



Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ

Welcome Friends to Membership Sunday!

January 29, 2023



Membership is taking the leap of belonging. It's a way of saying, OK. "This is my spiritual home!"

As prophetess Letty Russel describes in her book "Church in the Round"

"[My] image of church community is a communion table around which people are seated in a circle. There is no pulpit, altar, or front or back seat. All are seated equally and everyone has equal access to the table."

Written in 2005, Letty's words echo through our time together here in the congregational life and invitation we share. An invitation that is open, affirming, welcoming and ever-unfolding as we live together and grow together on our spiritual journeys.

As a member of the United Church of Christ, we are a non-credal church, which means that we view creeds and statements of faith as "testimonies not tests". We do not require you to believe any particular set of doctrinal statements, other than to affirm our Church Covenant. Your acceptance of membership here is an affirmation of that covenant.

In a covenant of membership, a person and the congregation promise to be in relationship with God and one another. We promise to come together, even as we learn what it means to live in the model of Jesus and the radical and gracious hospitality that courses through our very spirit.

Some of what we are called to do is clear. As Jesus stated in his response to the scribe who asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus replied:

"To love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. And the second is like that, to love one another as yourselves"

Still, the many ways in which we live into this clarity unfolds in our present with each other, in a shared congregational life open to the Spirit that continues to speak to us, with us, and through us into the world in which we live.

And for our friends who have decided to journey with us but are not quite ready to make a commitment to membership – please know how much you are already a loved and welcomed part of our congregational life. As a member, though, you would be able to vote in the important decisions that affect the life of Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ, including:

- Setting direction for our congregation in our surrounding communities,
- Interviewing and hiring a pastor, when the need arises, and
- Choosing our leaders and how we spend our shared financial resources.

Yours would be a welcome voice in those sacred decisions.

And so, today, on this Sunday, January 29, 2023, we welcome and invite all those who have decided to become a member of this congregation, those returning and those who may be transferring membership from another church - to come forward and join us on the steps of the chancel.

As we pass the microphone, I ask you to share your name and a word or two about why you are choosing to join us today.

Now friends...

- having heard the names and voices of our newest of members,
- and being witness to their intentions to join Sayville Congregational United Church of Christ, and in so doing
- stating their affirmation of our Church Covenant...

We exuberantly and gratefully welcome and acknowledge these members “on the journey” in this lifeboat, this spiritual vessel we share and carry into our lives and the world around us.

At this time, I ask all to stand if you are willing - and to come forward if you are comfortable in so doing - to lay your hands on the shoulders of the ones before you, extending this “laying on of hands and spirit” to these members, as we all affirm our shared commitment – as members, visitors and friends in singing our Church Covenant.

Sayville Congregational Church Covenant
Covenant Text Adopted 1976; With Musical Setting by James Ahrend

In response to God's love,
we covenant with each other...
to be faithful to the demands
and inspiration of the eternal spirit,
revealed in the event of Jesus Christ;
to accept and respect each other
with love and concern
in our worship and witness;
to reach out with the courage
of our convictions
in the cause of justice,
liberation, and equality for all.
In this, we covenant to keep the
ultimate promise: "I care, I am with you."

Friends and All! We are intentionally radically inclusive, welcoming all persons, regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, ability, gender, sexual or affectional orientation or expression, or any of the ways in which the world attempts to divide us from our God, as we know God. We celebrate the Creator's Diversity! We welcome people from all paths that honor the event and the Teachings of Jesus Christ in our hearts and actions, in all the ways we may! Amen!

Please remain where you are so we can take a few photos. And! Remember to join us for a fabulous hospitality and celebration following worship!

Note: In spring, we will be inviting all members to sign our Church Covenant document, bringing it up to date, along with our church directory. Please look for an update form in our early spring mailing. If in the meantime, you would like to be listed in our directory or have changes to make, please let us know: churchadmin@sayvilleucc.org or give us a call 631-589-1519. Visit our website at www.sayvilleucc.org and sign up for our weekly newsletter eChimes online or by asking our office to add or your name to our mailing.

Thank you for being with us on this very special day!

