

Church Membership			
Source: Staff	Authority: Session	Original Approval Date: 2003 Last Review Date: 2013	Next Review Date: 2016
<p>Purpose of Policy:</p> <p>To define church membership as it is understood by the congregation of Eastminster United Church and to provide guidelines for the management of the church’s membership rolls.</p>			
<p>Theological Rationale:</p> <p>We believe that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord necessarily connects us with other believers in Christian community as members of the Holy Catholic Church. That membership is expressed and experienced in the context of denominational tradition and local congregation.</p> <p>While anyone may, by his/her own choice, associate with the congregation as an adherent, and so be welcomed as a member of the ‘church family’, opportunity is given for those who share the essential faith of Eastminster Church and are willing to support its mission to be received as full members of the congregation.</p>			

Definition

According to Article XV of The Basis of Union (1925) of The United Church of Canada:

*“We acknowledge one holy Catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head are one body in Him and have communion with their Lord and one another. Further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a sacred and visible brotherhood **consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus and obedience to Him**, together with their children and other baptized children ... and we acknowledge as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which professes faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him ad divine Lord and Saviour.”*

Therefore, the members of Eastminster United Church are those who, having made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, have declared their intention to practise Christian discipleship in association with, and participation in, the life of Eastminster Church.

Categories

As a reflection of the changing circumstances of individuals, there are three categories of membership in Eastminster Church:

Resident:

A resident member is one who lives in the community served by the church and is reasonably active as a supporter of and participant in the worship and mission of the congregation.

Supplementary:

When a resident member ceases to be active, his/her name may be moved to the supplementary list. Although still included in the membership roll, supplementary members are removed from elder lists and are not included in counts of active members. If they choose to become active again, supplementary members may be returned to the list of resident members at any time.

Non-resident:

Both resident and supplementary members who move away from the community are designated as non-resident members. They are encouraged to choose a new church home and to request the transfer of their membership.

Changes

Changes in the status of members are monitored by church staff in consultation with the elders. Movements from one category of membership to another are made by staff to reflect those changes. Individuals may be moved to the supplementary list on the recommendation of one of the ministers or the designated elder. Individuals are moved to the non-resident list as soon as the change of address takes effect. Young people who move away to attend college or university are normally retained on the resident list until they leave school. At that time, their status is reviewed according to the three categories of membership.

Adherents

The master list of active church households also include adherents who are not members of Eastminster Church but who are supporting and/or participating in the life of the congregation. With the following exceptions, no distinctions are made between members and adherents: adherents do not automatically have the right to vote at congregational meetings and, if they become members of Session, they have all privileges and responsibilities of elders except the right to vote.

Reception

New members are received in one of three ways:

Confirmation:

Members may be received by a first-time public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. If he/she was not previously baptized, the baptism is incorporated into the service of confirmation. Instruction in the faith is provided for all who seek confirmation. The minimum age is Grade Eight (or equivalent).

Transfer:

Those who have been baptized and confirmed and are already members of other churches may be received by transfer of membership from any congregation of The United Church of Canada or any other Christian denomination. Instruction in the faith, including an introduction to the tradition and polity of the United Church, is provided.

Re-affirmation of faith:

When an individual has been a church member but has been absent from active participation, he/she may be given an opportunity to re-state the vows of confirmation.

Removal

Individuals are removed from the historic roll of the congregation by **death**, by requesting **transfer** to another church, at his/her **own request** or by **act of Session**. Removal by act of Session may follow a disciplinary procedure or simply reflect a disassociation which has already occurred.

Authority

All changes to the historic roll of the congregation require the authorization of the Session. On behalf of church staff, the minister-in-charge submits proposed receptions and removals to regular meetings of Session and advises whether the church's policies have been applied.