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For more Wesleyan Church membership resources see wesleyanpublishing.com.

LEADER
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*FOCUSING ON **MEMBERSHIP** IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH*

1. SO, WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

The Wesleyan Church has crafted a membership plan that:

- Honors our strong system of doctrine and lifestyle commitments
- Offers a membership training strategy that also provides discipleship material with much more to come
- Provides one-tier membership for adults
- Encourages clarity, integrity, and good preparation for membership
- Recognizes the biblical concept of greater expectations for those in leadership positions
- Gives members the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to their experience of regeneration, Christian baptism, their acceptance of the Articles of Religion, Elementary Principles, and the authority of The Wesleyan Church in matters of church government
- Student membership is provided as an option for children and youth.

A training program for membership need not be limited to those joining as new members, but could be extended throughout the educational system of the church. It is likely that many of the current members in most Wesleyan churches would benefit from instruction in the Bible, Wesleyan doctrine, personal spiritual growth, relationships, and Christian service.

Be sure to see pages 9–10 of this section and read “How to Use this Training Guide.”

2. WHY MEMBERSHIP TRAINING?

So, what are the reasons for membership training in the first place? (Note: The following are primarily for the instructor’s use, but may also help explain the rationale for each category to a seminar group.)

- We are recognizing that vast percentages of folks who come to our churches are not Wesleyan by birth or background, and may be “in Christ,” but in the dark about us! They tend to be in one of five categories: Calvinist, Catholic, charismatic, converts, and the clueless.
- Therefore, many of those newest to our churches may love us and really want to officially belong (membership), but are not even close to being ready to embrace some facets of our beliefs or lifestyle commitments.
- In light of the above discoveries, these are the folks that we most need and hopefully want to disciple and assimilate into membership.
- During a membership training seminar, a prospective candidate gets a clear picture of the “what and why” of Wesleyan beliefs, yet they feel a graciousness and openness that we are extending to them.
- This approach virtually eliminates the temptation for church leaders to let these fine candidates “slide” on into membership

without truly understanding who Wesleyans are and what we believe. It also allows for maximum integrity for the candidate and an understanding that there is a journey we want them to take with us!

- Finally, this approval provides a system of protecting the integrity of our belief and lifestyle system. It is all above board and sets a standard of excellence and expected development.
- Membership now becomes more meaningful than ever and discipleship training is strengthened.

3. HOW DO WE SET UP THESE MEMBERSHIP SEMINARS?

First, you can call them whatever you wish. Various phrases you might use could include: “Membership Training Class,” “Membership Is Belonging,” “Membership Seminar,” “Membership Information Group,” or whatever title your church prefers.

It is best to choose a title that doesn’t give the impression that they must join once they take the membership seminar.

We recommend a minimum of four to six hours of contact time. Eight to sixteen hours are better. There is a huge amount of material and interaction that needs to take place over time. If you choose to have only one four-hour marathon session, it is extremely helpful to give out the Participant Guide in advance and at least have them read the *Articles of Faith*, the provided history of The Wesleyan Church, and encourage them to raise questions.

Scheduling options could include: (1) Three two-hour seminars on a week-night, on Saturday morning, or late Sunday afternoon; (2) some churches prefer using a number of weeks within the Sunday school or small groups setting. Offering it in two to six two-hour segments has been done successfully.

Offering more than one option is very helpful, such as a Thursday evening group and a Saturday morning group. The advantage of this approach is that a person can do a “make up”

class if they miss one at the other time. You know the schedules of your folks. You choose. But try to get a “system” going where you offer the sessions at least once or twice every year, depending on the need.

HOW TO USE THIS TRAINING GUIDE

1. READ AHEAD

Some of the advance preparation will take modest blocks of time and will sometimes require making copies and bringing in a resource person(s).

2. BUILD EACH LESSON TO FIT YOUR TIME

The seven sessions provided could be presented in a minimum of 45 minutes each. It is advisable to get the group involved in discussion and to build team spirit, which all takes time.

3. WHY SEVEN LESSONS?

Thirteen (curriculum length) is clearly too much for most churches that will use this material. The seven lessons can be compacted into four to six hours, or expanded into a twelve or thirteen lesson series.

