

TASK FORCE ON THE STATE OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Members

The Rev. Paul Canady, Chair	East Carolina, IV	2024
Ms. Diane-Louise (D-L) Casson, Secretary	Delaware, III	2024
The Rev. Canon Lydia Kelsey Bucklin	Northern Michigan, V	2024
The Rt. Rev. Mark Cowell	Western Kansas, VII	2024
Ms. Laura Curlin	California, VIII	2024
The Rt. Rev. Glenda Curry	Alabama, IV	2024
Russell "Jack" Drake	Alabama, IV	2024
The Rt. Rev. Elizabeth Bonforte Gardner	Nevada, VIII	2024
Ms. Lindsey E. Hardegree	Atlanta, IV	2024
The Rev. Canon Juan I. Marquez	Dominican Republic, IX	2024
Ms. Christina Pacheco	South Dakota, VI	2024
The Rev. Dominique Piper	Los Angeles, VIII	2024
Ms. Elizabeth Rousseau	Connecticut, I	2024
The Rev. Michael Sells	Navajoland Area Mission, VIII	2024
Ms. Julia Ayala Harris, Ex Officio	Oklahoma, VII	2024
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Ex Officio	North Carolina, IV	2024
Mr. Michael Glass, Representative of the President of the House of Deputies	San Joaquin, VIII	2024

Changes in Membership

Mathew Payne resigned in April 2023 from the Task Force.

Representation at General Convention

Deputy Paul Canady, Deputy Laura Curlin, Deputy Lindsey Hardegree, and Deputy Elizabeth Rousseau are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this Report at the General Convention

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Brian Murray and the General Convention Office for their assistance in crafting the church-wide survey the Task Force initiated and in collecting the data.

Mandate

2022 - A156 Establishing a Task Force on the State of Membership in The Episcopal Church

That the 80th General Convention authorizes the creation of a task force to re-envision membership as defined in Canon I.17.1-4: Of Regulations Respecting the Laity and Canon 1.6.1: Of the Mode of Securing an Accurate view of the State of This Church; and be it further

Resolved, that the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies appoint the members of this task force to include at least 3 bishops, 5 clergy and 7 laypeople with appropriate representation from urban and rural congregations, congregations in which people of color are a majority, and congregations that represent the full geographic and economic diversity of the Episcopal Church, including at least one member from outside the United States of America; and be it further

Resolved, that the President of House Deputies is encouraged to include as an additional member one who has served on the most recent House of Deputies State of the Church Committee; and be it further

Resolved, that this task force work closely with the Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators (A132) and the House of Deputies State of the Church Committee; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force be charged with developing new and relevant membership definitions that reflect the experience, practices, and needs of congregations, including membership definitions that are:

- expansive and applicable to a wide range of cultural and regional contexts
- easy to ascertain and report in yearly parochial reports
- faithful to the distinct role and sacramental understanding of the baptized in the life of the church
- new and expansive, including those who are not yet baptized or whose baptisms are not recorded in an Episcopal church; and be it further;

Resolved, that the task force be charged with examining the impact that a changed understanding of membership would have on diocesan canons and congregational bylaws; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force reevaluate the present connection between confirmation and membership; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force issue a report to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$50,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Summary of Work

The Task Force on the State of Membership in the Episcopal Church worked to engage the question of what membership in a church means in this era of Christianity. More specifically, we explored how The Episcopal Church counts its members, levels of membership in our branch of the Jesus Movement, and how we can improve our methods of counting our people. We looked at definitions of membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Presbyterian Church (USA) along with standards for membership in various Episcopal parishes and dioceses as they interpret the canons. We recognize that we have a broken and outdated way of counting our people where membership does not necessarily reflect active participation. We also recognize a “one-size fits all” solution is not possible as different methods are needed in different contexts of our Church.

Our work and mandate extended from the report of the House of Deputies State of the Church Committee to the 80th General Convention. As part of that work, we met with the Task Force on Vitality and the current HODSTOC subcommittee on the Parochial Report. We look forward to seeing how their work and our work will converge! We fully support their recommendation for increased collection of data to help us understand who we are as a church and how we can most effectively continue the spread of the Gospel. We also appreciate that these groups are working on solutions in other realms of membership and data collection.

The Task Force sought to engage others in the conversation about what it means to be a member of an Episcopal church through a church-wide survey. We went through Diocesan offices asking for Bishops or their designee to identify five or six parishes to “represent the broadest possible spectrum of parishes, missions, and worshipping communities in your Diocese.” All communication was translated into Spanish and French. We received names from 37 dioceses representing eight of our nine provinces. Unfortunately, we did not receive responses from dioceses or parishes outside the United States. A goal of the survey was also to evaluate the connection between “confirmation” and “membership” as well as peoples’ understandings of the defined levels of membership and the effectiveness of those definitions. We received 81 responses, and we express our gratitude for all those who took the time to answer. The data from this survey is available in the Supplementary Materials section of this report.

Our questions focused on the varying definitions and categories of “member” of The Episcopal Church. We aimed to learn what respondents’ understand about the differences and gauge their opinion on the importance of those differences. Additionally, we asked open-ended questions about what it means to be a member of a church, transferring membership, and the Parochial Report. We offer all of the responses, unedited, in the Supplementary Materials section.

Some observations from the survey:

- 61% of respondents said that the various categories of membership are only slightly or not at all important in carrying out ministry in their local setting.

- 54% of respondents said that varying degrees of membership are important.
- 77% of respondents said that they understood the differences in membership status.
- Baptism, Receiving Communion, and Contributions of Time, Talent, and Financial Resources were all Very or Extremely Important aspects of membership to those who responded.
- A strong desire exists for an online process for transferring membership from one parish to another.

The outcome of our conversations, collaboration with other interim bodies, and the results of our church-wide survey is that, with prayer and discernment, the Task Force proposes a change to Canon I.17 that we believe will provide clarity on what makes for a member of The Episcopal Church. The proposed shift in language specifically seeks to provide better understanding between the terms “communicant” and “communicant in good standing.” We maintain our long-held understanding that Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in this or another tradition, is the entry point for membership into the church. (Canon I.17.1.a). The question of “communion without Baptism” was outside the scope of this Task Force, and therefore we offer no opinion on that subject.

The phrase “known to the treasurer” often gets used when speaking of a “communicant in good standing.” The Task Force wishes to point out that this phrase is not found in TEC Canons, though it might be in parish bylaws or diocesan canons. We hold up the flexible and broad phrase “giving for the spread of the kingdom” found in TEC Canons, which recognizes the many ways one could be helping to advance the Jesus Movement. We hope that this phrase will remain flexible in our practices.

Identified future needs and recommendations:

- An online dashboard with easier access to membership data.
 - Such a tool could help parishes see how they compare to their peers. It could also assist in establishing markers for parish and diocesan vitality, enhancing the ability of parishes and dioceses to assess where they are as they discern God’s call to them.
- Parochial Report that captures church plants, missional communities, campus ministries, schools, and other worshipping communities.
 - It’s difficult to capture the full scope of The Episcopal Church’s membership when we do not have the whole picture.
- Webinars at regular intervals on the status of membership in the Church.

Proposed Resolutions

A108 Proposal of Changes to Title I, Canon 17

Resolved, That Title I, Canon 17 be amended as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

Canon 17: Of Regulations Respecting the Laity

Sec. 1 .

a. All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are Members thereof.

b. Members sixteen years of age and older, or who have been confirmed or received, are to be considered Adult Members.

c. It is expected that all Adult Members of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church or by a Bishop of a Church in full communion with this Church. Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church, rather than confirmed. This may be a requirement for specific leadership roles as defined by the Constitution and Canons of this Church and its constituent bodies.

d. Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop at Baptism is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also,

Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and at some time after the Baptism receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop in Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also,

Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands at Confirmation (by any Bishop in historic succession) and is received into The Episcopal Church by a Bishop of this Church is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; and also,

Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church at Confirmation or Reception is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed.

Sec. 2. All Members of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered Communicants in Good Standing.

Sec. 3. A person who is active in the life of this Church through worship, giving, and program participation, but whose official membership remains elsewhere is to be considered an Associate Member. An associate member may serve in leadership at the discretion of their local canons and bylaws.

Sec. 4.

a. A Member of this Church shall procure a Letter of Transfer to transfer their Certificate of Membership from the congregation in which their membership is recorded to another Congregation. This Letter of Transfer shall indicate that the person is recorded as a Member of this Church and whether or not such a Member:

1. is recorded as being a Communicant in Good Standing;
2. has been confirmed or received by a Bishop of this Church or a Bishop in full communion with this Church.

