

The former Membership Review process placed the Board and Pastor in the very awkward position of informing people that they were at risk of being moved to inactive status or that they had been moved to inactive member status. Individuals may or may not have felt like the church did a good job of following up with them or of nurturing them. They may have stopped attending for personal reasons, such as work or a new love, or they may have left in anger or with hurt feelings. Regardless of the cause of the absence, those letters, no matter how carefully worded, seemed to only cause further separation between individuals and the church. Let us affirm, that if there is a concern to be addressed, we want to hear about it and be in dialogue!

According to our Bylaws, “a Member in good standing is a Member who registers their attendance, provides identifiable financial support, makes a definite service contribution, and demonstrates interest.” We are initiating a more positive approach that moves us from a role of monitoring membership to member’s choice. It is a personal opt-in or opt-out approach. People renew their membership with a gym, AAA, AARP or other organizations. It is our choice to renew or let it lapse and the same will be true with church membership. This will allow those who do not want to continue in membership with this church to exit gracefully without having to request that their membership be dropped or without an uncomfortable letter from the Board. This approach also allows ease of re-entry to active membership.

Church Membership is not the same thing as being a baptized believer. There may be confusion on this point based on our ecumenical backgrounds. Church Membership involves commitment to one particular part of the Body of Christ, in this case MCC Knoxville. In talking about active and inactive, we are simply describing an individual’s relationship to this congregation not commenting on their spirituality.

In implementing this approach, we ask every member on our roles to prayerfully examine their membership commitments and then to sign, or not, their Membership Covenant Renewal Form. On Easter Sunday, we will celebrate and renew our Membership Covenants along with remembering our baptismal vows. This fits with the ancient history of the church who initially only received new members on Easter Sunday. Lest there be confusion, we will still receive new members throughout the year but all of us who choose to do so will renew our covenants on Easter Sunday. You do not have to be present on Easter Sunday. If you have signed and returned your Renewal of Membership Covenant, you will be considered an active member for the next year.

This will apply to our long-distance members as well. You do not have to live in physical proximity to MCC Knoxville to be a member. You might be in East Tennessee but homebound. You can still participate in worship, spiritual nurture, and financial support of this church as active members. There are also several ways, and new ways emerging, to volunteer from your location.

The Deacons and Pastor will be following up with any member who does not return a Renewal of Membership Covenant. Please return your Renewal form by Easter Sunday if possible.

Please read the letter from the Pastor as you consider renewing your membership covenant or choose to opt-out or choose to be an official friend of the Church.