4. HOW DO I SHRINK OR EXPAND THE SEVEN SESSIONS?

Each session has several units. You may choose to omit one or more units. The three types of lesson material that lets you shrink or expand your time are: discussion activities (and personal testimonies/storytelling); study sections where you dig into life and Scripture; and the Beliefs sections which can be as brief or as lengthy as you choose to make them.

5. TEACH IT ACCORDING TO YOUR STYLE

Read and absorb the information, but express it in your own words and way. Add your own research. Expand on the information and the activities. Watch for the additional teaching tips in the columns.

6. REMEMBER THAT PARTICIPANT GUIDES ARE AVAILABLE

They make a great workbook for the participants to use, keep, and review. But if you see cost as a factor, the Leader Guide has all of the worksheets and they can be copied. It does create more preparation; you hope that the old copy machine is working when you rush in to make copies and that they will look good so you can give a “quality” impression to your candidates! Why not just buy the Participant Guides for them? Order by calling Wesleyan Publishing House, 1-800-493-7539.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE COST OF THE PARTICIPANT GUIDES?

We think it is wise to provide the guides for your potential members as a courtesy and a small investment in their future.

8. CONSIDER TAPING YOUR SESSIONS

You should expect your candidates to be present at all of the seminars or make up the ones they miss. Therefore, if you audio or video record your sessions, the tapings can serve as “makeup” sessions. And you can use the tapes for evaluation of the sessions.

9. CALL THE CLASS WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT ADVERTISE IT BIG TIME!

10. ENCOURAGE CURRENT MEMBERS TO TAKE IT!

Many of them had little or no membership training and you could probably coax some to join the group.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(One application per person)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

How long have you been regularly attending our church? _____

Are you currently a member of another church? _____

Which one? _____

Is some kind of membership transfer needed? _____

Method? _____

Have you completed our membership training seminars? _____ Year? _____

Do you need further counsel or instruction before making a decision about joining? _____

Have you ever taken a step to establish personal faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior? _____

Have you been baptized by water since making the above decision? _____

If you've not been baptized, are you willing to be at the next opportunity? _____

At this point, what might be a personal barrier or point of hesitation for you to join? _____

Is it your desire to join the church at our next time for publicly receiving members?

Do you intend to join as a student member, adult member? (Check one.)

Are you willing to take additional training classes that the church makes available for members? _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SESSION 1

WE'RE BUILT TO BELONG

SESSION GOALS

- Communicate appreciation for their presence.
- Get to know others in their seminar group.
- Identify key values of membership.
- Explore the Bible on membership.
- Brainstorm a strategy for creating a climate of belonging in this congregation.
- Create a thirst to return!

ADVANCE PREPARATION CHECKLIST



- Since this guide has enough material for 10–13 sessions of 45 minutes each, be sure to use this material selectively.
- If you have, for example, only 4–6 hours of contact time, carefully select the units you prefer to use.
- It may be best, if time is limited, to have them read assigned sections ahead of time, such as the portions on history and beliefs.

- Make clear, innovative announcements about this seminar.
- Confirm location and setup of your meeting place.
- Provide name tags and pens.
- Drinks and snacks would be nice.
- Have extra Bibles, Participant Guides, and pencils.
- Audiovisual equipment needed?

- Consider taping each session for those who must miss a session.
- Provide background music as they enter (an idea).
- Keep accurate attendance records. (Maybe delegate to an assistant.) An attendance roster is on page 23 of this guide. Feel free to make copies!
- Call Wesleyan Publishing House at 1-800-493-7539 for needed material.

LESSON OVERVIEW AND DESIGN

Unit 1 Class Time—Launching Out.
Welcome and provide your group a synopsis of the session. (5–10 min.)

Unit 2 Values of Membership (approx. 10 min.)

Unit 3 Community Time: Interaction, get acquainted (10–30 min. This may consume half of your class time.)

Unit 4 What about the Bible and Membership? (10–20 min.)

Unit 5 Tough Questions (Q and A) (5–10 min.)

Unit 6 Application and Affirmation (5–7 min.)

Minimum Session Time = 45 min. Maximum = 75 min.

- Notice the minimum/maximum time spent on each unit.
- Use the estimated times to help select the amount of material to use for the time you have available.



