



Information on Church Membership

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Who are you?

Who are you? In some ways, the answer to this question is straightforward. You can frame your identity in terms of your name, home, job, age, activities in your day. But you are also a child of God! That is your true identity. Everything else about you may change — but this one thing will never change. At the very core of your being, you are created in the image of God. It is a skin that we cannot shed no matter how hard we might try.

Knowing that, then what? Individually and communally — it takes time to know the answer to that. First Pres welcomes you to come here and wrestle with that very question, “what now?” For engaging that is at the heart of a life of faith. Here you step forward in your own faith and say to God, “Here I am, and I am open to whatever you might do next.”

On the subject of faith, Presbyterian author Frederick Beuchner said, “Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession. It is on-again-off-again rather than once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure where you’re going, but going anyway. A journey without maps.”

Share with us your “faith journey” when the moment permits. Your faith journey is less about what state you lived in or what church you attended there and more about what God was doing in your life during that time. Your faith journey may be filled with landmarks and road-side attractions, or wide open spaces. Your faith journey may feel full speed ahead, or paused a rest stop, or even broken down on the side of the road. It’s all part of the process. And we get through it together, by the grace of God. Wherever you are on this journey, you are welcome to travel with us.

Companions on a faith journey are essential. Life is hard. We are made to do this together. We can’t do it alone. Together, we are infinitely more than the sum total of our individual parts. Together, we can hold each other up when one of us falters, drawing on the strength we find from one another. Each of us has strengths, skills, and gifts that are uniquely our own and that contribute to our life together. Plus, Jesus did say, “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name” Jesus said, “I am there among them.”

Here, we want you to find your particular gifts and use them. Some of these gifts are in the forefront of our life together: preaching and teaching, for example, or leading groups of people. Some gifts are quieter in nature, such as listening and prayer. Some have gifts of hospitality and nurture — baking cookies for Sunday morning or preparing meals for members struggling with illness. Some are encouragers who provide a supportive word where it is needed most; some are helpers who travel to other countries to provide aid; some are singers who lead the community in song; some are laughers who help us find joy. Others organize, study, create, envision, or heal. All are equally important, God-given abilities. All are needed, here and in the world around us. And all are welcome here.

Who are we?

First Presbyterian Church is not (just) a building.

First Presbyterian Church is a community of people.

1450 members - all ages, families couples, and singles

8 pastors, plus program staff, administrative staff

24 Elders, 55 Deacons, 25 Stephen Ministers, 8 Session Committees

We have a rich history - we signed our charter 195 years ago on August 21.

The groundbreaking for our current sanctuary was June 8, 1936. (Still needs work!)

Worship at 8 and 9:30 each Sunday; Taize service once a month.

Our 9:30 service is live-streamed on Youtube and Facebook. Go to our page to see past services and some memorial services, too.

Our annual budget is approximately \$2 million. (Over \$200,000 to mission)

First Presbyterian Church is not made up of perfect people.

First Pres is made up of people committed to growing as disciples of Jesus.

We worship, pray, study the bible, do acts of service, and nurture and care for all.

First Presbyterian Church does not expect everyone to think or believe the same things.

First Presbyterian Church values and appreciates people who are at different places in their faith journey. We are diverse!

Some are very sure, some are not so sure.

Some are seekers, some are confident believers, some are bible scholars, some are new explorers of God's Word.

All have a voice. All can come to the Table.

First Presbyterian Church does not have complicated membership requirements.

We ask all who are joining to first attend these classes.

Baptism is required to join. If you've been baptized and are a member of another church, our church office will ask for your letter to be transferred. If you have not joined another church or it been a very long time, you simply profess your faith by asking simple questions as a part of the new member liturgy.

Those presenting a child for baptism are asked to attend baptism training with a pastor. We offer education for people of all ages about our theology and our practice of faith.

First Presbyterian Church is not an exclusive club.

First Presbyterian Church welcomes all who wish to worship the Triune God.

There are no dress requirements! No tests to pass! All backgrounds and races are welcome. Some give a great deal in time and talent and treasure, some give just what they can. Some have lives that revolve around church, others find their heart centered in Sunday worship. Different seasons bring different levels of participation in the vital congregational life we share - but all are welcome! We want you to be long.

First Presbyterian Church is not a civic organization with a Board of Directors.

First Presbyterian Church has Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church, and we are a family seeking to follow the one Lord faithfully.

Why join a church?

(from the Book of Order, G-1-304)

Belonging? Commitment? Modeling? Duty? Obligation? Tradition? Openness? Calling?

In Jesus Christ, God calls people to faith and to membership in the Church, the body of Christ. Baptism is the visible sign of that call and claim on a human life and of entrance into the membership of the church. The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God's love claims people before they are able to respond in faith. The baptism of those who enter the covenant of membership upon their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls forth a response of faithfulness. Thus, God gives to the Church not only its mission but also its understanding of membership. (from the Book of Order, G-1-304)

Expectations of Membership

(from the Book of Order, G-1.0304)

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church.

Such involvement includes:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- 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,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

-- How can you be engaged in these?

Questions of membership:

Who is your Lord and Savior? Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. Do you trust him?
Do you intend to be his disciple, to obey his Word, and to show his love?
Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, giving of yourself in every way, and will you seek the fellowship of the church wherever you may be?

What we promise

The congregation will support you. People will be assigned to you at the beginning who will engage with you and encourage you for the first year. Your deacon will follow up on pastoral care needs and invitations to fellowship.

How are we governed

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is governed by a constitution. It has two parts.

- The Book of Confessions - This book includes statements from different times and contexts that express what the church believes. New statements of our faith can be added to the Book of Confessions over time. Some well-known confessions and creeds found there include - The Apostle's Creed, the Westminster Catechism, and the Barmen Declaration.
- The Book of Order - This book includes the rules which we use to order our life together. These rules can be amended every two years, but requires a majority of the church to agree. The Book of Order describes how Presbyterians relate to each other and make decisions.

Presbyterians are essentially representative, trusting in elected groups of ministers and elders to make decisions for the full body. A helpful analogy can be the structures of the US government. A local church is governed by its session. The session is a group of elders elected by the congregation to oversee the church. The session is responsible for most of the decisions made in a local congregation.

All of the churches in a geographical region gather together in a presbytery. The presbytery meets regularly, often monthly, and has responsibility for overseeing property, ordaining and overseeing ministers, and assisting congregations in their ministry.

Several presbyteries in a state or region make up a synod. Synods may meet a few times in a year. Presbyteries send representatives to General Assembly. General Assembly meets every two years and is the church's highest governing body.

Church	USA
Session	City
Presbytery	County
Synod	State
General Assembly	National