



Membership Q&A - September

1) When does it take effect?

Officially, it takes effect when the new *Discipline* is printed. Our target date is November 14, 2016. However, in the spirit of the new *Discipline* provisions, some pastors are introducing the changes to their congregations earlier.

2) When should it be introduced to the congregation?

The membership changes can be introduced any time that is conducive to the local church calendar, but certainly before the end of the conference year.

3) When does the annual renewal happen – New Year’s Day, new conference year or some other predetermined time?

This is a local church decision. Some may take advantage of the new year, while others will plan for it to be accomplished by the end of the conference year. Still others may find another time in the church’s annual calendar that works best for them. It is important to find a time that works and be consistent in conducting the reaffirmation annually. The goal would be choosing the approach that furthers discipleship.

4) Is reception into membership something that takes place once or more a year? If more frequently, do new members have to renew their membership at the prescribed time if when they were received is less than a year?

This depends on the flow of new people in the local church. In a congregation where many new people are attending, the church may want to schedule a membership preparation class/event quarterly. If a person has come into membership less than six months before the annual recommitment, it would not seem necessary for them to reaffirm at that time.

5) What membership resources are available for use in order to present the new membership criteria and guidelines?

The *Belonging* booklet, used by so many for membership preparation, is in the process of being revised (both Leader’s Guide and Student’s booklet), and will be

made available as soon as possible. When local churches share with us other “best practices” they have used in membership preparation, we will share these with our constituency.

6) What about members in nursing homes or care facilities, are they expected to renew annually?

Everyone is expected to make an annual reaffirmation. For those who are disabled or have limited understanding, a “pastoral proxy” could be used, in which the pastor could sign for them. The LBA should use wisdom and compassion in these cases.

7) Is there youth membership? If so, what does it look like?

Student membership is still available and has been essentially unchanged in the membership revision (see *Disc.* 564-565).

8) Can people grandfather in? Do long time members now have to agree to annual renewal?

Everyone is expected to reaffirm their love for the Lord and their loyalty to The Wesleyan Church on an annual basis. It is hoped that pastors will make this a positive time of celebrating our love for Christ and the Church, as something that is our privilege, rather than a requirement.

9) Do we simply explain that membership as we have known it no longer exists and that each person must start at the same place and choose to become a member and renew it annually?

It seems that saying, “Membership as we have known it no longer exists,” sends the wrong signal. Those who have been covenant members are still members. Those who have been community members are still members. The conditions of membership have changed (see *Disc.* 297, but as long as persons still meet the conditions, they are still members. Saying, “Each person must start at the same place and choose to become a member” would likely be insulting to covenant members and perhaps confusing to community members. Those who have been members are still members, as long as they still meet the membership conditions.

10) How will it work for leadership candidates for whom we would have greater expectations, at the local and district levels? Will they be processed by the nominating committee first, and then accept the leadership standards prior to nomination to the congregation?

Local nominating committees could ask potential nominees to read a copy of the leadership qualifications (see *Disc.* 260-268; 558) and ask them to indicate their agreement to “follow carefully and conscientiously the Guides and Helps to Holy Living found in paragraphs 260-268.” Hopefully district nominating committee members would nominate people they know from their own churches or other district churches, persons in whom they have confidence. Local pastors could

confirm these choices, or if there is any question, potential nominees could be asked to read and sign a paper indicating their agreement as stated above.

11) Are all members still to be approved by the LBA and/or congregation?

All current members are still assumed to be members. The first annual reaffirmation will give them an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment. *The Discipline* specifies the procedure for approving new members either by the LBA or the congregation (see *Disc.* 566-570).

12) Do ministers' spouses need to take the leadership commitments?

This would be strongly encouraged but not required.