

# Becoming a Member of Robertson-Wesley

## An Invitation

Everyone who chooses to live as a Christian and to practice their faith with Robertson-Wesley United Church is invited to consider becoming a church member. This page is intended to explain what membership means and how it works. To request membership, or for more information, please contact the church office or talk to one of the ministers.

## The Meaning of Church Membership

The Apostle Paul calls the Church the Body of Christ. By this image, he emphasizes the importance of each one of us as a part of the whole. It is a sense of belonging in which each one has something to receive and something to contribute, and together we become something greater than the sum of the parts.

We also understand the Church as a Covenant Community. Covenant is a Biblical way of describing a relationship in which there is a mutual bond and commitment to one another and to God, while true Community is a commitment to one another's well-being.

Church membership is simply a public declaration of our sense of belonging to this Covenant Community, the Body of Christ.

## Universal Membership

There are two aspects of church membership: universal and local. Universal membership means belonging to the whole body of Christians throughout the world (and throughout history). This "universal church" is a spiritual idea, of course, not a real organization.

We become a member of the universal church by our Baptism and Confirmation. We might be Baptized as an infant or child, then Confirmed as a youth or adult; or we might be Baptized and Confirmed at the same time as a youth or adult. Either way, Confirmation is the time when we publicly declare our intention to live in Christ and to practice our faith within the life and fellowship of the Church. A Membership Class is offered (usually once a year) as an opportunity for people to prepare for Confirmation.

This Universal Membership is permanent and life-long. Many Christian denominations recognize each other's Baptisms and Confirmations and in the United Church we never baptize or confirm a person a second time.

## Local Membership

The second aspect of church membership is local membership (technically referred to in the United Church as full membership). This is an indication of the particular congregation in which we are currently practicing our faith. When we are Confirmed we automatically become a full member of the local congregation in which we are confirmed.

When we move, this local membership may be transferred from one congregation to another. If we become inactive for a long period of time (usually 3 years or more), our local membership may expire but may be renewed at any time.

### **Privileges of Local (Full) Membership**

At least one parent must be a full member (or intending to become a full member) when a child is baptized.

At Congregational meetings, one must be a full member in order to vote on matters relating to the Ministry (e.g., calling a new minister).

A person who is interested in Ministry must be a full member for a specified period of time before they can apply to enter the Discernment Process, which is the first step in the preparation for Ordained or Diaconal ministry.

### **The Membership Class**

Since the decision to become a church member should be an informed decision, we provide Membership Classes. They are led by the ministers and offer an opportunity to discuss the basics of Christian faith and church life.

The purpose of the class is to help people locate themselves on their spiritual journeys, to answer questions about Christianity and the United Church, to survey the basics of faith with attention to current developments, and to build fellowship with others at a similar place on the journey.

Two Membership Classes are usually offered each year, one for youth (age 14 and up) and one for adults. For information about dates and times, please contact the church office (or check the Program Guide for the current year or the website).

### **Youth Membership Class**

Preparation sessions are held during Lent and Easter. Youth confirmation will take place in the regular Sunday morning worship service sometime in the Easter season.

### **Transfer or Renewal:**

To have your membership transferred to R-W or renewed, please contact the church office or speak to one of the ministers at any time.