prayer. Our commitment to the ministry of the Word (through preaching, small groups and one-to-one discipleship) reflects our conviction that when God's Word is faithfully taught, we hear God's voice. The gospel is the heart and core of all God says in Scripture, and therefore the heart and core of our church life together. Prayer expresses our dependence on God.



— What do we believe? —

Chalmers holds the Bible to the supreme rule of faith and life. Chalmers is a church from a Scottish Presbyterian tradition, and in keeping with that tradition, holds the Westminster Confession as its statement of faith. This historic document is the statement of faith for many churches and groupings of churches around the world.

We ask everyone who becomes a member of Chalmers to assent to the following questions:

Depending on God's grace...

Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God and the supreme rule of faith and life?

Do you acknowledge, with a repentant heart, that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness?

Do you believe that Jesus died in your place taking the punishment from God that you deserved? And are you trusting for forgiveness solely in his death?

And therefore, do you believe that your salvation in Jesus is due entirely to God's grace and in no part to your merit or efforts?

Do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead and lives today?

Do you believe in spiritual resurrection at conversion and bodily resurrection in the future, where you will live and reign with Jesus in the New Creation?

Do you acknowledge Jesus, not only as your Saviour, but as Lord of your life?

Do you believe in the work and power of the Holy Spirit, enabling you to live a life in accordance with the Lordship of Christ and under the authority of the Word of God?

What the Bible says about partnership between elders and members

— The biblical commitments of a church elder —

Church elders share all the commitments of members, as they too are brothers in the family. However, there is added responsibility placed on their shoulders as they seek to shepherd the flock entrusted to them. Local church leadership is always plural in the Bible, which is why these are a plural 'we'. And in larger churches like ours, deacons are appointed to help the elders with increased ministry needs.

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| To Teach | We will teach God's Word regularly and faithfully, proclaiming the gospel and teaching how to obey it (Tit. 1:9, 2 Tim. 4:1-2). |
| To Pray | We will regularly devote time to praying for those in our church, both in prayer meetings, and in our own time (Acts 6:4). |
| To Lead | We will strive to direct the affairs of the church well, in order to fulfil the church's mission and vision (1 Tim. 5:17). We will seek to be a Christ-like example to follow, both in our family lives and in our community (1 Tim. 3:4-7, 1 Tim. 4:12). |
| To Care | We will make ourselves available and appoint others who can provide pastoral care for those in our church, speaking God's Word to them and meeting practical needs (1 Pet. 5:2, Acts 6:2-4, 1 Thess. 5:12). We will help the sick and the struggling, especially those who are unable to attend (1 Tim. 5:3, Jam. 5:14-16). |
| To Discipline | We will graciously discipline the rebellious sheep under our care, seeking their good by calling them to repent of sin and return to right living (Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 6:1). We will seek to win back sheep who have strayed from the flock (2 Tim. 2:24-26, Matt. 18:10-14). |
| To Train | We will equip church members for the work of ministry, so that the church is built up (Eph. 4:11-12). We will seek to train and send out workers, so that the gospel is carried to others (Acts 13:1-3). |

— The biblical commitments of a church member —

We recognise that there are some valid reasons that a member can't carry out some of these commitments as they would like – a stage of life such as becoming new parents, or as in older years. Likewise poor health, unemployment, or work away from home would make some of these difficult. In such cases, we want to assure you that we are grateful to you for doing what you can and that the elders' commitment to you remains.

- To Attend** I will prioritise weekly attendance at Sunday worship over other things, placing myself under biblical preaching and taking part in the Lord's Supper. I will seek other opportunities during the week to meet with my brothers and sisters (Heb. 10:25, 1 Cor. 11:33, Acts 2:46).
- To Pray** I will pray regularly for my leaders and my brothers and sisters (Heb. 13:18, Eph. 6:18).
- To Represent** I will strive to represent Christ well, living out God's Word in a lifestyle worthy of the Gospel and seeking to take opportunities to speak Jesus' words to others (Eph. 4:1, Phil. 1:27-30, Col. 4:5-6).
- To Love** I will encourage my brothers and sisters (1 Thess. 5:10-11). I will seek opportunities to show hospitality to them, to meet their needs and to care for them (Heb.13:1-2). I will gently challenge them when they fall into sin (Matt.18:15-17). I will bear with them and forgive them when they sin against me (Col. 3:13).
- To Give** I will sacrificially give of my money to support the work of ministry and will seek to help financially those in my church family who have need (1 Tim. 5:18, 2 Cor. 9:6-15).
- To Serve** I will use my gifts to serve whole-heartedly in the local church. I will do this without grumbling, in the strength God provides. (Gal. 5:13, 1 Pet. 4:10-11).
- To Submit** I will gladly submit myself to the church elders and I will seek out and heed their godly counsel (Heb. 13:17, 1 Pet. 5:5). When I fall into sin, I will submit to the gracious discipline of my brothers and sisters (Matt. 18:15-20).

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All Bible quotations are taken from the ESV translation

Chalmers Church Edinburgh is incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation; Scottish Charity Number SC044674.