CREATE

1. CLASS TIME—LAUNCHING OUT

Thank them for joining the membership seminar.

Thanks for making time to join this membership seminar! We are honored that you have chosen possibly to take ‘belonging’ to this congregation to a new level. As we meet together, we hope to make several discoveries:

1. *New acquaintances with others interested in a deeper level of involvement in our church.*

A WARM WELCOME

You may say something like this.



UNIT 1



- 2. Additional knowledge about the history, beliefs, and mission of The Wesleyan Church.
- 3. Grow in your personal faith and learn ways you can serve God in and through this congregation.

In a few minutes, we will take time to get acquainted with each of you. But first, let's work together to uncover some of the values of membership. Let's explain the benefits of belonging.

2. VALUES OF MEMBERSHIP



UNIT 2

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Early in this first session, help them relax with input and a bit of group discussion. Don't worry about going too quickly to the worksheet. Let them have a bit of "freelance" discussion before you get to filling in the blanks. Let them succeed on their own!

Remind them that this is a membership information seminar. Whether or not they choose to join the church, it will help prepare them for increased understanding and involvement in our congregation.



LEADER'S EDGE

- Do they have Participant Guides in hand?
- Have them put their name on their guide for identification if lost.

Leader p. 24
Participant p. 5

MY MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

1. I became a member with a view to _____ and I believe our part is to _____.

2. I became a member in a hope of _____ by your values and example.

3. Public confession is also a sign of _____ . Every year needs to be a reminder to the membership of the _____ of the church.

4. I am glad to see the opportunity for you to _____ and serve the Church.

5. We all should seek to help _____.

6. I believe in _____.

7. In an effort to _____, I believe _____ to the _____ of the Church is _____.

8. My spiritual journey is _____ and I believe _____ to the _____ of the Church is _____.

9. My spiritual journey is _____ and I believe _____ to the _____ of the Church is _____.

My Membership Guide

Say something like, "OK, I want to invite all of you to help us figure out what in the world we are doing here! Membership. What is the point? Why join? What are some of the values and benefits of officially joining a church?"

(Give them time to respond.)

After a time of volunteer input, without going so long that you wear them out on this one, have them turn to their worksheet titled "We're Built to Belong."

NOTE: Where they have blanks, you have suggested answers indicated in bold. Please do not let them struggle to guess or read your mind. Let them know that they have already

come up with many of these answers, but we will just recap with the worksheet, and provide the answers for them to fill in as each point is read.

Why Bother to Belong?

1. Humans are made with a need to **belong** and Christians are part of a community of believers. Membership is a response to these realities.
2. Becoming a member is a form of **witness** to your values and priorities.
3. Public commitment is also a type of **accountability**. Everyone needs to be held accountable for the important things in life. Membership attempts to help.
4. Membership gives expanded opportunities for your **growth** and service for Christ.
5. We all tend to need mutual **encouragement**.
6. Membership involves **responsibility**.
7. It is an affirmation of your personal commitment to **Christ** to be a serious part of His Church on earth.
8. Your committed involvement becomes one added blessing to the congregation; your **gifts** and abilities contribute to the strength of the total effort. Everybody wins!

3. COMMUNITY TIME

This activity may take up to half of the time for your first session. It is probably time well spent. Let it be an enjoyable part of this session. The point is to learn the names and a bit of background about your group members. Here are a couple of suggestions, but you may have creative approaches of your own that would be useful.

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED



UNIT 3

- The size of the group may affect time needed, so adjust other portions of the lesson.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- Keep this portion moving without denying them a word or two.



• Do not, at this point, ask for “testimonies” of their salvation. Let them give safe and simple things like any two or three of the following:

- Name
- Length of time at your church
- Church background if any
- Hobbies
- Family
- Occupation
- What got them to this church the first time?
- First impression when they first attended

Option 1

The simplest approach, especially with a group of fewer than 15, is to go around the group and have each person share any two or three of the following: name; length of time attending this church; what prompted their first visit to this church; former church background, if any; hobbies; or brief information about their family. Decide ahead of time which two or three pieces of information is preferred.

