*Potential words on “becoming a parish member” for a website, or new members manual…*

# Parish Membership

## A Continuity with the Early Church

The Biblical image of the perfect Christian community is one where the sharing of the Gospel and the teaching of the Apostles takes place.  In this sharing, the community realizes its life in God through Jesus Christ. For two thousand years, communities of believers have dedicated themselves to living in an awareness of fellowship and belonging -- strengthened by ‘remaining faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the community, to the breaking of bread and to prayer' [Acts 2:24].

The Tradition of the Church teaches that our Christian identity is established by being a member of a community that worships together, celebrates the sacraments and remains faithful to this biblical image.

## Considering Parish Membership

Members are those Orthodox Christians who understand what it means to build up the body of Christ. They do this by making a true commitment to our parish.

Membership creates stability in the parish just as marriage creates stability in society. Membership also creates strength in our parish because it is a commitment to participate in the ministries of the Church, to fulfill the spiritual strivings of an Orthodox Christian, and to financially support the parish by proportional giving/pledging.

Membership makes a person’s baptismal vows specific to the parish, its work and its people. Baptism could be considered the *theory* and membership in the parish the *practice ground*. Just as the monk has his cell and monastery, a pastor his flock, so a Christian needs his pasturage, his *field of practice*. Our life together is the *field* of working out our salvation in Christ.

## Next Step

*Those seeking membership should contact the Pastor. We ask that you complete new member form (link) to indicate your intentions in writing. New members are blessed in to the parish by the Pastor periodically throughout the year after Sunday Divine Liturgy.*

Those Orthodox Christians interested in pursuing membership should approach or email me for further information.

I pray that you will be with us for many years and that in your time here you will be drawn closer to our loving, merciful and forgiving Father, His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and the All-holy, good and life-giving Spirit.

Sincerely,

Father xxxx

More>>>>

## Before Becoming a Member

Before you decide to become a member get to know our parish, as well as other Orthodox parishes in greater *xxx* area, and let us get to know you. We are a friendly parish so it shouldn’t be hard.  If you have questions ask any one for help. Attend our worship services. Survey our parish calendar (link) and explore fellowship, ministry, and outreach opportunities so you can experience the full life of our parish.  There is much going on, so you will decide where your personal gifts and talents can fit best.  This involvement enables you to know the parish better and for us to come to know you.

Once we have gotten to know one another –then *commit.* Indicate your interest in becoming a part of our Orthodox Christian community through the new member form ( Link )and a discussion with Fr XXX.

 If you are transferring from another Orthodox parish we ask for a transfer letter from that parish.

## Living an Orthodox Life as a Parish Member

Members of xxx Church are those Orthodox believers who participate in the shared learning, worship and faith of the parish (Acts 2:42-47).  The criteria for membership in the parish is fundamentally determined by the individuals' willingness to accept, profess and practice the Orthodox Faith.

Members of the parish worship actively and regularly, including vespers and feast days, and receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion.   Members make a personal contribution to the life of the community by active involvement in one or more parish ministries that fit their gifts and interests. They participate in parish programs, service projects and fellowship events.  Members take seriously the need to grow in their understanding of the Orthodox faith by participating in study groups, workshops and retreats. They participate in parish meetings and in the decisions facing the parish and its future.

## Monetary Support – Our Duty of Care

The Church teaches us to be generous toward our parish and toward others as part of the discipline of learning to turn our hearts toward God – and not our self.

As parish members we have a personal “duty of care” toward our parish. That duty includes contributing to the financial stability and work of the parish by making an annual pledge of monetary support. In order to achieve a sound and solvent financial picture with a balanced budget, it is essential that each adult parishioner make a generous, meaningful pledge of financial support to the parish. This pledge is part of the requirement for membership in the parish.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Our financial support of xxx parish is not an obligation or an option, it is our responsibility.  Our parish has been entrusted to us—not to keep—but to care for, to minister from, to strengthen, and to preserve for future generations. We are responsible. We need to work to keep our parish in better condition than we received it.

We are each asked to prayerfully consider the amount we intend to pledge in thanksgiving for the many blessings that we enjoy from God.  The mission of the Church and the success of xxx parish are impossible without our loving and generous support.

## Visitors & Friends

Not everyone is ready or able to become a member, and we understand this. But we sincerely appreciate your visit to our Church and we welcome you to pray with us as often as possible. Many persons who do not become formal members of the parish are considered “Friends.” These people regularly join our community and are considered an important part. Please consider becoming a ‘Friend of xxxx church’ and, if you are able, please help in supporting the work of the parish in whatever way you can.

## New Member Form

 Link to your form

An alternative detailed list of membership expectations

* **Sacraments --** Participate in the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession
* **Come to church**. Worship regularly –*more than on Sunday only.*
* **Financial Stewardship** - Offer your pledge for our ministry together. Members of the parish make a consistent, generous, proportional, meaningful financial contribution supporting the work of the parish, the Diocese and the Orthodox Church in America. *They indicate their intentions through a pledge card.*
* **Ministry** - Review our set of ministry opportunities (here), identify a ministry area that fits your personal gifts and interests and in which you can make a contribution. Answer the question, “What is God calling you to do here?” Then get started. *Members make a personal commitment to the life of the parish.*
* **Fellowship** - Participate in the life of the parish. Social events, study groups and service projects. *Members participate in a rotating list for hosting fellowship during Sunday social hour.*
* **Spiritual Growth** – Work to continuously grow in your knowledge and understanding of the Orthodox faith.
* **Participate** in parish governance meetings, workshops, retreats and other scheduled discussions pertaining to the life and future of the parish. Over time we hope that you come to understand and identify with our parish goals as understood in the context of our parish heritage inheritance and mission.
* **Connect** with the life of the other Orthodox parishes in the xxx (city or town) area. Support their events and efforts. This becomes part of your commitment to the witness of the local Church.
1. Obviously this wording is specific to a particular parish from which the words were “lifted”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)