I am a Village Church member

We'd love to warmly welcome you into membership at Village Church. First though, you do need to understand what that actually means and the commitment you're making.

Official Membership

You can apply at www.vc.org.au/become-a-member. That sends a request to the Session (see below) who will choose whether to approve you as a member and let you know. That's all it takes!

What is the Session? Village Church is Presbyterian. That means our church is led by a group of elders, called the Session. Our elders are members of Village Church who have been nominated and elected by the other members to be elders. The Session is led by our Senior Minister Sam McGeown. New members are approved by the Session.

Official membership gives you particular rights in the church. For instance, at our congregational meetings which decide things like appointing new elders, appointing new staff, approving the yearly budget etc., only official members can vote on those things. Unofficial members – i.e. regulars who have not become official members – can always attend congregational meetings to hear what's happening, but cannot vote themselves.

Although membership functions mainly at the level of the local congregation, it's important to know that by becoming a member you officially place yourself under the larger governance structure of the Presbyterian Church of Australia:

→ General Assembly of Australia
→ Presbyterian Church of Queensland State Assembly
→ Brisbane Presbytery
→ Village Church Session
Village Church members

The Brisbane Presbytery consists of all the ordained ministers from each Presbyterian church in north Brisbane, like our Sam, plus a balancing number of elders, meeting one night every two months to decide higher level issues like city-wide gospel strategy. The State Assembly is the same except for all Presbyterian churches in Queensland, meeting for one week each year. The GAA consists of a small selection from each State Assembly (PCQ, PCNSW etc.), meeting one week every three years, and is the final authority on doctrine and discipline.

You read about Presbyterianism here: logos.com/grow/what-is-presbyterianism.
You can see the denomination's official rules – pcq.org.au/pcq-code.php – and official doctrine – presbyterian.org.au/images/downloads/wcf/WCF-AustVersion-2019.pdf.
Yet to be an official member, you don't have to agree with or even know about these. You just need to be a baptised Christian. However, you should understand that all ministers and elders have sworn to uphold these rules and doctrine, so even if you personally disagree with some parts, you'll need to accept the church being led in accord with them.

Now, more important than these technicalities is the spiritual dimension of membership…

Spiritual Commitment

In the rest of society, you might become a member of something - a library, a footy club, whatever - to get something out of it. But Paul depicts the church as a unified body, and each member is a different part of the body (1 Corinthians 12). So the body doesn't exist to serve the individual members. Each member exists to play its part in the body. For you at Village Church, that'll mean making your own unique contribution to our four focus areas.

1. Community

In Jesus, God is putting back together all the relationships which sin tore apart (Ephesians 1-3), and we enjoy the fruit of that in a loving church community united around Jesus (Ephesians 4:1-3). So, in becoming a Village Church member, you commit to meet with the church community each and every Sunday that you possibly can, and meet with a midweek Community Group whenever you possibly can, because we can't love each other as a community if we "neglect to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing" (Hebrews 10:25). You commit to relate to other Villagers "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3), even with those Villagers you find most difficult to get along with. Rather than looking to the community for what you can get out of it, you commit to loving others with a Christ-like love which "does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). None of us will do this perfectly. But Village Church members commit to have this loving community as our constant goal.

2. Transformation

As a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been saved from your sin and have acknowledged Jesus as the Lord of your life. God's plan for our lives is that eventually each of us will "be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:29). This transformation only happens when every part of the body - each church member - actively contributes to it:

> *Speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.* Ephesians 4:15-16

So, in becoming a Village Church member, you commit to becoming more and more like Jesus yourself, and actively helping others to do so too. This means listening to and applying the Bible teaching from our paid pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). But their job is not to do all the ministry themselves, it's "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son" (Ephesians 4:12-13). That is, their job is to equip <u>you</u> to build up others in their knowledge of Jesus. That means things like talking to others about the Sunday sermon, contributing at Community Group, maybe reading through the Bible with someone, and participating at Village Academy when you're ready for that. You never have to make the most advanced contribution, just the one you can make. Your transformation depends on

us, and ours depends on you.