Option 2

Divide up into twos (or if necessary a group of three) with another person they do not know. Instruct them that they have three minutes each to interview the other person and learn several things about them. After each has done this, the total group gets back together and takes turns introducing their recent acquaintance to the others.

Option 3

Have them select one or two items from their wallet or purse that tells something about them as person.



• Remind them to use the following section in their study guide to write the names of their group-mates.

Leader p. 24
Participant p. 5

MY NEW FRIENDS
Why Do We Breathe?

1. How do you feel about _____ and I believe you are a member of the _____ community of believers. Welcome to a congregation that is excited to have you!
2. How long have you been a member of _____?
3. How long have you been a member of _____?
4. How long have you been a member of _____?
5. How long have you been a member of _____?
6. How long have you been a member of _____?
7. How long have you been a member of _____?
8. How long have you been a member of _____?
9. How long have you been a member of _____?
10. How long have you been a member of _____?

My New Friends

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NOTE: It is likely that you will have a very diverse group, in terms of religious backgrounds and life experiences. If so, take time to recognize it, and celebrate what a great thing it is to have a congregation with such diversity, yet unified in Christ and mission.

My Membership Group:

4. WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE AND MEMBERSHIP?

Some would argue that the Bible does not directly address the membership issue. That is technically true, but that does not mean that membership is not a biblical issue. The Bible is clear and strong about many of the dynamics that membership represents.

Make sure each person has access to a Bible, their worksheet, and that you give them plenty of hints on how to find the passages you indicate to look up. Lead on!

What Does the Bible Say about Membership?

Good question! The Bible doesn't really give us the kind of membership guidelines we are sharing with you, but there really is a focus on belonging, fellowship, accountability, responsibility, regular meetings, objectives, and even ejection!

BIBLE STUDY ON MEMBERSHIP



- Plan your time. You may study all of the following Scriptures, add your own, or you can select some of the suggested passages.



Leader p. 25
Participant p. 6

What Does the Bible Say about Membership?

MEM-2021-01
©2021 March 12, 12:17
Version 2.0.0.6

Questions? Send your questions to info@church.com when the author (Paul) is online.
 Working "membership" types of membership, including:
 Family: _____
 Friends: _____
 Church: _____
 Ministry: _____
 People of the common good: _____

Life Application

What kinds of things can our church do to study about that are worthy of our attention?

What helped you realize that this church needed you best?

How do we work together better that they belong?

What can each of us do to contribute to a thriving congregation?

24

Help your group look up the following Scriptures and list the things mentioned that seem to be “membership type” issues, such as belonging, contribution, regular meeting, devotion, accountability, sacrificing to belong, caring for one another, and other dynamics that you see emerging. Write those membership characteristics as you find them in the following Bible passages.



LEADER'S
EDGE

- Be sure to have loaner Bibles and pens/paper available in class.

- Make clear what they are looking for: “membership-like” characteristics.

- Insert your ideas only if they seem stuck, or need an early example, or if you are pushed for time.

- To save time, you could have them do just one or two of the Scriptures in class, then work on the others as a personal study or devotional.

- You could assign each Scripture to a small group and have all groups share what they found.

- Don't assume that all persons in your group can do this on their own or will be comfortable doing it at all.

- Have them read a portion or all of Ephesians 6, and gently instruct them about how to write a Scripture reference:

Chapter number
Colon
Verse number

Membership Characteristics

Acts 2:42–47 Thirst to learn (v. 42); fellowship, camaraderie, and belonging (v. 42); serious about prayer (v. 42); they were influential in demonstrating the power of God (v. 43); a strong bond and generosity among them (v. 44); sacrificial and servant-hearted (v. 45); faithfully met in the existing temple (church) for worship and fellowship (vv. 46–47); well thought of by outsiders (v. 47); reached out to others in witness and welcome (v. 47).

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 Like parts of the human body, they each had something to offer the whole. They were learning to contribute and appreciate other members for their contributions.

Romans 12:3–8 Humility with confidence (v. 3); sense of responsibility for one another (vv. 4–5); each has a “gift” to use in serving Christ; use it energetically (vv. 6–8).

