

The Reception of New Members

Book of Government §9-2D

*Persons may be received into the membership of a congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in one of three ways: transfer of membership, profession of faith, and reaffirmation of faith (**Book of Government**, §9-2). In each case the Session shall be responsible for determining the procedures to be followed and the extent of instruction required. In every case, it is preferred that the persons to be received into membership are admitted at a normal Sunday morning worship in the face of the entire congregation. At the appropriate time in the worship service, having invited the candidates for membership to come forward and stand facing him before the congregation, the pastor may remind the congregation and those to be admitted of the importance of membership, using words such as the following:*

The visible church is seen not only in denominations, but is especially evidenced in particular churches or congregations. A particular church consists of all those professing Christians who, along with their children, are associated together to live their faith, to worship together, who seek individually and jointly to serve the Lord in witness and service. All those who have been baptized and who make a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are entitled to the rights and bound to the obligations of membership.

Preceded by the following declaration, the following questions shall then be put to the candidates, it being understood that candidates coming into membership by transfer of membership shall answer only questions 4 and 5:

All of you being present to make a public profession (and/or reaffirmation) of your faith are to assent to the following declarations and promises by which you enter into a solemn covenant with Christ and the Church.

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God and without hope for your salvation except in his sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon him alone for your salvation as he is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now promise and resolve, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to serve Christ in his church by supporting and participating with this congregation in its service of God and its ministry to others to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and to the spiritual oversight of this church session, and do you promise to promote the unity, purity and peace of the Church?

These questions having been answered in the affirmative, the pastor may offer prayer asking God's continuing guidance and mercy upon the new members and the whole Church, and then may say:

Inasmuch as you have made a profession (and/or reaffirmation) of your faith, and having [been baptized/ received baptism] and having been approved by the church session for active membership, I declare you entitled to all the privileges of this congregation and the full fellowship of the church, as well as having all the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon those who profess Christ and seek to worship God by service to him and ministry to others.

The pastor may then commend the new members to the congregation for their Christian confidence and affection.

Note: Some candidates for profession of faith may require baptism. For guidance, see the Service Form, “The Sacrament of Baptism (Adults).” This service may be incorporated into the service of Reception of New Members.