Upon acknowledgment that a Member who has received such a Letter of Transfer has been enrolled in another congregation of this or another Church, the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden issuing the Letter of Transfer shall remove the name of the person from the parish register.

b. The Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation to which such membership is surrendered shall record in the parish register the information contained on the presented Letter of Transfer, and then notify the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation which issued the certificate that the person has been duly recorded as a Member of the new congregation. At that time the person's removal shall be noted in the parish register of the congregation which issued the Letter of Transfer.

c. If a Member of this Church, not having such Letter of Transfer, desires to become a Member of a new congregation, that person shall be directed by the Member of the Clergy in charge of the said congregation to procure a Letter of Transfer from the former congregation, although on failure to produce such Letter of Transfer through no fault of the person applying, appropriate entry may be made in the parish register upon the evidence of membership status sufficient in the judgment of the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden.

d. Any communicant of any Church in full communion with this Church shall be entitled to the benefit of this section so far as the same can be made applicable.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

Canon 17: Of Regulations Respecting the Laity

Sec. 1.

a. All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are ~~members~~ *Members* thereof.

b. Members sixteen years of age and ~~over~~ *older*, or who have been confirmed or received, are to be considered ~~adult members~~ *Adult Members*.

c. It is expected that all ~~adult members~~ *Adult Members* of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church or by a Bishop of a Church in full communion with this Church. Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church, rather than confirmed. *This may be a requirement for specific leadership roles as defined by the Constitution and Canons of this Church and its constituent bodies.*

d. Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop at Baptism is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also,

Any person who is baptized in this Church as an adult and at some time after the Baptism receives the laying on of hands by the Bishop in Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; also,

Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands at Confirmation (by any Bishop in historic succession) and is received into The Episcopal Church by a Bishop of this Church is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed; and also,

Any baptized person who received the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church at Confirmation or Reception is to be considered, for the purpose of this and all other Canons, as both baptized and confirmed.

Sec. 2.

~~a. All members of this Church who have received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year are to be considered communicants of this Church.~~

~~b. For the purposes of statistical consistency throughout the Church, communicants sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult communicants.~~

~~Sec. 3. Sec. 2. All communicants~~ Members of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered ~~communicants in good standing~~ *Communicants in Good Standing*.

Sec. 3. A person who is active in the life of this Church through worship, giving, and program participation, but whose official membership remains elsewhere is to be considered an Associate Member. An associate member may serve in leadership at the discretion of their local canons and bylaws.

Sec. 4.

a. A ~~member~~ Member of this Church ~~removing from the congregation in which that person's membership is recorded~~ shall procure a Letter of Transfer to transfer their Certificate of Membership from the congregation in which their membership is recorded to another Congregation. ~~certificate of membership~~ This Letter of Transfer shall indicate ~~indicating~~ that that the person is recorded as a ~~member (or adult member)~~ Member of this Church and whether or not such a ~~member~~ Member:

~~1. is a communicant;~~

~~1. 2. is recorded as being in good standing~~ a Communicant in Good Standing;

~~2. 3. has been confirmed or received by a Bishop of this Church or a Bishop in full communion with this Church.~~

Upon acknowledgment that a ~~member~~ Member who has received such a ~~certificate~~ Letter of Transfer has been enrolled in another congregation of this or another Church, the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden issuing the ~~certificate~~ Letter of Transfer shall remove the name of the person from the parish register.

b. The Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation to which such ~~certificate~~ membership is surrendered shall record in the parish register the information contained on the presented ~~certificate of membership~~ Letter of Transfer, and then notify the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden of the congregation which issued the certificate that the person has been duly recorded as a ~~member~~ Member of the new congregation. ~~Whereupon~~ At that time the

person's removal shall be noted in the parish register of the congregation which issued the ~~certificate~~ *Letter of Transfer*.

c. If a ~~member~~ Member of this Church, not having such a ~~certificate~~ *Letter of Transfer*, desires to become a ~~member~~ Member of a new congregation in the place to which he or she has removed, that person shall be directed by the Member of the Clergy in charge of the said congregation to procure a *Letter of Transfer* ~~certificate~~ from the former congregation, although on failure to produce such *Letter of Transfer* ~~certificate~~ through no fault of the person applying, appropriate entry may be made in the parish register upon the evidence of membership status sufficient in the judgment of the Member of the Clergy in charge or Warden.

d. Any communicant of any Church in full communion with this Church shall be entitled to the benefit of this section so far as the same can be made applicable.

EXPLANATION

The goal of the Task Force is to simplify the canon regarding membership in The Episcopal Church.

The Task Force proposes a new level of membership called Associate Member. This is built upon models in The Presbyterian Church (USA) and is currently used in some Episcopal parishes. Associate Member acknowledges there are people that would consider themselves members that don't fit "Member" or "Communicant in Good Standing." This proposed change would allow dioceses to have additional membership categories as needed.

The Task Force proposes amending our understanding of a Communicant in Good Standing to remove the reference to receiving Communion three times in the preceding year. We maintain in Sec 3 that being active in public worship, unless unable for reason, fulfills the intent, which is to ensure a Member is a part of the life of the parish. We recognize that some parishes struggle to find adequate clergy coverage to provide Communion on even a semi-regular basis. There are active and faithful members of those parishes for whom the "three communions a year" canon would be a hinderance.

The Task Force proposes cleaning up the language of "Certificate of Membership" to the more common "Letter of Transfer."

The Task Force offers clarified language that the sacramental rite of Confirmation is not a requirement for membership, but may be a requirement for certain leadership positions in parishes, dioceses, and The Episcopal Church. This change also recognizes the maturity of the rite of Confirmation, and would allow for Members under the age of 16, who have made the adult commitment of Confirmation, to be considered Adult Members.

Implications for changing definitions of membership

These proposed changes uphold all but one of the current membership categories while recognizing the diversity of diocesan requirements for leadership and the importance of local context. The Task Force also recognizes and affirms that Confirmation as a requirement for membership remains at the discretion of each diocese. Regardless of what happens with these proposed changes, we encourage dioceses and parishes to work towards ensuring their canons and bylaws align with Canon I.17.

As the Rev. Carlos de la Torre wrote in a report for the State of the Church Committee after the 80th General Convention:

While it can be argued that the canons offer some wiggle-room for some of these situations, these situations are no longer a rare exception to the norm. Changes in church and culture, especially in a post-pandemic world, requires us to think creatively on what it means to be a present and future, active and engaged, member of The Episcopal Church. The Church should not simply change our present definitions and understandings of membership because the world around us is changing, but because the Church should be constantly evolving.

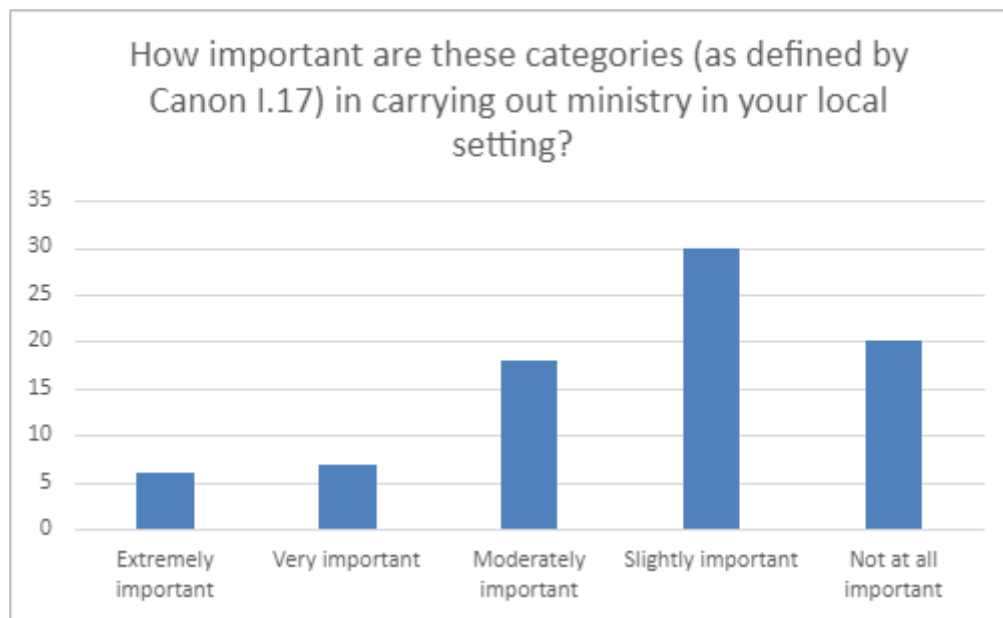
Supplementary Materials

2023 Survey by the Task Force on the State of Membership in the Episcopal Church

In The Episcopal Church, we currently have multiple categories of membership defined by [Canon I.17](#):

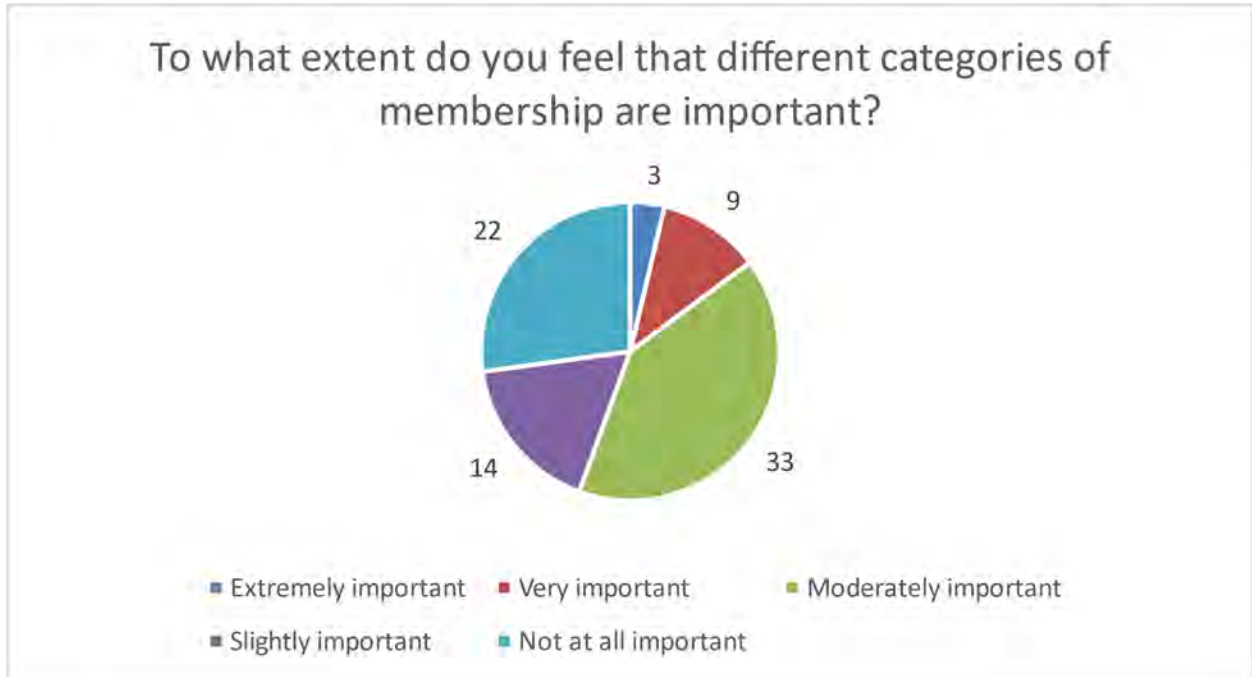
- Baptized members,
- Adult Baptized members,
- Communicants,
- Adult Communicants, and
- Communicants in Good Standing

As a leader in a worshipping community, how important are these categories (as defined in defined by [Canon I.17](#)) in carrying out ministry in your local setting?



