

The Joining Process at Jefferson Unitarian Church

Once a prospective member has attended the Path to Membership Class and received a copy of our New Member Packet, they are ready to engage in the joining process. We have set aside third Sundays as Joining Sundays, but this is primarily intended to keep the opportunity to become a member visible to our newcomers. A person can become a member any Sunday or at the conclusion of the Path Class or simply by dropping by the church office. Filling out and turning in the required paperwork and signing the membership book must be accomplished before a person is considered a member. The process continues when a new member photo is taken and they are presented to the congregation in a welcoming ceremony. In addition, they are invited to new member potlucks to help them make connections with other new members.

The New Member Packet contains:

- all paperwork needed for membership
- church mission statement and bylaws
- principles and purposes card
- brochures on adult and children's programs
- map of church facilities
- organization and leadership information
- endowment or stewardship philosophy
- brief history of UUism with bibliography
- any UUA pamphlet deemed appropriate

The required paper work includes:

- New Member Profile. *See IV.b. New Member Profile*
- Foundations of Fellowship form. *See IV.c. & V.b. Foundations of Fellowship I & II*
- New Member Pledge form. *See IV.d. N.M. Financial Commitment Form.*
- Youth R.E. registration form. *See Youth R.E. Enrollment Form.*

The signing of the membership book is a formality, but it is an important record of all who have ever been members, and is required before new member paper work will be processed by the church office. Once this happens, a checklist of all the actions that the office takes to include them in the membership is attached to the papers. *See IV.f. New Member Checklist.* This ensures that none of these steps is omitted by mistake. A short biography of the new member appears in the newsletter published just after they join. A letter from the minister is mailed to new members during the week after they join. *See IV.g. Letter to New Members.*

A photograph of a new member with their family is taken as soon after joining as can be arranged. The photos are attractively displayed on a bulletin board. They are left up for several weeks to a few months, depending on the rate at which new photographs must be displayed. Photos are put alphabetically in a three ring binder photo album after being taken down so that this record of new members may be used by ministers and others.

We present our new members to the congregation during a ceremony in the Sunday service about three times per year. *See IV.h. N.M. Welcoming Ceremony.* This ceremony includes questions asked of the new members and the congregation about our willingness to walk together, a welcoming statement to the children of new members, a charge to new members, and a candle lighting ceremony. A gift, such as a flower, the UU handbook, or a chalice pin, is presented to the new member. A short biography of each new member may be printed in the order of service, and a cake reception in their honor is held during coffee hour.

We help our new members feel welcome and find new friends by inviting them to four new member potlucks during their first year of membership. *See IV.i. New Member Potlucks.* Making several connections with new friends during the first few months of membership is the most important factor in preventing the revolving door syndrome. Often it is easier for a newcomer to make friends with another new member, and potlucks play an important role in this process.