

## **A Service of Belonging**

**Leader:** In the United Church of Christ, we speak of “testimonies, not tests” of faith. We don’t have all the answers, but we aren’t afraid of engaging the difficult questions. We do know Jesus welcomed all who came to him, and we seek to walk in his way and be his disciples, by the grace God has given to us. We now welcome these persons who wish to join in a covenantal relationship with this expression of the body of Christ, the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Waterville, Maine.

*New members come forward*

**Leader:** (to the congregation) I now introduce to you . . .

**Leader:** (to those joining)

Dear friends, I introduce to you the people of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Waterville.

And now I ask you . . .

Is it your wish to make this community of faith your church family, and the people with whom you will share your journey of faith?

Is this the place and are these the people with whom you will seek to make sense of the issues of your life; your dreams; your faith; who who are, what you do, and who God calls you to be?

Is it your wish to make this the place where you continue your journey into greater health and wholeness; where you listen to the story of God’s salvation and the Good News of Jesus Christ, allowing Jesus to be an example and teacher to you, where you are called to a life of ministry and justice; and where you are fed at the table of new life?

**New Members:** Yes, that is my wish.

**Leader:** (to those joining)

Will you commit yourself to seek and serve God in union with this community of faith?

**New Members:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** (to those joining)

Will you pledge your spiritual, social and financial support to this parish family? Will you walk with us as we seek the place where God’s dream for our community, the needs of our community, and what we have to offer our community, meet?

**New Members:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** (to the congregation): Will you, who are members of this faith community, witnessing these promises, share the joys and sorrows, and do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

**Congregation:** We will.

**Leader** (to the congregation):

Will you welcome (name/s) into this church, embrace their gifts, their needs, and their dreams? Will you recognize that their presence and participation will change the shape of the body and help it grow in new ways? Will you support them in their journeys, and assist them in their ministries?

**Congregation:** Yes! Yes! Yes!

**Everyone:**

**Loving God, send your Holy Spirit to be among us, knitting us one to another. Help us to grow with each other, to love each other, to support each other, that by our common life in this community we may come to know and serve you and the whole human family. Together, may we live in the Spirit, building one another up in love, sharing in the life and worship of the church, and serving the world for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

**Leader** (with Deacons):

In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of this church, we extend to you the hand of Christian love, welcoming you as members into the covenant of this church.

To represent the church universal, I'd like to ask anyone who is a Deacon here, has been a Deacon here or anywhere, to come forward and offer the hand of Christian love.