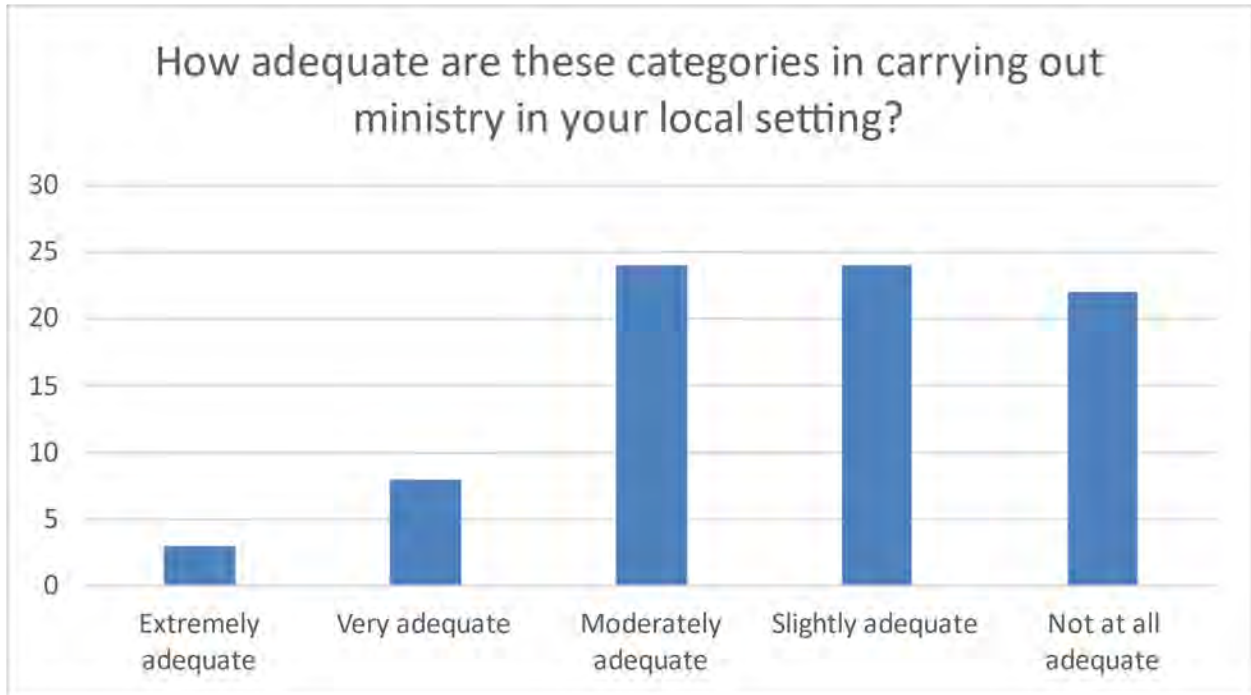
Extremely important	7.41%
Very important	8.64%
Moderately important	22.22%
Slightly important	37.04%
Not at all important	24.69%

To what extent do you feel that different categories of membership are important?



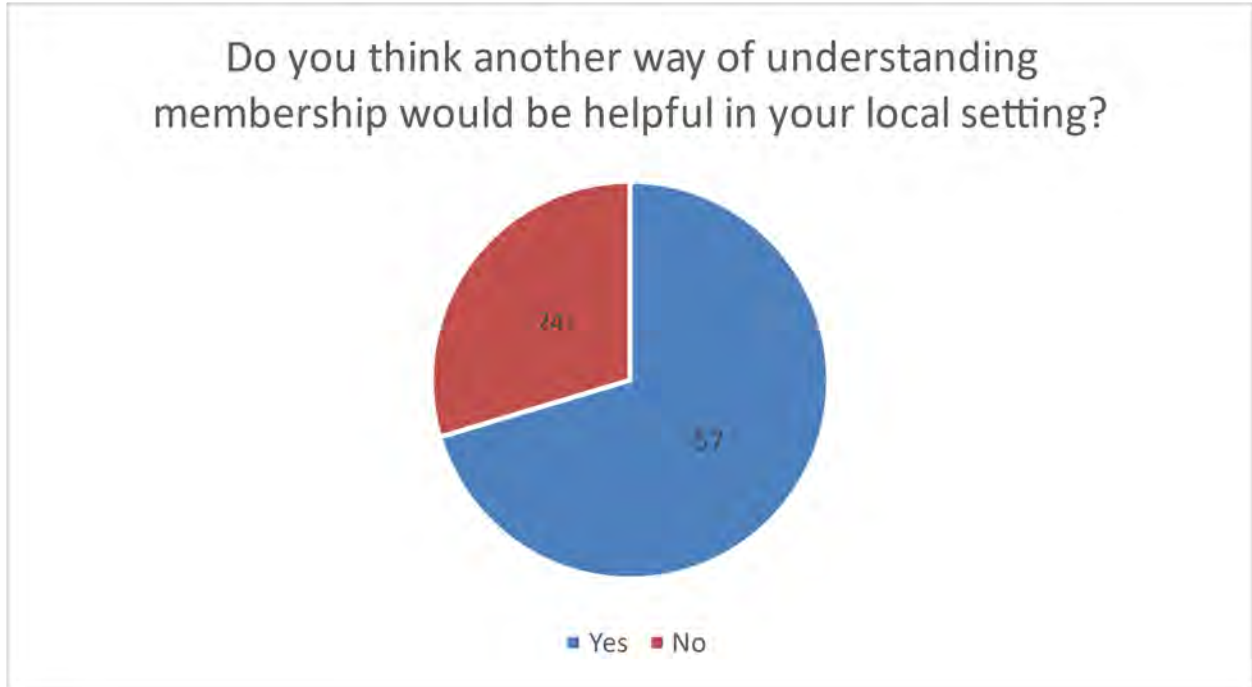
Extremely important	3.70%
Very important	11.11%
Moderately important	40.74%
Slightly important	17.28%
Not at all important	27.16%

How adequate are these categories in carrying out ministry in your local setting?



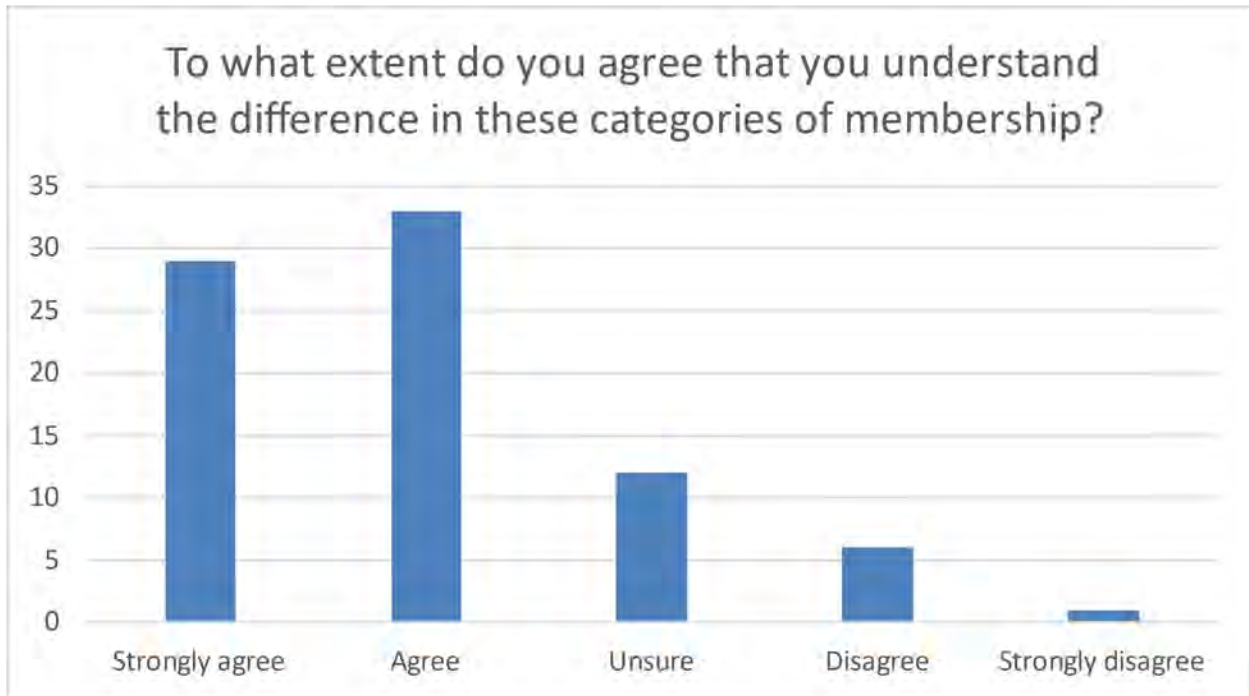
Extremely adequate	3.7%
Very adequate	9.7%
Moderately adequate	28.4%
Somewhat adequate	29.8%
Not at all adequate	28.4%

Would another way of understanding membership be helpful in your local setting?



