



Church Membership !

Why belong to a church?

These notes are based on two sources of information, the **Methodist Church Law Book (2015)** **Methodist Church of NZ** and **Presbyterian Book Of Order (2012)**, **Presbyterian Church Aotearoa NZ**



Useful web sites

www.presbyterian.org.nz

www.methodist.org.nz

www.ucanz.org.nz

www.levinuniting.church

Background

Levin Uniting Church is made up from people who have confessed their personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord.

The Parish is a fellowship which includes both the congregations of St Johns Methodist Church and St Andrews Presbyterian Church Levin who have joined together as one body to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ and demonstrate the Love of God for all people. The members of this combined Christian fellowship affirm **“Christ is our foundation who inspires us to be a worshipping welcoming, giving group of people, actively sharing the good news within our community and beyond.”**

Levin Uniting Church was formed in February 2008, when St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church and St John’s Methodist joined forces and all worship activities were shifted to the St Andrew’s site, now known as Levin Uniting Church on Oxford. It’s the only church on Levin’s main street, and can comfortably fit 300 people.

In November 2015 Parish Council unanimously decided “THAT the Parish Council of Levin Uniting Church – acknowledges the dialogue with the Participating Partners during the last few months, – as a result of the dialogue supports the Methodist Church of NZ through its Lower North Island Synod, becoming the Coordinating Partner from November 2015 and requests the Parish Clerk to inform the national church partners and UCANZ accordingly.” **This Parish includes people in the area between Waikawa and Hokio to Waitare Beach.** It is inclusive of all who profess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour

The Ministry of Levin Uniting Church is centrally based at 87 Oxford Street, Levin from where we care for and about people in both urban and rural areas throughout the wider Horowhenua District including Manakau, Ohau, Hokio, Muhunoa, Gladstone, Kawi, Poroutawhao, Waitare Beach and Heatherlea.

Levin Uniting Church is a part of the Community of Faith which believes Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord. Through baptism one enters the Community of Faith. By personal decision and profession of faith, associated with either adult baptism or confirmation, a person is initiated into membership within the Church Universal, specifically within **Levin Uniting Church**.

Membership:

Membership will normally find expression through participation in worship, including regular attendance at the Lord's Supper, the nurturing of a personal spirituality characterised by reading the Bible and prayer, living – according to one's informed conscience – an ethical and just life and the giving of financial support to the Church. The standards on which membership of the Church is based are set out in the Church's Mission Statement.

Baptism:

Baptism, is a response to God's grace and signifies entry into the covenant relationship of God with God's people, and is a basis of membership in the Church, whether that be infant, child or adult.

A record of all persons baptised shall be kept in a Register of Baptisms and Confirmations, and a Certificate shall be issued to the parents or guardians of the child, or to the person baptised.

Confirmation:

Confirmation is a response to an individual's profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Confirmation involves commissioning a person previously baptised to responsible membership in the Methodist, Presbyterian or Uniting Church, through the laying on of hands with prayer. Confirmation will be normally of persons not less than 14 years of age, and shall be preceded by appropriate preparation.

A person who has been received as a Member of the Church and who exercises Christian commitment through regular participation in the worship and mission of the congregation shall be recorded in the Membership Roll of the Parish.

The Parish Council may, at its discretion, enter in the Membership Roll the name of a person who is a regular attender at worship and active participant in the life of the congregation or Parish. Persons transferring from another denomination, whose acts of Baptism, Confirmation or reception into membership are recognised, may also be received into membership, and have their names added to the Membership Roll, by the decision of the Parish Council.

There are at least ten characteristic's of a Church member.

- 1. Personal Faith and one Baptism**
- 2. Longing for fellowship**
- 3. Caring and nurturing disposition**
- 4. Regular participation in activities**
- 5. Willingness to contribute finance and resources**
- 6. Sense of balance and perspective**
- 7. Joyfulness of heart and mind**
- 8. Willingness to learn and grow**
- 9. Commitment to a personal devotional life**
- 10. Want to grow Gods kingdom**



The Membership Roll will be reviewed annually by the Leaders' Meeting or Parish Council. The names of those who cease to exercise responsible membership and/or who no longer participate actively in the local Church may be removed after adequate pastoral investigation.

All who have been baptised with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are members of Christ's body the church. Those members who have expressed their intention to live their discipleship as part of the fellowship of the Cooperative Venture are called to exercise the full responsibilities and privileges of membership. This membership may be affirmed and recognised by the parish council.

A public commitment known variously as Profession of Faith, Confirmation, Admission to the Lord's Table or the production of a letter from another parish certifying membership.

It's taken for granted that every Christian will join together with other Christians in the membership of a local congregation for only then can the implications of common membership of the Church of Christ find expression - that is to say, in fellowship, mutual care, submission to necessary discipline, the maintenance of spiritual unity, and the offering together of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God - and the work of the Church be effectively carried out - that is to say, in the proclamation of the gospel and the making of disciples in a particular area.

For personal study and reflection

The following are shared not as a prescription but rather to help and encourage personal reflection by people seeking to join in Membership of **Levin Uniting Church**. These precepts are common throughout most denomination's.

- The local church is not to be despised by the Christian (1 Corinthians 11:22).
- The New Testament refers to patterns of behaviour in the church, meaning the local church (1 Corinthians 14:19, 28, 35); and the directions given by the apostles were given in the first place to churches (1 Corinthians 16:1).