3. Outreach

This community and transformation isn't just for us. Jesus commanded his disciples: "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). That's why Village Church has a vision to share God's love 'from the ends of our toes to the ends of the earth'. So, in becoming a Village Church member, you commit to playing your part in that outreach. We all have different gifts. So your part might be talking about Jesus with people who don't yet know him. Or it might be volunteering with Village Mosaix, serving food to the needy, showing some of the love of Jesus, creating a context for others to explain the love of Jesus. It might be bringing people to church where others will speak of Jesus. Or it might be giving a friendly welcome to new people who've come to hear about Jesus. Or one day, you might even become one of our Gospel Partners overseas. Whatever the specific contribution to outreach you can make - and that may change as you become more and more like Jesus over time - as a Village Church member you commit to doing that.

4. Build

Every Village Church member should want to see our community, transformation and outreach not only happen but be built up more. Maybe you have gifts in administration that could help us organise things behind the scenes as things get bigger and more complex. Staff, events, equipment and community assistance all cost money, so Village Church members commit to give "as much as they are able" (2 Corinthians 8:3), "as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given" (2 Corinthians 9:5), because "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). But the main way we can all help to build these areas of the church is by praying. A loving community does not happen except by God's power (see Ephesians 1:15-16; Colossians 1:3-4). Transformation in Jesus does not happen except by God's power (see Ephesians 3:14-20; Philippians 1:9-11). People are not reached with the good news about Jesus except by God's power (see Colossians 4:2-3;
1 Timothy 2:1-4). So, in becoming a Village Church member, you commit to praying, that our community will be more and more united in love, that you and other Villagers would grow more and more like Jesus, and that together we would reach more and more people with the good news about Jesus, including through our Gospel Partners. You commit to pray for these things, both on your own and with others, in our Sunday services, Community Groups and Prayer Meetings. We need God's power, so we ask for it.

Our prayer for you is that, in becoming a member of Village Church, you will experience firsthand what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

We hope that everyone who attends Village Church can part of our Christian family like this – in loving relationships, serving, growing, reaching out to others – whether you become an official member or not. But a difference with becoming an official member is that you explicitly *pledge* your commitment to being part of the church in this way…

Membership Pledge

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, with God's help, I will do my best to be an active part of the Village Church community. I commit to being regular at our Sunday gatherings and at a Community Group during the week, as much as possible. I will do my best to relate to other Villagers with humility, gentleness, patience and love and will seek to be a source of unity in the church. I will not be a source of gossip or dissension. I will aim to make church not about my preferences and desires but about loving others with a Christ-like love.

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, with God's help, I commit myself, alongside my brothers and sisters in Christ, to be transformed increasingly into the image of Christ. I will also make it my goal to see others around me transformed. I will be open to be equipped for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ until we all grow up into Christ.

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, with God's help, I will seek to use my time, gifts, experience and personality to share the good news of Jesus from the end of my toes to the ends of the earth. I commit to playing whatever part I can in the outreach of Village Church.

As a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, with God's help, I want to see our community, transformation and outreach not only happen but be built up more and more. Therefore, I will seek to willingly give, as much as I am able, to the ministry of this church. I will pray regularly for the staff, leaders, gospel partners, members and needs of our church.

I am a Village Church member. I realise this membership is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the body of Christ. And now, in Christ, I will seek to play whatever part I can in our church.

Sign _____

Witness _____

Membership Questions

(to be used when welcoming people into membership *publicly*, for instance a 16 year old who was baptised younger, now wanting to publicly confess their commitment to Christ)

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

Response: Yes, I do.

With God's help, will you seek to be an active member of Village Church, to meet regularly with your brothers and sisters in Christ and committed to sow unity and not discord?

Response: Yes: I will

Relying on the Holy Spirit, will you commit yourself to build up Christ's church, becoming more and more like Jesus yourself, and actively helping others to do so too.

Response: I will.

Drawing on Christ's love for the lost, do you promise, in Christ's strength, to confess Christ before others, to serve him in your daily work, and to play what part you can in the outreach of this church?

Response: Yes, I do.

Resting in the goodness of your heavenly Father, will you seek to be diligent in prayer, generous in giving your time and money, learning to live by the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?

Response: I will.

Question for church members

VILLAGE CHURCH: Do you today commit to continue to pray for, encourage, challenge and support [NAME] in their walk with Christ?

Response: We do.

On the basis of your public confession of faith and commitment made this day before your brothers and sisters in Christ, we welcome you as a member of Village Church.