Yes 70.3%
No 29.6%

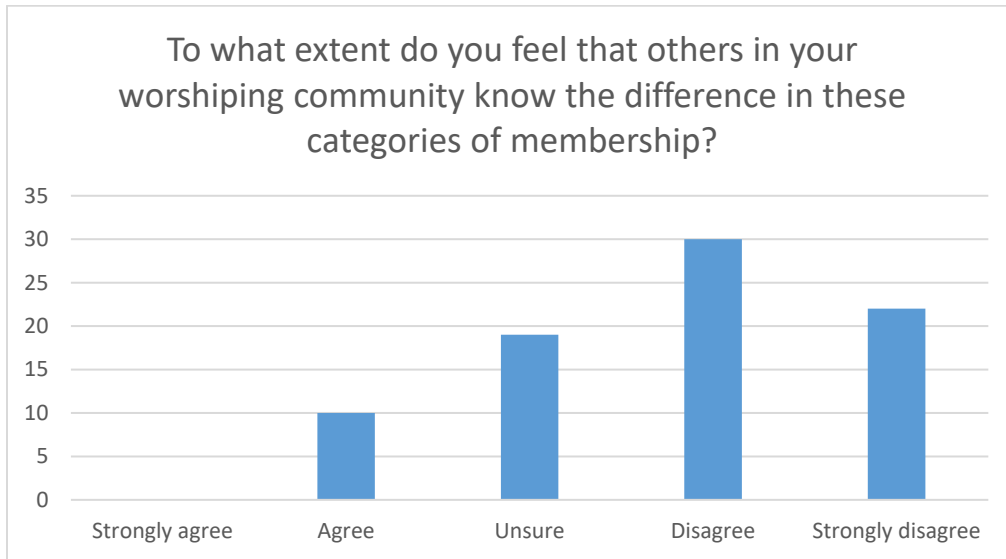
To what extent do you agree that you understand the difference in these categories of membership?



Strongly agree 37%
Agree 40.7%
Disagree 7.4%
Unsure 14.8%

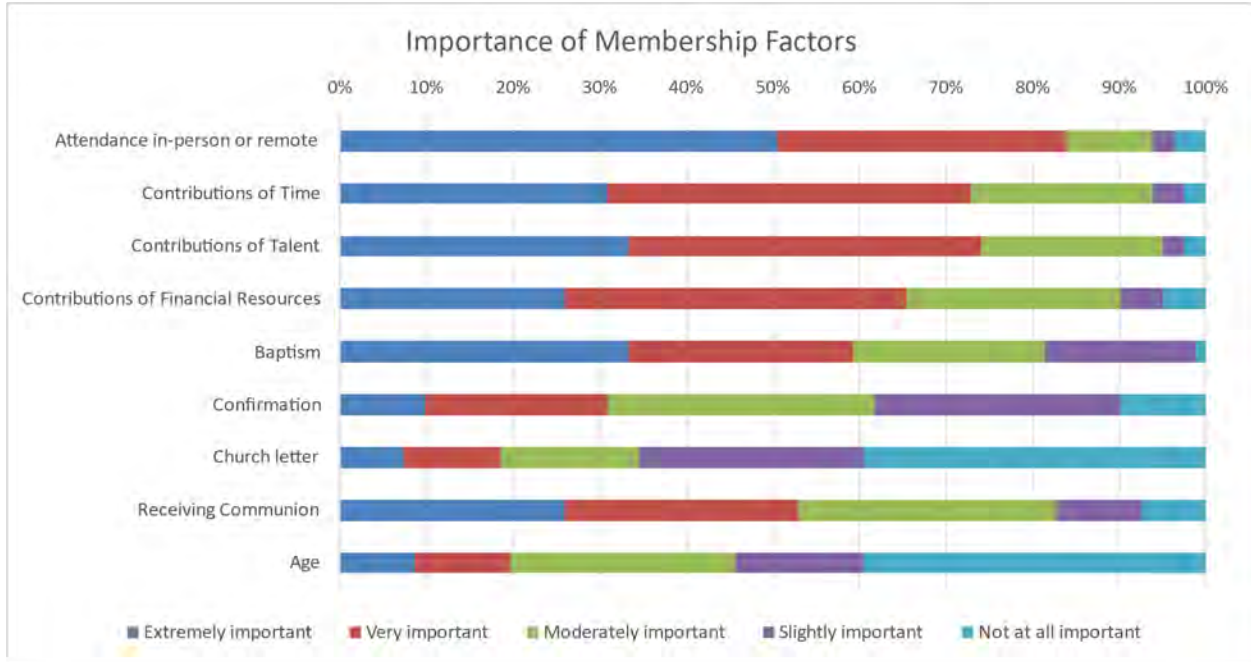
To what extent do you feel that different categories of membership are important?

Extremely important	3.70%
Very important	11.11%
Moderately important	42.0%
Slightly important	18.5%
Not at all important	27.1%



How important are the following factors to membership categories?

• Attendance (in-person or remote)		• Baptism	
Extremely important	50.62%	Extremely important	33.33%
Very important	33.33%	Very important	25.93%
Moderately important	9.88%	Moderately important	22.22%
Slightly important	2.47%	Slightly important	17.28%
Not at all important	3.70%	Not at all important	1.23%
• Contributions of Time		• Confirmation	
Extremely important	30.86%	Extremely important	9.88%
Very important	41.98%	Very important	20.99%
Moderately important	20.99%	Moderately important	30.86%
Slightly important	3.70%	Slightly important	28.40%
Not at all important	2.47%	Not at all important	9.88%
• Contributions of Talent		• Church letter	
Extremely important	33.33%	Extremely important	7.41%
Very important	40.74%	Very important	11.11%
Moderately important	20.99%	Moderately important	16.05%
Slightly important	2.47%	Slightly important	25.93%
Not at all important	2.47%	Not at all important	39.51%
• Contributions of Financial Resources		• Receiving Communion	
Extremely important	25.93%	Extremely important	25.93%
Very important	39.51%	Very important	27.16%
Moderately important	24.69%	Moderately important	29.63%
Slightly important	4.94%	Slightly important	9.88%
Not at all important	4.94%	Not at all important	7.41%
		• Age	
		Extremely important	8.64%
		Very important	11.11%
		Moderately important	25.93%
		Slightly important	14.81%
		Not at all important	39.51%



Is there something else that is important, but that we have not included?

- It has been helpful for me to take into consideration how committed someone is to the church when they weigh in on the way "things should be." If they are not attending, their opinion carries less weight. If they are not giving time, talent or tithe, their opinion carries less weight. If they are not committed, I am less likely to ask them to consider a leadership position because they have no skin in the game.
- Prayer
- Change age to 18; perhaps a category for affiliated persons (baptized but irregular attenders, not all that active). Keep a category on parochial report for active non-baptized (Kids and other new people who are not yet members).
- Although there were remote forms of worship prior to the greater pandemic, COVID-tide obviously increased and enhanced those forms of worship as well as heightened the number of virtual programming options overall. There may need to be a consideration of how attendance is evaluated (does being on screen for part of a service "count"; are online views used to determine attendance?). Obviously, there is always a tension between attending and contributing that leads into a discussion of active versus passive membership, but the added ways for remote participation may, in fact, open that debate further.
- The desire to spend time in the Word and willingness to commit to lifelong learning.
- If we keep the categories from Canon I.17, I would create space for non-Baptized members as an example.
- Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and Receiving Communion are all very important, but not when we are talking about membership.
- Attendance can be at church gatherings/outreach outside of Sunday worship. In other words, we have several active members who do not attend Sundays for various reasons.
- I guess I wonder what you're assuming "Attendance" (in the table) is at. Sunday morning worship? Worship, period? Worship feels central to me, but when we had a Thursday evening service for a while, we had a few folks who were Thursday people and definitely not Sunday people. We've also had folks who'll participate in outreach, or care for the grounds, but don't really show up for church much. That's complicated in its own way, but if those folks think of themselves as members and participate in the life of the parish, do we count them even if their worship attendance per se is low or nonexistent?
- NA
- There are people who contribute financially and who never attend. Perhaps this is a category that could be included.
- No

