

## Big Question: Church Membership

### *What does membership look like in a hybrid church environment?*

The Board of Trustees, through a Bylaws Review Team, is currently preparing a **comprehensive set of amendments** to All Souls' bylaws to bring them into alignment with current church practices and best practices recommended by the UUA and other experts. This is an important part of **preparing** for a new minister.

One of the Bylaws articles under review is **Article IV: Membership**. Currently, the Sunday worship service at All Souls and many of our church activities are conducted in a **hybrid environment**, with some attending in person, others attending online, or a combination of both. All Souls started meeting virtually to continue our worship services during the COVID19 pandemic, while also allowing the church to maintain care and covenant with members.<sup>1</sup> This virtual environment also helped maintain connections during the pandemic for those who were part of covenant groups, affinity groups, or others.

As pandemic restrictions have eased, and some folks are more comfortable meeting in person, we have moved to a hybrid model, for our church service and other activities. We recognize that there is a substantial **difference between** having online services to **manage** the challenges of the **pandemic and being a hybrid church**. We want to ensure that All Souls is a fully functioning church that is meeting the needs of our members, whether participating in-person, online, or both.

Some questions to consider:

- All Souls has many **avenues** through which members can **participate** in the life of the church—via covenant groups, affinity groups, volunteering, etc. **Some** of these avenues can **only** be pursued **in person**.
  - Are the **expectations** for what it means to be a member of a covenantal community **different** for members who **only participate virtually**, and may not live in the DC area? How so? How can we ensure that All Souls is keeping its covenant with members (and members with each other)?
  - Should All Souls have a **category of membership** for individuals who only participate virtually, and may not live in the DC area?
  - What would you think of **limiting some privileges** of membership (e.g., being on the Board of Trustees or voting at annual meetings) to individuals who live in the DC area, or are willing to travel to All Souls for important occasions?
  - How has the current **hybrid model** affected the **relationships** church members have with other members, including the ability to create and/or maintain those relationships?

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<sup>1</sup> Our virtual environment also has provided a way for members in the area who were no longer able to travel, or former members who've moved away from the DC area, to participate and enjoy the worship services.

- Our Bylaws state that members should be prepared to make a **financial contribution** to the Church and participate, as able, in its ministry.<sup>2</sup>
  - Has the current **hybrid church model** affected members' **financial commitment** to All Souls, and if so, how?
  - Should the financial **expectations** for individuals who only participate **virtually**, and may not live in the DC area, be different from members who also participate in person?
- In the UU tradition, the members own the building and everything in it, and are responsible for providing financial support for all the operations and programs of the congregation.
  - To support the ongoing work of the church, **what can we expect of each other**, and how should that be reflected in our bylaws?

Join the Bylaws Review Team to discuss this and other questions at 7pm on **November 9** on zoom or on **November 13** in the Church Library, following the service. Or submit comments at <https://forms.gle/UtiQYWfkUPvBhZp46>.

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<sup>2</sup> Article IV of the Bylaws focuses on membership.