

An Invitation to Membership



Second Presbyterian Church

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THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

Becoming an active member of a church is a step which publicly identifies a person with a particular congregation within the larger Church of Jesus Christ. It is a public witness that worship, fellowship, and service are important aspects of the Christian life, and that these obligations are fulfilled best through affiliation with a particular congregation.

Active member of Second Presbyterian Church are entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church. This includes the right to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to present children for baptism, to take part in meetings of the congregation, including voting, and to hold office.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), of which we are a part, governs itself much like the civil government of the United States. Part of the church's constitution is called the *Book of Order*. This document defines a faithful member as one who accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church. Such involvement includes



- proclaiming the good news,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church,
- praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church,
- supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.

These responsibilities are fulfilled individually and together with other members. Not every member is called to fulfill all of these, such as “participating in the governing responsibilities of the church,” but many are related to aspects of everyday life.

The members of Second Presbyterian Church, Staunton, invite you to consider becoming an active member of our congregation. We feel we have not only much to offer people who become a part of us, but we also stand to gain from the presence of new members, and the gifts, ideas, and energy they have to share!

BECOMING AN ACTIVE MEMBER

The basic requirements for membership in Second Church is faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life. This commitment is to be expressed through Baptism and a public profession of faith in Jesus as Lord, whether these occur through the ministry of Second Church or previously within some other Christian gathering.

Second Church receives members in one of three different ways:

1. Profession of Faith
2. Transfer from another Christian congregation
3. Reaffirmation of Faith

These steps are described below.

Becoming an active member takes two steps. The first involves meeting with the Session, usually on a Sunday morning prior to the worship service. At this meeting, the Session has the opportunity to “examine” prospective new members, which means they may ask you about your church background and what has led you to become a member of our church. The second step is a public welcome during the worship service.

Profession of Faith

Persons who have never been an active member of any Christian church will need to be received by profession of faith. These steps will need to occur:

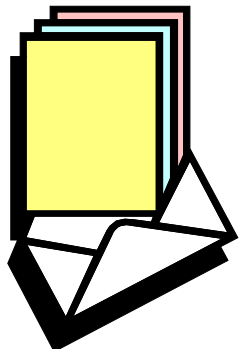
1. Receive instruction in preparation for membership either by attending a Confirmation/Commissioning Class (young people) or by meeting with the pastor (adults).
2. Appear before the Session to be examined and received as a member.
3. Make a public profession of faith during a worship service (includes baptism, when necessary).

The service of welcoming new members includes your response to the following questions, which are the public profession of faith:

1. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world? *I do.*
2. Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? *I do.*
3. Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word, and showing his love? *I will.*
4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? *I will.*

Transfer of Membership

Second Church can receive persons who are members in good standing of another Christian church as active members. As a congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are only permitted to receive members from other Protestant churches that are “in correspondence” with our General Assembly, the highest governing body of the denomination. Other churches are in correspondence with us if the denomination to which they belong participates in mission efforts with the PC(USA).



If you desire to be received by letter of transfer, these steps need to occur:

1. Ask the pastor to write to your previous church to request that they issue a letter of transfer. (You may do this yourself if you like, but it often is quicker if Second Church makes this request.)
2. Meet with the pastor to receive information about Second Church in preparation for membership.
3. Appear before the Session to be examined and received as a member.
4. Be welcomed as an active member during a Sunday worship service.

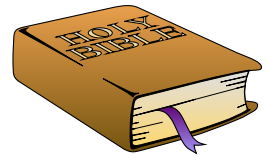
During the time of welcome in the worship service, the following question will be asked:

1. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? *I will.*

Reaffirmation of faith

A third way of becoming a member is by reaffirmation of faith. This way becomes necessary when:

1. A person is a member of a church from which transfers by letter are not possible.
2. A person has not been active in the life of a church for a period of time which would make reception by reaffirmation of faith more appropriate.



To be received by reaffirmation of faith, the following steps need to occur:

1. Meet with the pastor to receive information about Second Church in preparation for membership.
2. Appear before the Session to be examined and received as a member.
3. Be welcomed as an active member during a Sunday worship service.

During the time of welcome in the worship service, the following questions will be asked:

1. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world? *I do.*
2. Do you turn to Jesus Christ and reaffirm him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? *I do.*
3. Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word, and showing his love? *I will.*
4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? *I will.*