- NOTE: Could not figure out how "Age" is particularly important to Membership categories (except for "Children" vs. "Adults," so cannot answer that last line. Participation in local parish ministries/leadership is important. Some level of reasonable understanding of the Episcopal Articles of Religion would also seem important.
- Our parish is pretty small (about 15-20 people) and we have many that attend and donate time and money but have never been officially welcomed into the church. We count people for the record using these categories once a year, but otherwise don't pay much attention to them.
- Attendance should be in-person, remote is interesting but hard to accurately gauge.
- My choices in the above categories reflect what I believe should be true, not what actually is. For example: I rated baptism, confirmation as being "not at all important" to the categories -- but currently, they are critical. Even so, to me, regular attendees who do ministry are far more important than "members" who rarely show up or participate in anything.
- whether they consider themselves members
- These categories are very important.
- The status of retired clergy is never factored, and people who are seasonal are also not factored.
- Cultural background or Ethnicity
- "Passion for doing God's work" Ongoing assessment of individual's gifts for ministry and opportunities provided to exercise them.
- My contributors added Belief in the Trinity, How we treat each others.
- We are conflicted about how to incorporate Baptism and Communion into the definition of membership, simply because we don't ask that question at Annual Parish Meetings, e.g., nor is anyone monitoring who does/does not take Communion.
- A discussion should be held on the difference between Confirmation for one who was baptized as an Episcopalian as opposed to someone raised in another denomination that was never previously Confirmed. A similar question arises around Reception. For the baptized Episcopalian it may well be the case that Confirmation represents a less significant change than one who is being Confirmed or Received from outside of the Episcopal Church We oppose the practice of tying levels of membership to one's ability to make financial contributions on the grounds of excluding those who do not have the financial means to do so. They should be seen, treated, and categorized as the same kind of member as anyone else. Put differently, the widow living off of social security that attends weekly should not be seen as less of a member than the businessman that attends three times a year and pledges a pittance. Similarly, we also oppose the categorization of "communicants." One's membership as a part of the church should not depend on their spiritual state that defines whether or not they are prepared to receive communion. Put differently, a faithful attender that does not feel comfortable

receiving communion because of a deep conviction about some aspect of their spiritual life should not be penalized for taking the weight of communion seriously. Given what we have to say about inclusion, we feel there is a moral imperative that being "in the club" should not affect how we welcome people into our community, be that on Sunday mornings or in deeper incorporation into the life of parish ministry. It is notable that, while we claim "In Christ there is no East or West," in practice TEC has drawn unnecessarily hard lines defining gradations of membership. Generally speaking, there is not a clear understanding of the designations themselves nor what makes them necessary. There was a time in living memory when one's membership in a church was known in the community. Additionally, that membership identified parishioners as certain kind of people (erroneously or accurately). Not only that, but that membership often reflected what status a parishioner held in that community. There's the old saying that "Blue-collar workers were Baptists; Managers were Methodists; and Business owners, doctors, and lawyers were Episcopalians." Mercifully, this is less the case today, but a system that ties one's church membership to one's economic class needs to be deeply reimagined. Other than tracking statistics, we are not aware of any programs at the greater Episcopal Church or Diocesan levels that rely on the data put forward by the Parochial Report. Yes, the report is published every year, but what purpose does it serve? What ministries does it enable? Does it help TEC or Dioceses hone in on communities that need particular help? With all of that said, there are some aspects of membership that are important. We do not wish to see the historical and genealogical value of the Parish Registers go away. They are immense treasures (and also just plain cool). We also deeply value the theological claim that baptism is "full initiation ... into Christ's Body the Church." Baptism is our primary means of establishing membership, but the current categories are in contradiction with the above theological statement from our Book of Common Prayer. If baptism is "full initiation," then how can we have further designations? In the instance of a member pursuing ordination, we do think it is important for there to be an indication of that person's commitment to the church beyond simple membership. Does this person actually attend a church? Do they contribute to the ministries of the church in whatever ways they are able? Have they been confirmed? While we do think this information is relevant and important to verify, it seems this information could be provided through a simple checklist with their parish leadership that would not require convoluted record keeping otherwise. There are three additional considerations we ask you to consider. First, we have been approaching online attendance largely as a means of being very much the part of the gathered body. Will the individuals who only attend virtually be considered eligible for church membership, and if so, will their membership carry an asterisk? Second, we have one parishioner who attends five churches in a rotation, effectively attending our church once per month. By all indications, they would qualify as an Adult Communicant in Good Standing, except that their baptism is not recorded in our register. Could they be a member with our congregation and also a member of all four other churches and denominations? Finally, we have a surprisingly large number of people in our congregation that have been attending for decades that are not members by the current designations. Some are so involved as to be major contributors to the personality of

the parish, defining for decades many aspects of our community life. Could there be a way to include these stalwarts in our membership?

- If you mean official membership then these categories matter, but seekers, who are not yet officially members are in our minds members of this community.
- Online participation should count as full participation
- When considering the importance of member contribution of time, talent, and financial resources, each member's circumstances need to be considered. Some have physical limitations that prevent personal participation but who give of their treasure, while other have very limited financial resources but give of their time and talents. Age is important so those 16 and older can vote at Annual Meetings and serve of vestry.
- Whether or not somebody wants to be included in the church directory.
- Willingness to be involved, willingness to serve and give

Given that the notion of church membership differs by culture and region, how is membership unique in your context?

- Our city is a transient community, so we get folks from all over the country, with differing backgrounds. They are often not seeking an Episcopal church so much as a Christian church that mirrors their values and is welcoming. Our convoluted definitions of membership are not often discussed, but when they are (annual meeting for example), they become barriers and make some folks feel "less than".
- We are a small, mutual ministry, rural congregation. The COVID era took us into the world of technology, and now we have regular attendees from a broad population - former members who had moved away, and can now attend virtually; friends of members who attend virtually; people whose baptism and confirmation status is unknown, etc. I doubt that this is unique.
- Simply, membership is considered attendance, financial support, and having one's baptismal date recorded with the church office. We still make an attempt to put that information in ink in "the book".
- There are several Episcopal churches in the community I serve. Members have drifted among them depending on the priest, the worship time, programs offered, etc. This creates a lack of loyalty in church membership.
- N/A
- We are made up of mostly conservative, elderly white members.
- I'm only concerned with membership, insofar as it affects eligibility for vestry nomination. Otherwise it's irrelevant.

- People have little sense of denomination and we get very few formal transfer requests in or out.
- There are some who were once active but are not now, yet send a donation each year and we count them as members, but not active members.
- People are eager to 'join' the church if they are active, but less likely to be received or confirmed. If someone Joins the church they go into the ledger as baptized members. Hopefully they remain active.
- Membership signifies someones' commitment to the community.
- We are traditional church so we see going to church and involvement in prayer and ministry as nonnegotiable for active members
- Others come to receive and they are welcome
- Done want a place to get married or buried
- I don't think church membership is unique in my context. Persons coming from other Christian denominations want to know how they become members of the church and the process is pretty straight forward. If you feel called to follow Christ, you get baptized. If you want to participate in parish leadership, you need to be confirmed or received by the bishop.
- For persons coming from non-Christian traditions or from no faith. They want to learn about the faith and often want to know "what they need to do." I find this means we are talking more about how do I live as a Christian more than how do I become a member of the church. However, this still leads to baptism and when there is a discernment to become a leader, confirmation.
- We have a lot of new people and also a lot of evangelical converts. Some wait until their kids are 4-10 for baptism. So we have about 60-80 people throughout the year who are active but not yet baptized. Some get baptized and others turn in a membership form and are converted to members, others end up leaving the church because it isn't for them after all.
- So throughout the year, I mostly keep track of active attendees, then active members within that. I tend to keep our roles tight - if I haven't seen someone in a year and they are not responsive to me or others from the church who reach out, I deactivate them.
- We live in a community of about 35 thousand, mutable churches in the community. We have a moderate amount of diversity in the community. 80% are white and 8% other.
- All members are Baptized, confirmed or received
- In terms of labels and completing the annual parochial report, our parish follows the definitions outlined by the national church, and, as such, membership is not unique for us. Our membership (using those established labels) is part of our church family regardless of the specific labels they hold. We are a rural parish with multiple generations of some families

leading us, as well as some people new both to the area and to the Episcopal Church. Being accepted into the church family and being active tends to come down to the individual, rather than have their status affected by a perception of their membership category.

- It is not important in our context. What matters is who shows up and who gets involved. No one is ever turned away by our parish if they request sacramental or spiritual help. Categories of membership are not considered.
- Small rural church in a relatively small rural area. Making the Episcopal Church known in area is very important.
- We have very few young people in our parish. On any given Sunday the people in the pews are mostly, if not all, elderly.
- We tend to talk about those who are members of the parish community, (committed to making the parish their community of faith) and those who are members of both the parish and the Episcopal Church (by confirmation or reception).
- We have a number of people active in the life of our parish who are not baptized and have expressed clearly their desire never to be baptized. So they pledge and participate fully except are not able to serve on the Vestry or vote in parish elections. Some receive Communion regularly, which bothers me (the rector), whereas other non-Baptized "members" don't receive Communion, which is at least consistent with their personal beliefs that don't place importance on sacraments. Our newcomers identify strongly with the desire to be a member of the parish. Less important to most of them is the desire to be confirmed or received by the bishop.
- We are made up of mostly non-Episcopalians, refugees from other denominations or other kinds of traditions. Once they feel like they are part of the ministry, then they are members. We don't draw strong lines.
- I live in an unchurched society. I don't necessarily think it is unique anymore, but it is certainly a place where you have to explain why you attend church as opposed to needing to explain why you don't. But this is attendance, not membership. I just want people to show up.
- We have members who come from a variety of other religious communities, as well as a number who were raised outside of any church community. Our sense of membership is grounded in presence and involvement. We focus on making sure that people feel welcome, accepted and included.
- We have some members who work on Sundays but this goes beyond culture and region and is more about their types of jobs (doctors on call, sports related jobs that require travel, etc.) so we look beyond Sundays when we are considering who is active.
- Our immediate neighborhood is largely unchurched, so we find more members become that by declaration than by transferring a letter from another church.

