

# Westminster Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA

## Preparation for Church Membership

We are delighted that you would like to become a part of Westminster Presbyterian Church! We pray that God will use this church to encourage you as you grow in maturity in Christ even as you bless Westminster by bringing your gifts to this church.

We take membership in the visible church seriously here at Westminster. It is not a casual transaction because we hope it signifies a deliberate commitment to Christ and his body on earth, by all parties. For this reason, we ask anyone interested in membership to follow this same process, regardless of their previous church membership. Some people ask, ***“Why do I need to go to a 10-week class? I’ve been a church member elsewhere!”*** But we find that this class enables you to get to know us as a church, it builds relationships with others in the class, and it enables us to get to know you and help you become part of our church fellowship. We trust this process will be a blessing as it enables you to become part of our church family.

The requirements for membership include:

1. Attend the **10-week New Members Class**, normally offered September to November and again March to May. Because we feel these classes are quite important, we ask that you not miss more than three weeks unless arranged ahead of time. However, if you have Sunday work conflicts, are a college student, or have an extended illness, we will work with you. All classes are available on our church App.
2. When necessarily hindered from attending a class, please go to the App, under ‘Look & Listen’, and ‘Sunday School Archives’. New Members class is at the top left.
3. Have your **picture taken** for our bulletin. This happens in the first couple of weeks. It is a good way for others to get to know you. Pictures are published at the end of the classes in our church bulletin.
4. Meet with a pastor for a **personal interview** during the 10-week period. You will receive an email with a sign-up genius link to schedule your interview time. Ordinarily, two other Session members will be present. The primary aim is for you to express in your own words to our elders your testimony of how you came to trust in Christ as Savior. These Session members recommend you for membership.
5. If coming from another church membership, we can request a letter of **transfer**, if they issue these. If there is any personal difficulty or unfinished business you have with leadership at a former church, we urge you to meet with them and bring closure to that relationship. Whenever possible, we will notify a previous church listed on your application form that you are joining with us.
6. On the assigned Sunday for receiving new members, come forward with other new members to publicly affirm the membership vows and be welcomed. **We see this act as your public profession of faith or your re-affirmation of faith.**

## Membership Defined

**I. Communicant members** are those who have been baptized (\*see note below) in obedience to Christ's command and who have made a credible profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A credible profession is one that articulates the essence of the gospel and is not contradicted by unrepentant sin or false doctrine. Communicant members are willing to submit themselves to the government of the church and are received by the Session as communicant members upon hearing their profession of faith and their membership vows.

The prospective member must **reply affirmatively to the following questions** from our Book of Church Order, before the gathered congregation:

- (1) **Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?**
- (2) **Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?**
- (3) **Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?**
- (4) **Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**
- (5) **Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?**

\*Note on baptism: We recognize all previous Trinitarian baptism – that is, if performed “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” – regardless of the denomination administering it. We do not recognize baptism by cults which deny the Trinity. If you have never been baptized before, you will have to be baptized on the day you affirm your membership vows.

**II. Non-communicant members** are all the baptized **children** of communicant members who have not yet reached the age of publicly professing their own faith.

Opportunity for instruction and profession of their faith is offered to them early in their teenage years.

Non-communicant members are not entitled to vote in congregational meetings, nor partake of communion, nor to hold office in the church as elder, deacon or deaconess. They are, however, fully entitled to the spiritual care and prayerful nurture of the church.