

MDBA Membership Categories and Minimum Donation

Churches that are a part of the Middle District shall be in one of the following categories:

1. Active Church

An active church or mission church is one that cooperates through participation in various meetings and ministries; has all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities as stated in the Middle District bylaws, and financially supports the work of the Association at a minimum of \$500.00 per year.

2. Provisional Church (four types)

A. Provisional - Financial Hardship

A Provisional-Financial Hardship church is one that has been fully active and contributing to the Association's ministry but due to financial hardships has not contributed the minimum annual amount of \$500 for one calendar year. After receiving a written petition from the church expressing an explanation and a desire to maintain its active status, and upon a majority vote of the Leadership Committee, the church shall be informed in writing that its status as a Provisional Church has been granted. A Provisional Church shall have all rights and privileges of an active church and shall have voting privileges and maintain its number of messengers. This status may be maintained for a period of thirty-six months, dating from the most recent contribution to Middle District. A church may apply for a one-time extension of its Provisional status.

B. Provisional - Watch-Care

(Parts of the following are taken from the approved policy statement: "How to Join Middle District")
A Provisional Watch-Care church is one that has applied for membership in Middle District and meets any one of the following criteria:

- Not been a member of another formal group of Southern Baptist churches in the last 5 years.
- Has an active participant base of less than 24 adults.
- Considers itself a missional community / house church / or another new expression of church.

(Note MDBA's basic definition of a church. This working definition can help distinguish it from an on-going Bible study or small group)

Watch-care churches are strongly encouraged to attend Middle District activities, participate in mission projects and trainings, serve as members on MDBA teams, send two voting messengers to the business meetings, and contribute the annual minimum amount of \$500. Such churches will remain in watchcare for a period of 12 - 18 months before applying for membership. (See policy "How to Join Middle District.")

C. Provisional - Missions and New Church-Starts

A Provisional Mission Church is a new church that has been started by an active Middle District church. A Provisional New Church-Start is a new church that has been started by the Middle District Association.

During its first two years, a new mission or church start will have automatic membership in Middle District and is exempt from any giving requirements. After two years, the new mission or church-start will have expectations of an Active Church.

Missions and New Church-Starts churches shall have the rights and privileges of all churches including of having its members elected to committees and teams; contribute the minimum amount of \$500 annually; and sending a minimum of two voting messengers to Middle District business sessions. (see Bylaw Article 1.02)

Middle District's working definition of a church: (from the approved policy: "How to Join Middle District)

A church is a self-identified, fully autonomous, permanent gathering of Jesus-followers that:

1. Regularly meets in covenant relationship and whose life together is patterned after Acts 2:42-47.
2. Gathers to fulfill Jesus' mission personally and corporately through intentional, on-going, biblical patterns of worship, discipleship, mission and ministry. (In so doing, baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed.)

D. Provisional - Partnership Church

A Partnership Church is one that does not desire to seek Watch-Care status but desires to actively participate in the life and ministry of Middle District by cooperating for the purposes of missions, evangelism, leadership development, church planting and discipleship. These churches shall annually contribute a minimum of \$500; are eligible for Middle District's services, trainings and resources; and may send one voting messenger to MDBA business sessions. A Partnership Church may apply to become an Active Church after 12-18 months active participation.

3. Inactive Church

An inactive church is one that was previously an active Middle District Church but has not contributed financially for twenty-four months and has not requested and / or been granted a Provisional Church status. The Association will not seat messengers from inactive churches at business meetings. Before a church receives the inactive status, the Executive Director and a member of the Leadership Committee and / or Moderator shall have direct and personal communications with the church leadership or pastor to determine the church's desire to continue non-participation in the life and ministry of Middle District.

After three years in the status as an inactive church, the Leadership Committee, by a majority vote, may inform the church that it is no longer a member of Middle District.

June 23, 2015

Membership and Watch-care Process*

Membership Categories

1. Active
2. Provisional
3. Inactive

For details about the above categories, please contact our Executive Director so he can give a full explanation for your church to determine the best fit.

Membership Process

1. Write a letter. A church desiring membership in Middle District Baptist Association shall submit a request for membership by writing a letter to the Executive Director indicating the congregation's desire to participate in the fellowship and mission of Middle District churches.
2. Submit the documents which guide the congregation's life together:
 - A. Constitution, Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, Statement of Covenant Principles, or other governing documents
 - B. The church's statement of faith (doctrinal statement)

Review of these documents is to determine if the applying church evidences a shared understanding of the Biblical fundamentals of church life, belief, and ministry and which are reflected in the historic Baptist Statements of Faith referenced in the MDBA bylaws.
3. Receive a visit. The Executive Director and at least one member of the Leadership Committee shall attend a worship service prior to the church leaders' interview with the Leadership Committee.
4. Interview of pastor and two church leaders with the MDBA Leadership Committee to determine the church's commitment to Middle District Association's mission, activities, and budget.
5. Vote of acceptance by MDBA Leadership Committee.
6. Presentation of church to messengers at a MDBA business meeting to confirm the vote of the Leadership Committee.

"Watch-care" Process: a twelve - eighteen month provisional membership status for churches

One year of watch-care is required for a church that meets any one of the following criteria:

- Has not been a member of another formal group of Southern Baptist churches in the last 5 years
- Has an active participant base of less than 24 adults
- Considers itself a missional community / house church / organic church or other new expression of the church.

(Note below MDBA's basic definition of a church. This working definition can help distinguish it from an on-going Bible study or small group)

Process for becoming a Watch-care church

- Write a letter to Middle District's Executive Director indicating the people's expressed desire to seek membership in Middle

District and stated its compatibility with MDBA's doctrinal statements and mission as noted in the MDBA bylaws.

- Attend an interview of the Leadership Committee to receive their vote as a "Watch-care" church.
- Participate. Watch-care churches are strongly encouraged to attend all MDBA activities, participate in mission projects and trainings, serve as members on MDBA teams, and attend the business meetings as non-voting guests.

Watch-care Process continued

- Submit documents at the end of the twelve months, dating from their acceptance as a watch-care church by the Leadership Committee. After the watch-care year is complete, the process to become a fully participating church will continue with the church submitting the documents named above in #2, A and B.
- Interview two. This interview will be held only after the submission of the church documents. The church will be evaluated as to its cooperatives relationships and its participation in MDBA activities, mission, and budget.
- Vote of full acceptance by the Leadership Committee followed by presentation of the church to messengers at a MDBA business meeting to confirm the vote of the Leadership Committee.

Timetable: the applying church may complete this process on a timeline that best fits its schedule. Normally the process of membership will be completed in 12 – 18 months. A minimum of twelve months is required.

"Church" a basic, working definition:

A church is a self-identified, fully autonomous, permanent gathering of Jesus-followers who:

1. Regularly meet in covenant relationship and whose life together is patterned after Acts 2:42-47.
2. Gather to fulfill Jesus' mission personally and corporately through intentional, on-going, biblical patterns of worship, discipleship, mission and ministry. (In so doing, baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed.)

*The membership process is meant to provide encouragement and guidelines for applying churches and may be amended by the Leadership Committee that is tasked by the bylaws with the responsibility of dealing with and voting on churches that wish to become members of Middle District.