- I am currently serving in a small rural area of Louisiana. I believe that if a person is part of the family unit then they are considered a member of the church. Once the family member is in the church then it becomes important for the formal process of letter transfer, baptism or confirmation. Although baptism, confirmation, communion and letter of transfer are important for this community.
- As I already mentioned, we have an active and continuing Zoom congregation, for whom "communicant" becomes a challenging category. These are committed, pledging members who attend worship weekly, but receive communion irregularly. I am comfortable fudging the matter and calling these folks communicants in good standing; I just want to flag that tying membership status to sacramental participation gets complicated in an era where online worship participation is a real and viable option.
- Another aspect in our context is that we have many newer members who come from evangelical or unchurched backgrounds. In my experience the "letter of transfer" routine is all but irrelevant in parish life today. But a formal membership process is time-intensive for folks with young kids - a significant growth area for our parish - and may be intimidating or offputting for people with church trauma in their past. We tend to handle membership very lightly - if you're participating regularly and think of yourself as a member, you're a member! - and that seems to work well with the folks joining the parish. I think denominational identity and formally "opting in" as an Episcopalian feels odd and unnecessary to some of these younger folks, as well. We're the right church for them right now, but if they move, they may not look for an Episcopal church.
- Membership is a rather fluid concept. In our urban setting we draw people who are cradle-Episcopalians, those who've found their way here from other traditions, those who looking for a bit of shelter or a bite of food-and may see sharing in our worship as part of the "price of admission." From the settled to the seeker, we see, receive, and care for them all
- Our membership consists of 55 and older folks - white - no children.
- Sometimes people think they are a member because they went to our preschool. The current categories allow good clarity for relating who is actually a member.
- Our church is located in a small town in Wisconsin and the church endured an extensive fire in 2008. The church registry was lost. As the parish priest, I don't track pre-2008 baptisms and confirmations. Membership is based upon participation and financial contributions.
- Membership in southwest Louisiana is not seen as regional. We try to emphasize and teach our global membership as opposed to congregational membership.
- Having lived in Mexico City, the Mid-Atlantic, the South and, now, the Northwest, I do not feel that membership in any of these places is particularly unique. Some in Montana feel that people's sense of historic connection to their birth-church is unique, but I have found this to be true in most places.

- We have a large number of homeless persons who participate regularly in worship and take advantage of services we offer, both on our own and in partnership with others.
- We are located in a low populated area. Many travel a long way (from 20-40 minutes) to come to church.
- Like most regions, we have few "cradle" members of TEC, and the adult enquirers represent the full spectrum of beliefs and practices. We "incorporate" them by involving them in the work of the parish -- food kitchen, Toys for Tots, community dinners; we invite them also to participate in worship as readers, ushers, etc.
- But the idea of "full membership" is not in their vocabulary, and I don't push it.
- We are in a university community and some of our faculty and students return to their permanent homes for the summer. We also almost closed our doors during the pandemic and are slowly returning. Except for a few people, everyone grew up in another denomination (mostly Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, non-denominational evangelical). They have come to our church because we are the only church in town that is supportive of LGBTQ people.
- We have people coming from multiple denominations and some unchurched or disaffiliated. The notion of membership is less important to folks than it used to be. They tend to "affiliate" with us by attending, participating, etc. Until they become interested in the more formal leadership positions such as vestry, and ordination, membership is rarely a concern for any of us. Since, for the most part, the table or worship is open to any and all, it seems strange to suddenly throw up boundaries around certain offices. That isn't to say we don't need those boundaries, it just doesn't fit with the everyday.
- Most of the folks who join the church are either non-Christian or from evangelical backgrounds where membership is defined as attending.
- Membership in our context is often thought of as "fulfilling an expected duty." Parents will have their children baptized, because it's what you are supposed to do. You can tell them, teach them that it supposed to be the start of a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus -- and yet, many see it as a photo opportunity or as "hellfire insurance." There are some people who have no current connection with a church. They ask to have their children or grandchildren baptized. If you allow it, the baptism is the last time you'll ever see them until it's time for their funeral service. They never come back, because they have gotten what they wanted from the church, but aren't willing to give anything back.
- I serve two contexts. The primary one is a typical Anglo congregation where the categories of membership are reasonably relevant. The second is a Lakota cultural context. In that setting much of church involvement revolves around funerals, baptisms, Easter, and Christmas. The regular categories of membership are less meaningful and less helpful in that context.
- We have snowbirds who leave us in the winter, and our attendance also dips in the summer.
- In the traditional sense defined by the canons of the church.

- Our community is transient, so any perceived barriers to membership (baptism and/or providing documentation of it, confirmation, not being Catholic anymore) makes people back off right away. They want membership now and to figure out the sacramental aspects later.
- Membership in my context has a lot to do with families. Like, not all persons in a family might be at church on a Sunday - or maybe even ever come to church - but if it's Grandma's church then that's where all the kids and grandkids are going to be on Christmas and Easter and maybe Mother's Day. I think that's important to recognize, because it is the church for that family.
- The membership is totally Hispanic, from different countries, and also children of Hispanics born in the United States, most of them are bilingual.
- We have remote viewers. around the country. Some donate, most do not. We have people who won't pledge, but give generously and regularly.
- This isn't different than other places I've been.
- A large percentage of those in our parish are from other Christian traditions.
- We have a lot of people who do not ever make the transition into formal membership, but who participate on a regular or irregular basis. A lot of people think of us as their church even though we don't know much about them! We are in New England and people are very hesitant to make a formal religious claim about themselves.
- Lots of cowboys who aren't really aware that the sociology of the culture which leans more toward an individualistic interpretation of God is by nature more Protestant than Catholic.
- Because Nevada is a huge and empty state, congregationalism is an unquestioned norm.
- Our context includes members who voice concern during annual meetings regarding whether all whose votes are counted are officially members of the church and communicants in good standing.
- We are in a rural area that is seasonal. We have people who are members of other churches elsewhere, and are only here half a year or so. We have people who have membership in other churches in order to be buried there. The average Sunday attendance is really the important number for us.
- Our Membership is Majority Filipino.
- Our regularly attending members are made up of mostly older, white, congregants. We also have a few young families who do not attend regularly, but attend Christmas, Easter, and other special days.
- We have summer people who are here 5-6 months a year and are very active in this congregation, but also active in their winter congregations. We may not have their "letter" but we count them as members. Formal membership is not a major concern—we are focused on

hospitality, making room for all who want to be here, whether they come once a month, once a week, or three times a week.

- We have Native American population in this area, which helps cause an attitude of unimportance of membership categories.
- This area is largely Roman Catholic and Lutheran. Many are not familiar with the Episcopal Church.
- We are a minority in our area. Many opportunities to explain what confirmation is.
- In our context, our membership consists of predominantly elderly African Americans.
- We are unique in that much of our new membership comes from different denominational backgrounds. Many newcomers come to St. John's for social justice ministries, rather than because of an interest per se in the Episcopal Church. We haven't imposed requirements around confirmation, transfer of letter, etc.
- Membership is not unique in our context.
- It is not as important as being involved in our parish and community work and being a regular attendee.
- We put everyone to work no matter the age.
- Many of our younger members (in my opinion, correctly) believe they are members because they attend. They don't understand why there are differing levels, so to speak, of membership.
- We are a college parish and have students who come through regularly. They would qualify for membership in our parish but they are sometimes members of their home parishes (or internship parishes, etc.) Having some kind of designation that takes this into account would be helpful. We also have a number of retired clergy who are technically not members by virtue of their ordination, but who meet membership requirements according to our bylaws.
- Because we are in a college community, we see a lot of turnover. Some people arrive and are very committed for the duration of their time here (sometimes only a year, sometimes four or five). Some are far more involved than those that can technically claim membership.
- Additionally, our town (and congregation) skew older but we have very few resources for housing the elderly. As a result, many people tend to move away rather than age in place. Because of that, we do comparatively few funerals. Put differently (and maybe crassly), it is a simpler process to remove someone from our register because of death than it is to remove someone who has moved away for their final years.
- We don't think it is unique.
- We have a lot of "snowbirds" -- members who live here in the winter and have a home elsewhere in the summer. In some cases, many of them are members of two parishes.

- We have substantial groups of people who consider themselves members of our congregation who are not reflected in these categories (baptism not recorded, rare attendance, connected through our meal or garden ministries, consider themselves members or two congregations, attend only virtually and do not wish to receive communion). In eleven years of ordained ministry, I've seen letters of transfer used three times.
- The Episcopal church in my community closed in 2002 and our church plant began in 2019, which means that two generations were mostly never baptized or confirmed. Full membership and access to communion regardless of baptism has been important in rebuilding trust and shared identity as the body of Christ.
- Parishioners come to our community because of its welcome and inclusion of all people in the family of God. Belonging to the community has to do with being welcomed, with connecting with the people and the message/values of the community. The mark of membership at our congregation, then, has to do with people's sense of belonging with each other and the community. Additionally, while most people feel belonging to our parish community in connection to worship services, a significant portion also find belonging in their involvement in our ministries, especially through volunteering in the resale shop, the food pantry, or the community garden. Some who are part of these ministries might consider themselves members of the parish even if they don't come to worship services.
- Over the last three years, we have welcomed over 100 people, a vast majority of them from other Christian denominations and some from no religious affiliation. Their path to belonging in our community comes from getting to know people and feeling included, welcomed and loved, which is affirmed through sermons, the open communion table, formation/Christian education, and fellowship. As these newcomers feel embraced by the parish, they commit to it as members (filling out a form) and then learn more about the sacraments and our church polity. As a result, we consider members of the parish anyone who wishes to be a member, which allows them to feel welcomed, take part in the activities and ministries of the parish, be part of decision-making, and take leadership roles.
- I am not sure our church is unique. It seems our membership is following the pattern of many rural, small churches.
- We have several families/members who are "snow birds," splitting their time between here and another home. Some of them consider themselves members here and may spend less than half the year here.
- Our congregation is aging and few younger people/families are joining.
- Not sure it is unique but most people in our congregation seem to understand membership as a thing "achieved" by doing: attending worship, giving, being part of general activities of the parish--not by qualifying via canonical definition. Many who join us don't know of transferring a letter or even think to do that. Seems generational in the people who ask with older

generations being both more aware of the letter and seemingly have more urgency for that task to be accomplished.

