

# Becoming a Member of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek

## What Membership Means and How to Become a Member

Before joining our membership, it is a good idea to come to services throughout a month or longer so that you can experience both Minister and Lay led services. At Mill Creek, we are proud of our collaborative approach to Sunday Services. We are a Family-Oriented, Welcoming Congregation and we want all visitors to feel comfortable here.

When you would like to learn more about membership or if you have decided and want to become a member, the process is straightforward and unpretentious:

You meet with the Minister and Membership Chairperson to go over any questions you might have. There is a meeting every month that is dedicated to new member information, which is held immediately after the Sunday service.

You then can sign the Membership Book.

The following information covers the spiritual aspects, the official elements, and the practical side of membership. Each in its own right has an intrinsic value that creates the whole picture of membership.

We all look forward to seeing you.



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The following information is a brief description about what membership means at UUSMC:

There are three basic issues related to what it means to be a member: the spiritual, the official, and the practical. They are defined as follows:

## The Spiritual

Membership in a faith community is mostly about our need to belong, to grow, and to give spiritually. Some people remain non-member Friends of the congregation for a long time, but this ultimately keeps the person on the fringes of the community. When you sign the book, you are saying that you want this to be your faith community, your church, and it is. This UU Society of Mill Creek belongs literally to the members. Becoming a member then changes one's relationship with the congregation in a significant and deeply religious way, so that we come together in our joint acceptance of the role as congregational owners, leaders, and promoters. It is a commitment of faith and hope. It can grow to a desire to advance our larger Unitarian Universalist faith. At a minimum, we hope it encourages you to set an example of religious living and leadership for our own membership and the wider community.

## The Official

In our UU congregations, we are governed by the Congregational Polity system, which means every congregation is independent and self-governing. We use the democratic process to make our own by-laws, vote for a Board of Trustees and President of that board, and vote on all important decisions at the annual meeting (ours is usually the third Sunday in May). The Minister does not govern the congregation. Only members in good standing may vote. Our by-laws (available on our website) state that to be a member in good-standing, a person must have signed the Membership Book at least thirty-five days prior to the Annual Meeting, and has given a contribution of record (meaning the bookkeeper could identify the giver and record the contribution). UUSMC does not have an minimum contribution amount required to vote. All important decisions must come before the Board which then recommends those which will be presented to the Annual Meeting. So Membership means taking care of the business of the congregation, and **each member has a role** in what each congregation ultimately looks like and what it does which reflects on all members.



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## The Practical

In this and most congregations, there are few paid staff (at UUSMC only the Minister is full-time, the Director of Religious Education (DRE), Music Director, and Office Administrator are part-time); everything else is done by volunteers. This is really the magic of all religious groups, that so many people give of themselves to have a faith home. Members who get the most out of their religious experience of church/congregation are those who take part in the Sunday services by attending often, who get involved with some of the committees, and help plan and participate in the social activities. This is how members make friends and find meaningful involvement with the congregation.

An important part of the practical matters of a healthy congregation is the financial. Our financial records are transparent, and any member may look at the operations budget which shows where all the funds go.

We encourage members to pledge during our annual pledge canvass, usually held in March/April. At the most basic level, our congregation pays about \$100 per member in dues to our larger Joseph Priestley District and Unitarian Universalist Association, for all the services of curricula, Ministerial settlement, and all the many publications and services that we need. That does not cover any other costs related to staffing, the building, maintenance, etc. The UUA Guidelines suggest that members, if possible, give between 2-5% of gross income. Our UUSMC median for giving is roughly \$1500 per year per family. (The financial giving list is managed with a high degree of confidentiality.) Of course, people have different financial circumstances, and ultimately should give accordingly. For everyone, the giving of money is supplying an important tool for the work of the congregation, but there are many ways to give to UUSMC, and if you have more time and less money, then your time is equally valuable.

Above all, no one is treated differently because of their ability to give financially. So, give what you think is right for you and your circumstances.

At UUSMC everyone is welcomed and valued.

