

*We  
I nvite  
Y ou*



Uniting  
with a  
Congregation  
of the  
Orthodox  
Presbyterian  
Church

**O**ne of the greatest privileges you have as a Christian is membership in the church. It's an honor to be part of the community of faith—both locally and worldwide—and to enjoy the blessings of life, worship, instruction, and service with God's people.

We invite you to think about this privilege and then to join with us in this portion of Christ's kingdom.

## What Is the Church?

The Bible says that the church is a gathering of people who belong to God because they believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, as their Savior and Lord. The Bible places great emphasis on the importance of the church. It is called the people of God, the Body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is also called the Bride of Christ and God's flock.

So the church is a wonderful thing! Every Christian should desire to be openly associated—and officially united—with the church. To demonstrate what we mean, we invite you to look at some basic questions about church membership.

## What Is Church Membership?

When you unite in an official way with a particular congregation of believers, you become a member of that church. Our church is connected with other Bible-believing Christians through our denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This larger fellowship enables us to serve together in missions, nurture, and other church-related ministries.

In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, you join a church by public profession of faith in Christ, by reaffirmation of faith, or by letter transferring membership from another church. The elders of our congregation will interview you concerning your faith and, upon approval, will publicly introduce you to the whole church. This joyful event usually takes place in a worship service.

When you join the church, you become a “communicant member”—because you have the privilege of

participating in Communion (the Lord's Supper). And you are entitled to all the rights of membership and involvement in the life of the church.

The children of church members become "non-communicant members" upon their own baptism. The sacrament of baptism publicly acknowledges that your children, too, are part of the family of the Lord and enjoy the outward privileges of church membership. They become communicant members when they publicly profess faith in Christ on their own.

## Why Should You Join a Church?

- The Bible calls believers to publicly confess what they believe. Jesus himself said that he would build his church on such confessions of faith (Matthew 16:16, 18). Certainly, joining a church is an appropriate, meaningful way to do this, along with our normal witnessing in everyday life.

- Becoming a church member is one evidence that your conversion is genuine. It shows that your faith is in Christ. In the Old Testament covenant community, this was done by such actions as circumcision, the Passover, and sacrifices. In the New Testament, professing Christians are told to test the reality of their profession (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10). Church membership is one way to do this. It also keeps you from drifting from church to church, experience to experience, doctrine to doctrine.

- A local congregation is a visible expression of the unity of those who are committed to the Lord. The New Testament is dotted with references such as "the church at Antioch," "the church in Corinth," and "the church at Ephesus." Today, of course, there are such groups of believers throughout most of the world. A believer, therefore, should desire to draw close to other believers in his locality and to be identified as a member of that church.

- Many times in the New Testament, believers are reminded of their responsibility to one another. Christians must "submit to one another out of reverence for

Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). This involves a corporate responsibility, including a specific, concrete commitment to fellow members of this part of the Body of Christ. It also means a willingness to submit in the Lord to our board of elders (we call them our “session”), who care for us in Christ’s name. Joining a church enables you to fulfill this important commitment.

Church membership provides an orderly framework by which the church may fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28:19–20). The two primary elements of this command to disciple the nations are evangelization (with baptism) and teaching. Since Christ has given both of these ministries to the church, you can help fulfill his Great Commission by becoming a member of a local congregation.

- Jesus Christ is Head of the church. He rules the hearts of his people by his Word and Spirit (Colossians 1:18; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 1 Peter 1:1–2). And he also rules through the means of human instruments, the elders of the church. The Bible teaches that believers are to place themselves under the direction and care of such men (Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–5). Church membership gives our elders an important way by which to provide this care for you.

## What Are the Responsibilities of Church Membership?

- A “one-another” concern for the other members, showing interest in and encouragement for their spiritual and physical needs. You will find yourself working together with us toward common goals. This includes the redemptive purpose of church discipline, through which members can show genuine, loving concern for others in the church family (1 Corinthians 12:26–27; Galatians 6:1–2; Hebrews 10:24–25; 1 John 3:17–18).