- I don't believe a formality of membership is important in our congregation. Individuals show up, are welcomed, and encouraged to keep coming and organically become a part of our community. I think most of our congregation think of members as the ones who "show up" and are a part of things. It is not a label or status that matters.
- I had been attending for 3 years before the subject was ever raised to me. It was just assumed by everyone. " yeah, he's a member here."
- We are a diverse church in terms of race and gender and we are very much united in Love. Sharing of the Peace is an up on your feet, hug everyone you can event. It goes on for quite a bit and it takes a couple shakes of the bell to get everyone back to their seats.
- Membership is when we have a record of baptism or transfer. Anyone else is an attendee. They may or may not support ministries. But they are not members.
- The parish lost its register when its previous priest died. In addition to the sad loss of many historic records, the parish had to start a new register. In practicality, this meant that the parish register equals the directory of current active members.
- Based in a rural area, but one to which many repeat visitors travel and still others who live here on a seasonal basis, our attendance and membership fluctuates season to season. In addition, during and post-covid, we have a faithful group of folks who now interact with our worship services as they are livestreamed.
- We have people involved in the life of the church who don't fit in the current categories of membership.
- Often the view on canonical membership categories changes by rector. We have had rectors that allow parishioners who do not qualify, according to the canons, to serve on the vestry. Other rectors, will not permit this.
- We follow the canonical definitions of membership. In our context, one becomes a member of the church through baptism, reception by a bishop, or through transfer of letter from a church in communion with the Episcopal Church.
- The biggest unknown is accounting for online viewers who are not members.

What challenges have our current categories of membership caused in your context?

- Finding people who meet the membership requirements can be a limiting factor for leadership positions.
- I can't think of any 'challenges'. As a small mutual ministry community, we have a high level of participation and contribution of time and talent, and a high level of financial participation. Our budget needs are modest, so there is not a lot of pressure on tracking giving statistics.
- Too many categories. Too much chasing down information and ancient baptismal records from churches people haven't attended in fifty years or more just to join the congregation. If only this could be a simple form (provided by TEC) and then a happy little certificate (provided by TEC) in return signifying membership.
- Parishioners may not know their information. They may not see the importance of deepening their faith and membership through Confirmation. That last is on us clergy to become better teachers about the church and what membership, stewardship, and the like entails.
- N/A
- Understanding diversity.
- Welcoming others from different racial, sexual orientation and other backgrounds.
- Having the physical stamina to be actively involved.
- Financial support ending when people receive their heavenly reward.
- It's far too complex. We have four new member classes every year, and I've given up trying to explain the different membership levels. Heck, it would be easier if you all just gave us: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum as levels of membership. People get that...
- We just consider active people as members, and if people want to be 'official' members, they can sign the book on one of our regular new member Sundays. When the bishop's visit is upcoming, I invite those who want to become Episcopalian to start meeting with me for an even deeper dive. But we find that many people do not care about the official joining. Happy just to become active in the church.
- We could not possibly tell a person who is regularly active that they were not allowed to participate in annual meeting, even if they have not signed the book.
- Membership should signify commitment to the community, but sometimes someone's commitment is not evident to the leadership of the church.
- Once a year we try to stick folks in various boxes. It's a minor pain.
- Also congregations are so fluid. People come and go, disappear for months or years.
- They tenuous connections are also an issue

- In recent years there are far fewer "in name only" members . Attendance tidal is half of what it was fifteen years ago.
- The only challenge is in the parochial report. Which by they way does not impact parish ministry in any way shape or form. The challenge is the the data collected in the parochial report doesn't really capture who we are as a parish and the vibrancy of our community presence.
- Communicants in good standing is confusing. Did they receive communion at least three times, great, keep track and keep them active. But if we have communicants in good standing, it implies we have communicants in bad standing, when really we probably have someone who is inactive and probably doesn't consider themselves a member of the church at all.
- It is a challenge to bring in to our congregation, other ethnic groups, one problem is our location of the parish.
- N/A
- Most challenges are a matter of clarification. We have had some unsure how to become members (whether that means transferring a letter from another parish, being confirmed, or what), and when the explanation is begun, there is often a sense of confusion (perhaps surprise) at the different categories.
- None. They are all ignored and considered unimportant.
- In our context - not an issue
- It's very difficult to understand why the members of our (elderly) generation and young people see the importance of community at each level. Being baptized and then only being in the pews or working with the community 1-4 times a year seems to fill the bill for them.
- Difficult to explain and difficult to track.
- I have people who are active participants in worship, formation, and/or fellowship but are reticent to be formal members because of their perception that it will "lock them in" or because they have had negative prior experiences of membership.
- I have addressed that a bit in my comments above.
- Our folks are not aware of them, so it only causes me (the Vicar) problems when I have to fill out parochial reports and the like.
- The only real challenge is when it comes to the filling out the parochial report. The definitions are what they are...but I do like the category of "active, but not members".
- It's an administrative nightmare that has little to no relevance to our day to day worship or our community.

- The challenges truly only surface during parochial reports and other times in which we are asked to divide out what type of members we have. Otherwise, our routine operations are served well by thinking more in terms of active members and inactive members. For instance, we have a mailing list and email list for those who want to know the immediate
- none
- Mostly just trying to get the ways we actually track and measure our membership and participation to match the parochial report requirements in a way that doesn't undercount our members or minimize our vitality!
- We are not otherwise particularly preoccupied by the canonical membership categories. Instead we work on trying to invite those participating in our parish community to take whatever their next step is into learning, growing in faith, participating, sharing their gifts and joining God's work in the world.
- Various definitions create their own challenges and confusions. To be honest, we ignore the various categories in most contexts.
- Not all folks are baptized/confirmed in the Episcopal faith, but remain active in the church,
- People sometimes think they are a member simply because they had some past experience at the church. The current definitions help clarify who is actually a member.
- When I arrived at the church 3 years ago, the list of members included people who have not attended for many years, nor were they contributing financially. I simply counted people who are participating and who contribute financially, but I'm sure I didn't count some people I should have counted.
- None that I know of.
- The only challenge derives from what's required in the Parochial Report.
- No real challenges, other than limiting the participation of some faithful attendees.
- Few challenges
- We really ignore them most of the time.
- While I think confirmation is an important sacrament I am not sure it is necessary canonically to serve in some roles.
- Perhaps the biggest impediment the current categories of membership cause in our context concerns leadership. You cannot serve on a vestry if you aren't an official member of the church. It can be difficult to get people who aren't official members to serve as committee or ministry chairs – or to be able coordinate a ministry. Because long-time members can sometimes be reluctant to support people who are "new".

- When parishioners see the annual reports where our average Sunday attendance runs at roughly 30% of Baptized Members, they always question it. However, this may be more a question of proper education about the terms than it is anything else.
- They haven't caused challenges, they are just not very useful.
- Increasing the amount of young people is difficult under these circumstances because of how money is emphasized in being a member of a church.
- We are a small congregation and not one person fits precisely in any of the categories. We go through the our list of members and frequent attenders and pledgers and then say, "Okay, this one kind of fits Helen and we've counted her here, so cross her off the list so we don't count her again somewhere else." But it's almost entirely arbitrary how we decide which category each person goes in because few of them really fit.
- Often, people are on our "book" who aren't actively involved in the affairs of the church - or, sometimes, there are folks who are attending and have had conversations with me about their own spirits, but they aren't ready to be baptized or become "members". I'm much more interested in discipleship than membership.
- This helps us to categorize the different groups and thus better define the ministries.
- When people come back from ACNA, do we receive them or confirm them? How do we count regular remote attendees whom we never see? Why is confirmation required for some ministries when it doesn't have any true impact on whether one is an active member or not. (This raises the theological question of what Confirmation is after the revisions in '79)
- None. We ignore the current categories as irrelevant.
- From time to time someone who is not baptized and yet uninterested or unable to be baptized wants to join, and this can be tricky as we are trying to be faithful to canon law.
- Sometimes a waste of time keeping track of folks. Whenever I begin at a parish, there is a measurable number of people who leave instantly, and a huge influx of newcomers and new members. In my current parish, there isn't even a secretary, so it's a huge time expense asking for letters of transfer and guessing at parochial reports.
- They have not caused challenges.
- The do not really cause a challenge.
- Membership has limited time: Many have double jobs, to support their families here and the Philippines.
- Retired and aged members could not drive to be able to give their time. Grandparents stay home to baby sit.
- It is a challenge to attract younger families because we currently don't have Sunday School. We only have one acolyte and five adult lay readers .