Ephesians 6 See if you can locate the verses where the writer (Paul), mentions the following types of relationships, including:

Family: Verses _____

Employee: Verses _____

Army: Verses _____

Country: Verses _____

People of the common bond: Verses _____

From *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church* (2016)

The overall objective of membership in

The Wesleyan Church is:

To acknowledge believers as belonging to
the body of Christ;

To disciple them into a meaningful
relationship with The Wesleyan Church; and

To equip them for meaningful ministry in the world.

AN “OFFICIAL” WORD!

See *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, paragraph 551, introductory paragraph.



5. TOUGH QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

You may wish to skip this section entirely or use it later. Included are several questions often raised in membership training groups.

Q & A TIME



UNIT 5

The religious background I came from did not have or believe in membership. Why do Wesleyans?

We understand that certain church groups do not use the term *membership* or have that kind of structure. We honor that viewpoint and choose not to argue it, but offer the following suggestions:

1. Wesleyans do not require official membership for a person to take Holy Communion or to be baptized, and baptism does not automatically make you a member.

EXCELLENT SUPPORT PIECE

On page 110, there is a great article by Stan Baker, Wesleyan pastor and national church leader in Australia. Make copies if you wish.



Q&A



We have many positions of service and responsibility where membership is not required. And our pastors do not treat differently those constituents who are not members.

2. Membership is revocable. You can always back out, even after you join, if you find that it simply is not what you hoped it would be.
3. Most important is that you could be a member of the kingdom of God without being a member of a church. Likewise, you may be a member of a church, and not truly be a member of God's kingdom! Many are members of neither. We challenge you to be sure to establish a personal faith relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our hope and assurance. The church exists to help establish us in our faith and spiritual maturity.

Many people say: "I can be a Christian without attending or belonging to a church."

Technically, that is correct. Practically and biblically, that is off base. The Bible repeatedly makes the case that Christianity is not merely a "me" issue, but a "we" issue. One of the strongest analogies the Bible gives for Christ's Church is that of "the Body." Body parts need to be in direct and continuing connection, communication, and cooperation with one another, or the body is in trouble. The church is Christ's Body, and all parts need to be connected!

Remind them that the Bible is clear about the existence and importance of the Church; it is the collection of God's people who are sometimes gathered together and most of the time scattered about to be a "salt and light" influence for Christ.

What about The Wesleyan Church being named after a person (John Wesley)?

Another good question! There is a huge difference between name and essence. All people trusting in Jesus Christ as their Savior, Lord, and Hope are in fact a part of Christ's Church. The name tag on a

specific organization is simply to identify that one from the many Christian sub-groups. Just because my church may be called “The Church of Christ,” “The Church of God,” or “The Church of the Nazarene” does not mean that only the true believers are “contained” within that particularly named group, or that that group is more genuinely “in Christ” than other groups.

The name “Wesleyan” is simply to identify the person who had a significant human influence on the specific values and beliefs of our church. Christ in our hearts and lives is the vital issue, not the name on the church sign.

6. APPLICATION AND AFFIRMATION

Before bringing closure to this session, have them take several minutes to respond to the following:

1. What kinds of things can our church do to show that we really care for those who come?
2. What helped you sense that this church wanted you here?
3. How do we help people sense that they belong?
4. What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

Conclude this group session with prayer. Remind them that “caring” for one another begins in this group. In this first session, it is probably best that you or a co-leader pray. But first, give opportunity to express, within the confidence of the group, any situation for which they would like us to support them in thought and prayer. Pray and go.

PULLING IT TOGETHER



UNIT 6

Real life issues and answers!



Leader p. 25
Participant p. 6

What Does the Bible Say about Belonging?

ARC 6.01-07
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Revised 12-18

Application: In this topic you will explore the various reasons the writer of this section for sharing “belonging” signs of membership, including:

Identity: _____

Engagement: _____

Unity: _____

Community: _____

Presence of the Holy Spirit: _____

Life Application

What kinds of things can our church do to really show that we care for those who come?

What helped you sense that this church wanted you here?

How do we help people sense that they belong?

What can each of us do to contribute to a caring congregation?

21

Sharing and prayer time!





Reminders!

- Time and place of next meeting?
- Any class assignments?
- Any tasks to delegate?

Evaluation?

- Fresh notes to yourself (the instructor) about this session that may enhance further sessions?