- Prayer support for the church—the pastor(s), elders, deacons, teachers, members, ministries, youth and children, special needs and opportunities. Prayer should be offered for the church throughout the world and for all gospel mission efforts.

- Personal spiritual growth by means of prayer, Bible study, the use of one’s spiritual gifts, and a consistent testimony for Christ in all areas of life. The church is not a place to be entertained, but rather a place to become equipped “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). As a church member, you will want to know God’s Word and be active in its application.

- Faithful attendance at the worship services and meetings of the church. Jesus himself made it his custom to worship each week with God’s people. And regular attendance will surely encourage you and strengthen you in your love for God and his people (Luke 4:16; Hebrews 10:25).

- Contributing offerings to the work of the church and to its missions outreach. Such giving should be done regularly, cheerfully, and with a spirit of gratitude to God. The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian church that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- Acknowledging the elders’ authority and supervision in their watch over the members. While seeking to guard each member’s rights, the elders also seek to defend the purity of Christ’s church (Matthew 18:15–20; Hebrews 13:17).

- Telling the gospel message to your relatives and friends and inviting them to respond to Jesus Christ in faith. Jesus told his disciples—and the message comes to us today—“You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). When all members of our church are active in witnessing for Christ, there will be an enthusiastic and vital character to our congregation and its outreach.

## What Are the Privileges of Church Membership?

- *Satisfaction* in pleasing the Lord by uniting publicly with the visible church and in giving expression to your faith.

- *Awareness* that you are a vital part of this church in the fullest possible sense. As such, you’ll be standing

alongside all the other members of our church and actively working as part of the fellowship of God's people.

- *Participation in the sacraments.* Those who have confessed Christ publicly and have placed themselves under the care of the elders are invited to take part in the Lord's Supper. Baptism, likewise, is administered to believers and their children.

- *Opportunities to serve* in all areas of our church's ministry, thereby developing your spiritual gifts.

- *Special oversight* by the elders and deacons of our congregation. It is not only natural that they would give more attention to members, but it is also their special responsibility.

- *A voice in the government* of this congregation, particularly on issues related to the growth and future of our church. At official congregational meetings, you may enter fully into the discussions, plans, and decisions of this church.

- *Active involvement* in the Worldwide Outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Members' ideas, prayers, giving, and labor begin in the local congregation and then fan out across the United States and around the world.

## How Do I Become a Member?

In most cases, a Christian who desires to join a particular church will attend the services and meetings of that congregation. After a period of time, you will want to make known to the pastor, an elder, or perhaps another member of the congregation that you would like to become a member. You will then be given the opportunity to learn more about the teachings and ministries of our church. This may be done on an individual, family, or class basis.

Next there will be an interview by our elders. They will want to be assured, as far as possible, that you give a credible profession of faith. They will look for a testimony by words and actions that you are trusting Christ alone for salvation and that you are trying to live as a

Christian. Following your reception into membership by our elders, your name will be announced to the congregation at least one week before the day chosen for a public profession of faith.

On the occasion of your public profession of faith, four specific questions will be asked:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?
3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?
4. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?

## How Long Does Church Membership Last?

There is no expiration date for church membership. Membership continues from year to year as long as you fulfill the obligations of your membership vows. If you move to another area and desire to join another church, our elders will take appropriate action to make this possible. On the other hand, if you move and wish to retain membership, this can be arranged, provided you continue to show an interest in our congregation.

Membership in a church is an important matter. It carries with it many privileges and many responsibilities. Yet most importantly, it is something that our Lord Jesus Christ desires of each of his followers. So we invite you to take steps today to unite with us.

*Welcome in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!*

The Committee on Christian Education  
of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
607 N. Easton Road, Bldg. E  
Box P  
Willow Grove, PA 19090-0920