

New Member Welcome Ceremony

At JUC, we usually hold 2 or 3 ceremonies to welcome our new members per year, depending on the number of new members. You need enough new members at any ceremony to make them feel part of a group; too few and they feel self-conscious. A handful or more new members also makes the ceremony seem more significant to everyone involved, congregation included.

Invitations to the ceremony are sent to all new members who haven't yet been recognized and a personal call is made to confirm the intention to attend.

We give each new member a flower and a UU Pocket Guide as their gifts. The candle lighting during the ceremony seems to pull it all together, along with hugs or handshakes from those officiating. The cake reception following is also important.

Below is the script which we follow for this ceremony

New Member Welcome Ceremony Script

- New Member Coordinator or Membership Chair

Now is the time during the service that we honor our newest members and their decision to join our church family. Would all new members please join (chair of your Membership Committee, (minister), and me here at the front of the sanctuary? As you approach, please step to the podium and introduce yourselves and your children.

[Minister to light chalice as people gather up front unless it has already been lit.]

- Question to new members (Minister)

It is a joy to welcome each of you into our community of memory and hope. Will you walk together with us, sharing the joys and the responsibilities of membership? (If you will, say "yes.")

- New Members: Yes

- Question to the Congregation (Membership Chair) [Congregation's words in order of service]

Members of (your church), will you welcome these people into our congregation? Will you reach out to them in friendship, including them in our activities and fellowship? Will you be open to their unique gifts and perspectives? Will you extend a warm welcome to each of them, remembering that each of us was once a new member?

- Congregation: Yes. We join our strengths, talents, and commitment with yours. You are a part of us and we are a part of you.

- Welcome to Children (Minister or RE Minister if available)

We extend a special welcome to the children of our new members. We celebrate your presence among us. We commit ourselves to helping you grow and learn and to making you an integral part of our community. May your energy and enthusiasm be a source of joy and new life for us all.

- Charge to New Members (Minister)

Becoming a member of this church is an important step, but it is only a first step. I charge you new members to grow in your faith. More importantly, I charge you to find and share your special gifts with us. Ours is a shared ministry. Each of us has a crucial role to play. We need you. We need your energy; we need your ideas. Give generously of yourselves and your rewards will be great.

- Lighting of candles (New Member Coordinator or Membership Chair)

As we conclude, we invite each of you to take a candle from the basket, light it from the flame of our chalice, and place your candle in the bowl. Then, please accept the congregation's gifts and our warm welcome. Each of you brings light, vitality, and renewal to our community. Each of our lights has a common source. Together, we form a beacon of hope to each other and our wounded world. May your light shine brightly among us for many years. Welcome to (your church).

(Applause)

- Closing Remarks (Membership Coordinator or Chair)

I'd like to remind everyone that the names of all our new members who have joined since October are in today's order of service. We are truly enriched by their presence! Be sure to greet them after the service at the cake reception in their honor in the (your location).

Those of you visiting us today are invited to join (name ministers) at 12:15 here in the sanctuary for a brief discussion of our church and our faith. This session is listed in your order of service as "Getting to Know UU."

And for those of you who are considering membership, we warmly encourage you. The next Path to Membership class is (date). We invite anyone interested to sign up on the bulletin board (name location). It is a joyous adventure to be part of this vibrant, caring community!

[Minister to extinguish chalice if you have not yet had your official chalice lighting.]