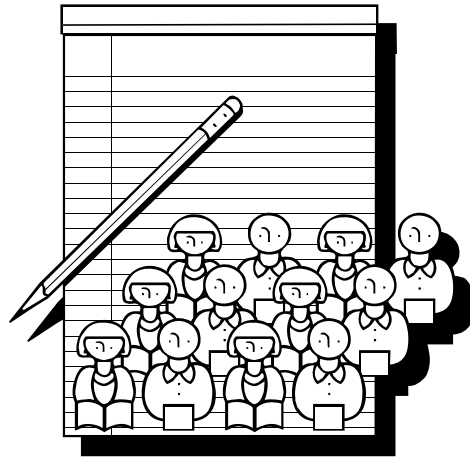


# Membership Classes

Fall 2011



## **M**embership Class

### Why Membership?

We have many people who worship with us for years before they decide to “join” the church. These people work and serve faithfully in responsible positions on the same basis as members except that they cannot hold an ordained office (such as elders or deacons) or vote in congregational meetings. Membership is not required to be an integral part of our church family.

### So, what does it mean to be a member?

Church membership is, in a sense, like the difference between being married and living together. People can live together for many years. But marriage says, “I am committed to being here. When something happens that I don’t like, I’m not going to just leave. I’m going to stay here and work it through.” This kind of commitment is what God looks for from us in our relationships - for it is the commitment He has demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

The other important part of membership is that it is a public statement before the world of our faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “The person who confesses Me before the world, I will confess before my Father in Heaven but the one who denies Me before the world, I will deny before my Father in Heaven.”(Matthew 10:32) A good question to ask ourselves in this regard is: “If being a Christian were against the law, would there be enough evidence to convict me?” Church membership is a great way to make a public proclamation of our personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

### What does it take to be a Member?

The only requirement for membership in a Presbyterian Church is the profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. However, we offer required membership classes normally three times a year for adults (9<sup>th</sup> grade and up) and once every other year for 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders to prepare people for membership.

## **What is the Purpose of the Class?**

The membership classes have three purposes.

- The first is to explore the meaning of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Since membership is on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, this is primary.
- The second is to help people get to know about the life and ministry of Moorpark Presbyterian Church. In each of the classes we have different leaders in the church come in and talk about what is going on in different ministries.
- The third purpose is to help people build special relationships with others in our church family. The relationships formed during New Member classes are often strong enough that several of our member groups have voluntarily continued to meet as small bible study groups after the formal classes were done. This third reason is so important that we require everyone -- even people who have taught membership classes at other Presbyterian Churches to take part.

## **How Will I Know If I “Pass”?**

A Presbyterian Church is characterized by the fact that it is governed by men and women chosen by the congregation as elders. In fact, *presby* is the Greek word for old. In our church, elder tends to be more of a title than a description. These elders are responsible for receiving people as members of the church. After class is done, those who would like to become members are invited to meet with a few of these elders to share their faith in Jesus and share why they want to become members. This is not an interrogation. It is a very special sharing time for which you will be well prepared. We have people who start the class who decide, on their own, not to become members. But we have never had anyone meet with the elders who has not “passed.”

## **I’m Not Sure I’m Ready to be a Member. Can I still come to the Classes?**

The classes are for exploration. You aren’t committing yourself to anything by coming. Most people who come to the classes end up becoming members of the church, but some decide to wait on membership while they continue to worship and serve with us. Over the years, a few have attended the classes and then decided to find another church home more in keeping with their own beliefs and life priorities. The classes are for personal exploration, growth and clarification.

## **When are the Classes?**

- Adults: We will begin a series of classes for adults (9th grade and up) on Sunday, Oct 2nd. Childcare is provided. We have found that this time of day best meets the needs of families with younger children. Talk to Pastor Dave Wilkinson for more information.
- Youth: The Youth New Member class for students in the 5th-8th grades (and for 9th graders who would prefer to come to this class) is held every other year. Sign up with Youth Minister Em Blattner or Associate Pastor Janet Loughry on Sunday morning.

## **What if I Have to Miss a Session?**

We try to be flexible in adjusting to people's schedules. Make up sessions will be arranged as the calendar allows. However, the purpose of this class is not only to impart information. It is also to build community and help you get to know others in the life of the church. It is essential that people be able to attend the first two classes with the whole group since the information given out is foundational for the remaining classes.