

First UU Membership

Frequently Asked Questions

Membership

How many people are members of the church?

As of January 2021, there are about 575 voting members of First UU Church.

Is everyone who attends church a member?

No, not everyone who attends church on Sundays or attends groups during the week is a member. Many people are, and many people are not. Some people choose to become a member soon after attending service for the first time while other people attend church for many years and never choose membership. Becoming a member is a personal choice.

Do I have to be a member to attend worship services, participate in groups, or join committees?

You are welcome to attend services, participate in groups, and join most committees without being a member of First UU Church. The only committees that require membership are the Board of Trustees, the Nominating Committee, and the Connections Committee because these committees specifically deal with church governance, selection of Board members, and membership itself.

Do I have to be a member for my children or youth to participate in Religious Education (RE) programs?

You do not. Children and youth are welcome to participate regardless of whether or not their guardians are members of First UU.

What are some reasons that people choose to become members of First UU?

There are many reasons why people choose to become members of First UU! Some people feel that it is important to create a formal relationship with the church that affirms their values and principles. Others seek to become more actively involved in church governance by voting and running for a position on the Board – both of which require membership. For some members, membership seems like a natural next step after they have decided that First UU is their spiritual

home, while others choose membership because they have been members of other churches in the past and find membership to be a meaningful aspect of being part of a church community. Still others choose to become members in order to financially support the work of the church. The reasons for why people become members are as varied and individual as the members themselves.

Do members receive any benefits of membership, beyond voting and deeper involvement?

Yes! Members receive benefits of membership, such as having rites of passage performed by our ministers free of charge, a discount on facilities rentals for private events, a parking pass for use in our Hillcrest parking lot, the opportunity to serve as a delegate at the UUA General Assembly, and subscription to congregational publications and the UUA's *The World* magazine.

How old do I have to be to become a member of First UU?

It is possible to become a Youth Member at age 15, and a voting member at age 18.

Where can I find more information on membership?

If you have any questions about membership not answered here or on the Becoming A Member page on the website, please feel free to contact the Connections Coordinator, whose contact information is at the bottom of this webpage. If you would like to read about membership in the church constitution, it can be found here <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/uploads/1/2/7/6/127676152/churchconstitutionjune2017.pdf> and is on page 2.

I want to become a member – where do I start the process?

The membership process begins with filling out the membership application form, which can be found here <https://www.firstuusandiego.org/become-a-member.html> at the bottom of the page. Once you submit your form, the Connections Coordinator will contact you to set up an informational meeting. After that, you can schedule a meeting with a minister to finalize your membership! At the meeting with the minister, you will be able to chat with them, ask any questions you may have, sign the Bond of Union, turn in your membership pledge form, and sign the membership book.

What is the Bond of Union?

The Bond of Union (or BOU) is a statement that all members sign. This statement affirms your decision to become a member of First UU, and clearly states that you freely made this decision of your own free will. Here is the full text: *"This church is an intentionally diverse democratic religious association, dedicated to building a dynamic faith and attitude wherein our religious heritage finds ennobling harmony with contemporary truth as validated by reason and*

experience. We seek the spiritual enrichment of our members in a mutually sustaining fellowship, and the welfare of all people. To these ends we foster free inquiry with the right to make up one's own mind on religious beliefs; respect for the individual with a willingness to listen to each other's opinions and viewpoints; and consideration and respect for minority positions while practicing the democratic process in human relations. We recognize our responsibilities as a Church to help our members fulfill in their lives their religious faith and personal ethic and to develop a sustaining confidence in the meaning and purpose of life. We recognize love as a creative and supportive force in life, and we realize the interdependence and unity of all life. We seek cooperation with other organizations having similar aspirations. In the spirit of the above Bond of Union, I freely choose to become a member of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego."

Money and Pledges

Why do members give money to the church?

Our church is self-sustaining and is funded primarily by the financial contributions of our members, given through membership pledges. These financial gifts allow the church to provide services, programs, staff, and facilities.

What does "membership pledge" mean?

The term "membership pledge" refers to the financial pledge that most members make to support the work of the church. A pledge is made once every 12 months, and payment towards that pledge amount can be made either all at once, once a month, or periodically over the course of a year. The amount, frequency, and method of payment is chosen by each individual member.

How much money do I have to pledge?

There is no amount requirement for membership pledges, and the amount can be changed whenever necessary. While the amount of your pledge is a personal decision, it is hoped that new members will either choose to pledge 5% of their income (after expenses) or give serious consideration to a plan to reach the 5% level in 5 years. However, this is in no way a requirement or an expectation, and pledges of any amount are appreciated and gratefully received.

What do I do if I want to be a member, but cannot make a financial pledge of any amount?

You can still become a member without making a financial pledge, all you need to do is make a confidential request for a pledge waiver from the minister when you meet with them to finalize your membership. This will allow you to become a voting member without a financial pledge for a period of 12 months. After that time, you may choose to either request to continue your waiver for another 12 months, or make a pledge in any amount.

I am not interested in becoming a member at this time, but I would like to make a regular financial contribution. Is that possible?

Yes, you can. Some people make the choice to become what is called a “pledging friend” instead of, or before becoming a member. If you are interested in more information, contact the Director of Operations.

Voting

What do members vote on?

Voting members help to choose church leadership through voting for who will serve on the Board of Trustees during the vote at the annual meeting each June. Votes are also held to approve the budget, call ministers, make changes to the church constitution, change the congregational covenant, or to make large changes to church policy (such as when the congregation voted on whether First UU would be open to people seeking sanctuary).

What does “voting member” mean?

All members who have an active pledge or waiver are voting members and are eligible to vote in congregational elections.

How do I check to see if I am eligible to vote?

If you have completed the membership process, have an active pledge (within the last 12 months), and have made a payment in any amount towards that pledge in the last 12 months (or you have an active waiver), you are eligible to vote. If you are unsure of your status and want to check before a congregational vote, you can ask the Connections Coordinator or the Director of Operations to check your status for you.

Membership Resignation

How do I stop or “cancel” my membership?

If you decide that you no longer want to be a member of the church, contact the Connections Coordinator or Director of Operations and let them know that you are resigning your membership. If you have any recurring pledge payments set up, those will be stopped and your status in the database will be changed from “voting member” to “former member”.

Can I pause my membership if needed?

Absolutely. You may choose to resign membership for a time and then reinstate your membership at a later date.

Can I still attend services, participate in groups, or join committees if I resign my membership?

Definitely. Just as non-members can participate in nearly all church activities, former members may do so as well. The only activities closed to people who are no longer members are the Board of Trustees, the Nominating Committee, and the Connections Committee.