- ☑ The New Testament takes it for granted that Christians living in the same locality will have regular fellowship, assembling together as a company of believers (1 Corinthians 1:2; 14:23; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:15).
- ☑ Christians are instructed not to neglect meeting together (Hebrews 10:25).
- ☑ Christians are to strive to excel in building up the local church (1 Corinthians 14:12).
- ☑ The members of the body of Christ are members of one another and are intended, therefore, to be in the closest possible association together (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).
- ☑ The picture of the church as the family of believers implies a close relationship (Galatians 6:10).
- ☑ A brick is only a building as it is together with other bricks, properly joined to them: so too with the Christian (1 Peter 2:4, 5).
- ☑ The logical consequence of receiving the Holy Spirit is to want to live in fellowship with other Christians (Romans 8:9; Philippians 2:1, 2).
- ☑ Constant fellowship is possible through the local church as in no other way (Acts 2:42).
- ☑ The fellowship is to be so close that mutual encouragement can be given both to love and to do good works (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24).
- ☑ To do this together is a vital part of Christian fellowship (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17).
- ☑ The early Christians gathered together on the Lord's Day to break bread in remembrance of Christ's death (Acts 20:7).

- ☑ Christians need to come together regularly in the local church for the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).
- ☑ We may do good effectively to the family of believers only as we know who they are by coming together in the fellowship of the local church (Galatians 6:10).
- ☑ By close association with one another Christian love is able to find the positive and practical expression it needs (John 13:35).
- ☑ Through church membership we are able to strengthen one another (Luke 22:32), restore one another when fallen (Galatians 6:1), and carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
- ☑ By means of the local church the exercise of spiritual gifts for the benefit of one another is made possible (1 Corinthians 12:14-28).
- ☑ The Lord Jesus Christ taught that the local church is essential for maintaining the right kind of discipline amongst God's people (Matthew 18:15-20).
- ☑ It is taken for granted in the New Testament that all Christians will be so committed to a local church that they will be within the discipline of that church (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- ☑ Christians are to be in such an association of membership together that they can discipline members who bring dishonour to Christ (1 Corinthians 5:1-13).
- ☑ Christians feel within themselves the desire to express the oneness they know and experience in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28).

- ☑ No effort of love or of tolerance is to be spared to preserve the unity that the Spirit gives (Ephesians 4:2, 3).
- ☑ The common life Christians have in Christ brings a common care for unity (Philippians 2:1, 2).
- ☑ Through the knowledge Christians have of one another's needs, associated as they are in the local church, they are able to do good to one another and to share what they have with others (Hebrews 13:16).
- ☑ They are able to fulfil their financial obligations to the work of Christ's Church (1 Corinthians 16:2; Philippians 4:14-19).
- ☑ The local church is the key instrument for the Word of the Lord to ring out to people everywhere (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 8).
- ☑ Christians are to be taught all that the Lord Jesus Christ requires of His disciples (Matthew 28:19): to this end God gives to local churches pastors and teachers, so that Christians may be fed and built up by the Word of God (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 2:2; 5:2).
- ☑ The most important part of the elders' work is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God (1 Timothy 5:17).
- ☑ Christians are expected to be in a situation where they will be contributing to the financial support of those who give themselves to preaching and teaching (Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17, 18).
- ☑ The local church, faithfully taught, is one means God uses to preserve the pure teaching and preaching of the gospel (2 Timothy 2:2).

BIBLE STUDY



Becoming a Church member is important. It often marks the beginning of an exciting journey and spiritual maturation. The Bible describes why we should grow and mature spiritually:

From your own Bible read the following verses and spend time thinking about them. These references are suggested for personal study because they have been found helpful.

Ephesians 4:14,15 - Be no longer children, but grow up in Christ.

2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 - The Thessalonians grew in their faith.

Philippians 1:9 - Paul prayed for their love to abound.

1 Peter 2:2 - Desire the pure milk of the word, so you may grow.

1 Peter 2:21 - Jesus set an example we should follow.

Philippians 3:12-14 - Paul forgot past achievements (and failures) pressing on to greater accomplishments.

2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in the grace and Knowledge of our Lord.

Matthew 4:4 - Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes from the mouth of God.

Hebrews 5:11-14 - Members fall away because they do not eat properly.

1 Timothy 4:7 - Exercise yourself toward godliness.

James 1:4 - To become perfect and mature, lacking nothing, we must have patience.

Besides personal Bible study Church members are encouraged to be people of Prayer.



Prayer is talking to God! He wants us to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call. To many, prayer seems complicated, but it is simply talking to God.

Many people don't know how to pray. Praying is like talking to your best friend! It's easy to talk to someone when you know they love you unconditionally.

Tell Him your needs! "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you" (**1 Peter 5:7**). "Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his welcome" (**Ephesians 3:12**). "So let us come boldly to the throne of God and receive his mercy and grace to help us when we need it" (**Hebrews 4:16**).

Psalm 34:17 says "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles".



Conclusion

If people still wish to be received into Church Membership we need to be assured on the following matters:-

- a)** The applicant is a person who freely confesses their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- b)** They acknowledge or evidence their faith through the sacrament of Baptism and Profession of Faith.
- c)** There is a clear indication of willingness's both to attend Public worship services and support the life and work of the Church.
- d)** The individual's life and witness are consistent with that of a professing Christian.
- e)** There will be some commitment to personal prayer and Bible study.

These notes are written to help, guide and encourage those considering Membership at Levin Uniting Church. If they raise issues or concerns please do not hesitate to discuss them with any of the Leadership.

Allen Little

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Parish Clerk January 2016