

## **Why Should I Be a Member of a Local Church**

The popularity of the “local church” in America is declining. There are many reasons behind this fact. The first and foremost is simply the secularization of our society – a society which once held, en masse, to a solid Judeo-Christian worldview.

The Bible predicted this decline almost two thousand years ago – not directly for America but globally. Many reasons could be listed to answer the question of why numbers are diminishing from the global Church, and even more could be compiled to show why so many professing believers are leaving the local institution we call the church. However, our focus herein is not the secularization of society or the decline of professing believers in the world. Our focus is on the value of being a member of a local church family.

In the Church Age, God has chosen to do His work in and through the Church, and a great deal of Scripture is devoted to the leadership and management of the local church. Therefore, we see that God has ordained the local church and endorses the organized structure and methodologies employed by it.

For many, church-going is like going to a restaurant or club. It seems the consumer-driven mentality has taken hold in the “church.” Many church members have directly or indirectly been taught to “come in” for the “show” and “receive the meal.” This mindset seems to focus on entertainment and personality, i.e. music, events, and a sermon. There is little interaction between members, as well as, a lack of commitment to the church, its ministries and community. Sadly enough, a come and go attitude leaves the leadership team and often other committed members wondering who really belongs to the church and who is just visiting. This is not the New Testament model.

Secondly, in today’s “modern” church environment there is little or no real effort made to maintain healthy relationships with others in the local church. When someone doesn’t like someone or something, rather than communicating and working together for a solution, by means of asking for change, seeking reasons for methods and directives, calling for repentance, or offering forgiveness, he or she simply move on to another “church group” leaving the unresolved conflict behind. The result is that the greater Church and those individual believers suffer.

Our factions are not a good testimony, and unresolved conflicts are unbiblical. When there is an unresolved conflict, it is usually because either one or both parties are in error. Just as leaven spreads throughout a lump of dough, if we allow error to continue, it will spread throughout the Church. This should not be.

As a church, we are called by the Lord to gather together. We are instructed to pray together, share with one another, work together, and serve one another for the benefit of the body and community.

Because we believe the Gospel provides hope to a dying world, we commit ourselves to teach, preach, and serve others for the benefit of all. We are called to go, send, and support ministry with an allegiance that saints in the past were willing to die for. We are called to be a missionary force. However, for a great majority of today’s pastors the church has become more of a mission field than an organized family of ambassadors, equipped and ready to represent the Lord. Our “churching” has become self-focused rather than an equipping station for service and outreach. Furthermore, on average only about 20% percent of today’s “church members” financially support the church and only a few more serve in some capacity. This too is not the Biblical model.

The average church-goer shows up on Sunday morning just before the “service” like going to a movie. They sing a song or two (if they sing at all), sit down, are spoon fed a predigested sermon or sermonette, and afterward leave promptly - barring any inconvenience in the parking lot. Our desire is to see this change and work together – by the strength of the Lord – for the greater good. Distinguishing between those who are “in” as a church member and those just passing through will allow the pastoral leaders, elders, department heads, and staff to know whom they are serving and whom they are equipping for service to the King.

The value of the local institutional church is manifold. However, for the purposes of this positional paper we will list just a few reasons we believe there is value in being a member of Candlelight Christian Fellowship.

Our purpose in presenting this is to encourage you to become a committed, long-term member of Candlelight and enjoy the benefits of membership. Benefits form a broad base of value to each member from the most significant spiritual component to the natural and physical blessings of investing in the local church family.

Some benefits of a long-term commitment to the local church are as follows:

1. Solid Biblical teaching acquired verse by verse over a lengthy period of time.
2. A clearly understood Biblical worldview and doctrinal distinctive.
3. The development of deep enriching, and lasting relationships.
4. Trusted friends with whom you can be transparent, acquire Biblical and prayerful support and enjoy accountability.
5. Biblical pre-marriage, marriage, parental, crisis, grief, and financial counseling.
6. Help with and growth in interpersonal conflict management.
7. Consistency in personal family development as families and children grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.
8. A protected environment where the pastoral staff, elders, and deacons can genuinely invest themselves in your personal walk and growth in the Lord.
9. United effort and ongoing support for missions, missionaries, and community service.
10. A true sense of ownership in the development of the church family, its mission, and its properties.
11. Use of church properties for weddings, funerals, events, etc., and access to Skate Plaza (member card provided).
12. Financial support as described in the benevolence positional paper when needed during times of difficulty.

We trust you will consider membership at Candlelight and invest yourself in the lasting benefit of being a committed part of the Candlelight family.

Blessings upon you all,

Paul D. Van Noy, Pastor  
Candlelight Christian Fellowship