



new member **CLASS**

TOOLKIT

**OZARK HILLS
CONSULTING LLC**

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healthy churches*

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An estimated 75-85% of churches have plateaued or are in decline. Even churches that see new people come in often lose them through the proverbial backdoor. An effective NEW MEMBER CLASS that introduces people to the church and connects them to a small group can help turn this around. This toolkit is designed to assist you in developing a class to retain and involve more people in your church.



An effective class will provide new and potential members with **INFORMATION, EXPECTATIONS, and CONNECTION.**



DECIDING YOUR CLASS FORMAT

An essential aspect of a new member class is deciding how you will present the material. Class format will depend on how much information you want to share. Perhaps you want to cover the material in a 4-to-6-week small group. Maybe you want to do a 2-hour or 3-hour session with lunch after Sunday morning worship.

In deciding the amount of information to share, you must consider two extremes: If your class is too short, you may not be able to effectively communicate everything you need. A one-time hour-long class likely won't cut it. However, if your class is too long, you might see people drop out. A 12-week class or a one-time five-hour class might scare people away.

Remember: You want to engage people and encourage them to stick around. So ask yourself the following questions:

- 1. How long should this class be?**
- 2. Will it work best as a standalone event, a temporary group during small-group time, or something else?**
- 3. Who will lead the class?**
- 4. What other important details impact the class format?**

INFORMATION

What is the most crucial information new or potential members need to know?

This question will help determine the content of your class. You'll want to share some about the history and doctrine of the church, though an exhaustive history and extensive doctrinal teaching will likely go far beyond the scope of the class.

You'll want to provide details about the church's purpose, ministry, and leadership. You will want to discuss what it means to be a member and how to be further involved in the church. I recommend that *Information* be 25-50% of your content.

Use the space below to brainstorm some big categories of information your new member class should include.

EXPECTATIONS

What does your church expect from its members?

Most organizations expect something from their members. A church should be no different. Jesus expects us to love God, love others, and make disciples. How does your church communicate this to new and potential members?

In *High Expectation Churches*, Thom Rainer explains how churches that expect are also churches that retain. People want to belong to something, and expectations provide meaning to membership.

Perhaps your church expects its members to attend regularly, be involved in a small group, give generously, and serve others. Communicate that as part of your new member class. Let people know what your church is about and how they should be involved. I recommend that *Expectations* be 50-75% of your content.

In the space below list four or five important expectations your church should have for its members.

CONNECTION

What is the next step to involve a new member in the life of the church?

Consider these two questions for connecting people to your church: 1) How does a person join as a member? 2) What is the first thing a new member should do after joining?

If they aren't already involved, this is an excellent opportunity to connect a person to a small group (Sunday School, life group, or whatever you call this ministry). Group participation is vital. Members who actively attend a group are far more likely to stick with the church, give to the church, and serve in the church. Maybe a new member is already in a group. How might you connect them to a ministry to serve others? You don't want a new member to get lost as a face in the crowd.

In the space below, write the process for how a person joins a church and a connection point or two to help a new member deepen their involvement.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

What is your class about?

The previous pages have given you space to brainstorm vital aspects of your new member class. Now it's time to look back over what you've written, pray for wisdom, and form a basic outline for the class.

After you create your outline, it will be time to put meat to the bones and fully develop your class. This is also the time to decide what you want to give those taking the class. For example, you may want to provide handouts that cover your church's doctrinal statement and constitution and bylaws. You may also decide to give out a book or other resource on church membership.

Use the space below to jot your outline, which will help you fully develop your class, and list a few resources you want to provide.

TIME TO GET STARTED

I'm glad you've taken the time to work through this toolkit. I pray it gives you the foundation for a new member class to help those joining your church stick around, be involved, and spiritually thrive. Now that you have your outline, it is time to get started by filling in the details and launching your class.

If you would like to speak to a certified church consultant about further developing your class for your unique context, please get in touch with us through:

ozarkhills.org

For additional resources please visit:

disciplepathway.com

