

Membership

A name on a list, or something more?

“BYLAWS BITS”— FEBRUARY 2015

What should it mean to be a member of First Church of Christ in Wethersfield?

According to our current bylaws, membership requires baptism, confession of faith, and public assent to our covenant. Is true membership something more?

We understand that there is a difference between a casual attender and someone integrated into our church community, so what are some characteristics of a member who is truly and fully integrated into the Body?

REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages believers to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another” (ESV). This passage suggests that regular attendance should be motivated by our concern for others and a desire for fellowship.

Why should members worship with the church? The church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15, NIV)—a place where truth is disseminated as the Word of God is proclaimed, a refuge where we may unburden our soul. Every able-bodied believer should remember that church membership involves a commitment to faithful attendance.

PERSONAL INTERACTION

Ephesians 4:11-16 focuses on the importance of every member ministering in the Body of Christ. Participating in a small group, for instance, provides an opportunity to “speak the truth in love” (verse 15).

As church members fulfill their respective roles, the members individually—and the church as a whole—grow to maturity in Christ.



GENEROSITY

True members give their time, talent and resources to support the church and take the Gospel to the community and to the ends of the earth. Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Paul said, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). We, who have freely received God’s gifts of grace, should freely give such grace to others, in confidence that God will sufficiently supply our personal needs. Giving

is an act of trust and worship, and is our responsibility.

CHURCH UNITY

Ephesians 4:2-3 urges each believer to strive “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (KJV) by maintaining an attitude of “lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Church unity is essential. Every member should take personal responsibility for helping to preserve harmony.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Membership involves a personal commitment to pursue a daily walk with Jesus Christ. Only when one stays connected to the Lord, abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines—such as reading the Bible, prayer, and meditation—can one bear fruit.

1 Peter 2:9 indicates that God calls people from darkness into His marvelous Light and separates them to Himself as His special people to proclaim His praise. Telling others what great things the Lord has done for us is a privilege. Members should be ready to give an answer to those who inquire about their faith.

In summary, membership involves relevance: covenanting with and joining with other believers in sharing your time, talent, resources, and prayers to support God’s Kingdom and to fulfill our mission of being a community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples.

The Committee—**Tina Balmer, Amber Bird, John Davis, Anton Hertle** and **Steve Soderberg**—encourages any First Church member to share his or her views regarding updating the bylaws. This can be done by mail, email, or notes to the Committee delivered to any Committee member, the Board chairperson, the chairperson of the Research and Long-Range Planning Committee (R&LRP), or the senior minister. Notes to the Committee may also be dropped off with the church receptionist, for the R&LRP mailbox. For your convenience, the current First Church Bylaws are posted on the Church website and are also available in the Church Library.

www.firstchurch.org/BylawsCommittee