

The Lutheran Process of Membership

1. *What is the Lutheran Process of Membership?*

The Lutheran Process of Membership (LPM) is based on the process that the early church used in bringing new believers into the life of the church. This process is called the catechumenate, which means “instruction”. It is for non-Lutherans and non-confirmed Lutherans who wish to join Hosanna.

2. *What is the purpose of LPM?*

LPM understands that spirituality is an individual journey. LPM’s purpose is to allow people to proceed at their own pace in joining Hosanna. Furthermore, since it is an individual spiritual journey, worship of God and individual spiritual direction lies at its very basis. LPM therefore seeks to use pastors, worship, education and service to welcome and prepare people for membership at Hosanna. LPM also understands that assimilation into community is part of the spiritual journey. Hence, it seeks to be hospitable and orient people to the life of the congregation. The overall aim of LPM is to journey with people spiritually and socially so that when they join the congregation they will be assimilated and welcomed into the worship, educational and service life of the community.

3. *What is the LPM process?*

There are four stages or phases of membership:

STAGE 1: INQUIRY STAGE

In this stage people interested in joining will “check out” or inquire into the congregation. The congregation will encourage them to participate in as many of the activities as they like.

Inquirers can be introduced to the congregation by special name tags, listing in the newsletter or posting their names on a special bulletin board. There will also be regular meetings for inquirers to attend for orientation and sharing. These meetings will be arranged as necessary.

The aim of this stage is to let the person feel as comfortable and welcome as possible in exploring the life of the congregation.

STAGE 2: INSTRUCTIONAL STAGE

If an inquirer desires to continue the process of membership, he or she moves into this next stage. This decision is told either to a pastor, LPM Team member.

In this stage the person agrees to participate in some educational experiences of the congregation. This can be one of the Sunday School classes, Women of the ELCA Bible Studies, midweek studies, youth programs or special classes. This experience is adapted to the needs and wishes of the individual. The suggested minimum number of times to attend is six, but people may attend as long as they wish.

The aim and purpose of this stage is to assimilate the person into the educational ministry and community of the congregation. It is to encourage the person to

become a life-long learner of Scripture and Doctrine. In this stage the person is encouraged to be involved in the service life of the congregation.

STAGE 3: FINAL PREPARATION

In this stage the person tells the pastor, LPM Team member that he or she wishes to proceed to the next stage of membership. In this stage he or she meets with the pastor to review and discuss the basic doctrines of the Lutheran faith. In particular he or she will review the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed and the Sacraments.

This stage can happen either through individual session(s) or through a special group session.

The purpose of this stage is to give guidance and nurture in the faith. It attempts to help the person articulate and deepen his or her faith.

STAGE 4: NEW MEMBER STAGE

When Final Preparation has been completed, the person is brought into membership through Baptism or the Affirmation of Baptism (Adult Confirmation).

In this stage the new member is encouraged to commit to involvement in one of the ministries of the congregation. This level of involvement can be a one time affair or an ongoing commitment.

The purpose of this stage is to involve the person in the service life of the community.

4. *How is worship involved in the Lutheran Process of Membership?*

The purpose of involving worship is twofold. First, it seeks to involve the spiritual power of worship in the journey of the person. Second, it seeks to involve the congregation in the spiritual journey of the person. Each person proceeds through the process through three public rituals. The rituals are like doors to each stage.

#1 INSTRUCTIONAL STAGE: Rite of Enrollment

In this stage the person is presented to the congregation at a worship service for enrollment into instruction. Specifically, the pastor shares the Good News of Christ, presents a Bible and prays for the person.

#2 FINAL PREPARATION: Rite of Final Preparation

In this stage the person is presented to the congregation for Final Preparation. Specifically, the pastor announces the person's completion of instruction and readiness to journey deeper in the faith. The pastor also gives to him or her a cross and prays for the person.

#3 NEW MEMBER: Rite of Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism

In this stage the person undergoes the rite of Baptism or the Affirmation of Baptism. The pastor gives to the person a copy of the church's constitution, offering envelopes, membership directory, certificate and a Ministry Associate sheet.

5. *Is there any time limit to this process?*

No. Each person goes through the stages at his or her own pace.

6. *When can a person take Holy Communion?*

The congregation practices open communion, which means we welcome all those who are baptized and believe in the presence of our Lord in, with and under the bread and wine. If the person has not taken communion before, he or she needs to contact the pastor.

7. *If a person is a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church, how does she or he join?*

The church will receive him or her by letter of transfer. The pastor at Hosanna can assist in requesting this letter. If a person is transferring from a local area congregation, he or she needs to discuss this with the pastor of the congregation he or she is leaving. The person transferring will be welcomed at a service. We also encourage him or her to attend Sunday School and the inquiry meetings

8. *If the person is not a confirmed Lutheran member but has been baptized, how does he or she join?*

He or she will need a letter of transfer from his or her previous congregation, but he or she will need to participate in the Lutheran Process of Membership in order to join by Affirmation of Baptism (Adult Confirmation).

9. *If the person is an inactive member or former member of Hosanna, how does he or she join?*

He or she may talk with the pastor and be returned to membership. He or she is encouraged to go through the Process of Membership and Reaffirmation of Baptism.

10. *If the person dies can he or she still receive a Christian funeral? Can he or she call the pastor for comfort or help?*

Yes. At Hosanna we practice the hospitality of Christ.

11. *If the person plans to be married and has yet to finish the Process of Membership, will he or she still be charged non-member rates for use of the facilities?*

Yes. Our wedding policy is that the person needs to be a member of Hosanna at the time of scheduling the wedding in order to have the member rate use of the facilities.

12. *How does a person lose or discontinue his/her membership at Hosanna?*

For those who do not contribute in any fashion for one year, we feel responsible for and continue to offer nurturing and love as fellow members of Christ's baptized body. However, we no longer seek to actively involve them. No one is ever removed from membership unless by request or transfer