

Belonging

Anyone who is willing to openly confess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour can become a member of the Presbyterian Church. People are admitted to membership by the local council of elders, called the Session. Admission to membership follows a course of biblical instruction designed to help people understand the privileges and responsibilities of being Christian believers and active members of the Church. To become a member a person is invited to openly profess their faith by affirming the following vows:

- Do you confess your faith in God as your heavenly Father, in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit as your Sanctifier?
- Do you promise, in dependence on divine grace, to serve the Lord and walk in His ways all your days?
- Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share dutifully in the worship and service of the church, submitting yourselves to her authority and guidance, and to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you for the advancement of His Kingdom throughout the world?

The first vow is concerned with a living personal faith in God the Holy Trinity. Unless someone can unreservedly declare themselves a believing Christian in these terms, they cannot be a member of the church. The second vow deals with the personal life of a Christian believer. In other words, by God's grace we are to live for the Lord every day He gives us. The third vow deals with the Christian's loyalty to the Lord and His people within the context of the local church and world. Members freely commit themselves to coming to worship regularly, serving others in the multitude of tasks that are required for a church to grow in grace and maturity, submitting to the leadership of God's people and enriching congregational life through regular giving of time, talents and money.

Your local minister would be pleased to meet with you and discuss these matters with you in more detail. May God bless you as you prayerfully consider your commitment to Him and membership in His Church.

*The Presbyterian Church
is a
God-glorifying,
Christ-centred,
Spirit-filled
Fellowship of
Bible-believing
Christians,
where all who love
the Lord Jesus Christ
and all
who earnestly seek Him
are welcome.*

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Welcome
to the
Presbyterian
Church



*'By grace you have been saved,
through faith — and this is not from
yourselves, it is the gift of God —
not by works, so that no-one can
boast. For we are God's
workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus to do good works, which God
prepared in advance for us to do.'*

(Ephesians 2.8-10)

Beginnings

Christianity in its Presbyterian form came to Australia at the end of the 18th Century with the arrival of people from the various Presbyterian Churches of Great Britain. While these believers traced their spiritual roots to the Protestant Reformation led by John Calvin in Geneva and John Knox in Scotland, they claimed to be in spiritual continuity with God's people from biblical times.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia was formed by the union of the six colonial Presbyterian churches on 24 July 1901, shortly after Federation.

In 1977 the Presbyterian Church entered a new stage of its history, when around two thirds of its membership left to become part of the Uniting Church in Australia. Although much smaller in size since then, the Presbyterian Church has enjoyed a period of biblical reformation and church growth. The Presbyterian Church is found in all six states and has over 50,000 adults and children within its communion, more than 600 ministers, deaconesses and theological students, and 740 congregations. At the last Commonwealth census nearly 720,000 people described themselves as being 'Presbyterian'. Understood from this point of view the Presbyterian Church is Australia's fourth largest Christian denomination.

The Australian Presbyterian World Mission has grown rapidly in recent years and now has more than 170 cross-cultural missionaries. While thankful for its great heritage, the Presbyterian Church has become a distinctly Australian and multi-cultural church, having established Arabic, Chinese, Cook Island, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and Samoan congregations in recent years. Christian work is conducted among aboriginal people in New South Wales and Queensland, with the first aboriginal Presbyterian minister being ordained in 1997.

The Presbyterian Inland Mission continues the work of the Australian Inland Mission founded by John Flynn in 1912,

with patrol ministries in outback Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, and has plans for further expansion into other remote and isolated areas of Australia.

Fully staffed theological colleges operate in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. The Presbyterian Church publishes the high quality monthly magazine 'Australian Presbyterian'. A wide range of social service and educational works are conducted by the Presbyterian Church.

In all of this we are grateful for the grace, guidance and help of God, and we say 'to God alone be glory.'

Beliefs

Along with other true Christian churches, the Presbyterian Church believes that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. As a result of this commitment to the Bible, we uphold the historic Christian faith.

- We believe in one God in the Trinity of the three persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm the real historical events of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and future return. We look to Him for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
- We submit to the Scriptures as the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- We seek to live in obedience to the Great Commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself'; and we endeavour to fulfil the Great Commission: 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.'

The Presbyterian Church is a Reformed and Evangelical denomination whose understanding of Christianity is set out in the Westminster Confession of Faith. So we stress, as the Bible does, God's initiative in people becoming Christian

believers. This stance does not lead to a lessening of human responsibility before God nor does it take away from the importance of mission and evangelism, but rather establishes the conditions under which true human response to Christ can take place.

The Presbyterian Church does not claim to be the only true church. We see ourselves as forming one small part of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ and we seek to have fellowship wherever we can with fellow Christians who share with us a common loyalty to 'the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints' (Jude verse 3).

Services in our congregations are simple in form, spiritual in tone and scriptural in focus. The sermon, in which a chosen section of the Bible is explained and applied to life, is the climax of worship, for we believe that in it God speaks to us of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and through it draws us to saving faith in Him.

The Presbyterian Church is ruled, under God, by a series of councils of ministers and elders. The Session governs the local congregation. The ministers and elders of a number of local churches combine together to form a regional body called a Presbytery. Above Presbyteries is the state General Assembly. Every three years the Presbyteries and the six General Assemblies send a certain number of ministers and elders to meet as the General Assembly of Australia.

Elders are elected by the members of a congregation from among those who are biblically qualified (1 Timothy 2.12; 3.1-7). To complement the spiritual work of the elders, congregations elect deacons to exercise a ministry of mercy and practical care. Ministers (teaching elders) are called by the members of a local congregation to work in that particular place. Ministers differ from elders in the amount of training they have received, they normally work full-time in church activities, and they preside at the Lord's Supper and administer Baptism. The Minister's chief work is to teach and preach the Bible, so that the focus of all congregational activities is on the Lord Jesus Christ.