- The congregation doesn't distinguish between categories so it's only the people responsible for the parochial report (mostly the priest and secretary) who even care.
- Those who donate only time and talent do not always have the same respect from those who also donate financially.
- None
- There have been no challenges with the current categories.
- Because we have ignored the categories of membership in the Diocesan canons, there haven't been any challenges.
- The categories are outdated and confusing. In our post-pandemic church, membership is not defined by one of these categories.
- Not really any as they aren't something that is brought up or really even thought about except when it comes time to complete the parochial report.
- none
- We have people who are faithful in attendance, who serve in many ministries, but can't serve on Vestry because they aren't confirmed and don't want to be (many are Methodists who want to remain Methodist but can't attend a church because they are LBGTQ+)
- General misunderstanding about who is what. We have people for whom our parish is their parish but we don't see them regularly. Some pledge and others don't. It's an awkward thing pastorally to say that, by definition, a person isn't a member unless certain circumstances are met.
- We have unintentionally caused offense by inviting people to officially join the church. Some have attended for decades and are shocked to learn that they are not members; some even asked if they were allowed to continue to attend if they didn't become members.
- Our Parish Registers are in bad shape, in some places incomplete and in others very poorly filled out. We are in the process of updating our Parish Register, and the lax practices of certain periods of our history make this a very difficult and time consuming task.
- We also find it very difficult to track adults and children who have been a part of our congregation and moved away but remain members.
- We think these categories of membership are somewhat outdated.
- We believe all are welcome will embrace anyone who wants to worship with us, so the categories are not a challenge.
- The only time we think about membership in terms of the current categories is when we work on the parochial report.

- Confusion about who really "counts" and pressure to "commit" before it feels pastorally appropriate
- The existing membership categories of TEC are based on important theological principles, particularly baptism as a step in committing to a path of faith in Jesus. Additionally, membership is often understood to afford rights and responsibilities (especially around participation, decision-making, and leadership) to individuals who have committed themselves to the parish community, signaled through baptism and communion.
- In our context, it's important for us to highlight the ways that membership and sacraments have been used to exclude and marginalize people, especially LGBTQ+ people and allies. A large number of people who join our parish are recovering from the pain that Christian denominations and institutions have inflicted by dictating who belongs and who doesn't. It takes a lot of courage and personal commitment for people to walk in through the doors of a church and risk participating and joining. It takes significant work on our part to show radical hospitality and welcome that helps people feel like they belong. Additionally, many of our newcomers are still wrestling to learn and unlearn bad theology about God.
- Imposing membership requirements, especially ones that require theological commitments, can be a significant barrier to witnessing the Gospel. Our stance that anyone can belong as a member is part of our witness that God doesn't have requirements of belonging: all belong. It's our radical welcome and hospitality, as we trust that the Holy Spirit is guiding people in choosing where they belong in a community of faith. As parishioners grow, heal from wounds and strengthen their faith, they choose to be baptize (if they haven't been previously) or confirmed.
- The biggest challenge is filling out the Parochial Report. Because of the way people are members until they ask for transfer or die, and we know about it, the numbers do not accurately reflect our membership. I do appreciate the count for "active members." That number more accurately reflect what is going on in the parish.
- Confusion on some people's part who feel like they are a member but then may find out that technically they are not. Or, they feel as if it is too vague because we do not tell people they are not members until x, y, or z happens but rather invite them to participate in the full life of the parish and then to discern. So, that often leads to a "at what point am I a member" feeling even if the technical process has been laid out.
- None that we are aware of.
- They have not been explained to the congregation at large. The focus seems to be on attendance, not initiation into the local church or even the Body of Christ.
- Part of our congregation consists of seasonal members who spend the winter months in warmer places. Some are actively involved in Episcopal churches at their winter residence. We count them among our membership, but so will their 'winter parishes.' Furthermore, some

attend services of another denomination in the winter months. The 'brand' of church seems to be less important than what they find in the life of the parish

- They just don't reflect the reality on the ground.
- Confusion in understanding. They don't really capture the level of activity by folks not in those categories.
- For our church, the membership categories limit parishioners' opportunity to serve on the vestry.
- Membership in the Episcopal church is a commitment and a responsibility. The Christian faith is covenantal. I believe that we should have high expectations of our members and that there should be a formal process through which new members are catechized and brought into the fellowship of believers. I would say that the greatest challenge to membership at this time is that we do not expect enough of our members.
- Figuring out exactly how often someone attends and receives communion. Trying to find a process of culling the rolls.

Does your worshiping community consider someone a member who is not yet Baptized or whose Baptism is not recorded in an Episcopal church?

- In our parish, we have had to delineate between the term "member" and "people of our parish". It has the tendency to set up a class system, with the cradle Episcopalians at the top of the hierarchy.
- Yes. We have a number of regular attendees, mostly via Zoom, whose baptismal status is unknown.
- While "technically" incorrect, I think folks who haven't been yet baptized or had their info recorded in the book are nevertheless "considered" members by others in the parish. Baptism is entrance into THE church, but ushers aren't checking certificates at the door to be members of this particular parish church.
- We considered all who attend on a regular basis to be members regardless of Baptismal status.
- All are welcome and with our constant flow of people moving in and out of the state.
- all who are part of our worship even online are consider part of the community.
- Most likely yes. I have never been asked by a member if someone is baptized, confirmed, if they transferred their letter, etc.

- We'll allow membership if they can show a baptism certificate from a Christian tradition. But baptism is a sine qua non-without it, no membership.
- People who formally join the church record their baptisms in our ledger. We have not yet had someone want to join who was not baptized. However, who knows if someone who is not yet a formal member but attends regularly was baptized? People are invited to be baptized at every big feast day when we do re-affirmation.
- Yes, particularly some of the college students who attend sporadically but feel connected to the community.
- No
- That's pretty much a biblical mandate.
- yes
- We have a person who was born in Vietnam and is Buddhist. She has been attending regularly and has asked what does she "need to do" as a Christian. Baptism is difficult for her as she is concerned how it would impact her parents. The worshipping community considers her a member even though she isn't baptized. In their minds, membership is determined by how often you worship with us.
- No. We follow the canons. However, I often have new members who don't know the exact date of their baptism in another church. So we check a box, and say "yes" they are baptized, and sometimes we'll put a year and month. We gain this information by having them fill out a "New Member Form" and we keep track in our Realm database (not the green book).
- Yes, we accept all people in our parish, we rarely ask if they have been Baptized or a member of the Episcopal church, unless they want to serve on the vestry. We then ask them if they would consider joining the church.
- N/A
- With a lower case m, yes--all are welcome, and all who attend and participate are perceived as being members. For those to be counted as full, adult Members (capital M), we do follow the expectation to be Baptized/have the Baptism recorded.
- Absolutely. But the truth is that we do not count members. The Church is not a club. Everyone belongs if they want to.
- No
- Perhaps not a "member" but I am finding that the people who attend and participate are not as concerned with those categories (although they are working toward reception in our parish) and are more active in the activities of spreading the Gospel message through action and speech.

- For membership we would seek to baptize one who is not baptized. We would consider someone a member of the parish if they were baptized in another tradition and that would not be recorded in an Episcopal Church.
- Yes--especially those baptized elsewhere. We are the church universal, correct?
- I addressed this above. We do consider them a member in every way, but we make clear the minor stipulation of not being allowed to vote or serve on Vestry.
- Yes.
- The community doesn't know if someone is or is not baptized. Everyone is loved, treated, and incorporated the same.
- Absolutely - we are known for being open, welcoming and inclusive. We have found that we are a place where others come to recover from the wounds inflicted by other church communities. With the bishop's encouragement and support, we practice open communion - welcoming all to receive from God's table. We've heard from several people that just hearing those words of acceptance and inclusion has been healing for them.
- We do consider some who are not baptized yet or in an Episcopal church as members, especially if they are infants and awaiting baptism, or older and expressing interest in becoming baptized at some point. We also consider them as members if they are baptized in other denominations recognized by the Episcopal church.
- They would not consider them a member if they had not been baptized. The baptism being recorded in the Episcopal church is not important. They believe baptism is required for membership.
- Yes, absolutely. And I'm actually a little shocked by the second part of this question. I assume this is based on the canons, but do the canons actually imply that only Episcopalian baptisms count???
- No; we still observe the formal definition of membership when the Canons so require with respect to categories of lay ministry and leadership. But all are welcomed and loved here.
- Definitely
- We only include the unbaptized as a member if they are in baptismal preparation (catechumenate).
- Yes, as the parish priest, I have not asked for evidence of baptism. Those who were baptized in another church are welcome in our church.
- We recognize many and all people who are Baptised in other denominations as being able to receive Eucharist. However, this does not make them members of the Episcopal Church.
- This would only be important, again, for the Parochial Report. In terms of real "membership" (in the sense of presence and activity), this is irrelevant.

- Not formally.
- Yes. We have a attendee who is Jewish. He does SO MUCH for our church.
- Yes
- I don't think we have any adults who are not baptized who attend church.
- We have several people who fully participate in the active life of the community, lead ministry, and would look like fully active members. Some of them are Jewish and have no interest in converting, but love the community. Others are agnostic and just aren't sure about baptism. There are many others that we don't have their records, but they certainly are members of the church by appearances.
- Membership is baptism into the Body of Christ either at this parish or a previous church.
- No. But again, I value the presence and ministry of a non-member more highly than the absence and lack of ministry of a member.
- They may not be a "Member" until baptism. But there is no doubt that they are a member of the family.
- Yes.
- Not really, no
- yes
- I don't know what the community thinks - I count that person just the same. To me, baptism makes no difference.
- We consider you part of the faith community and offer you participation in the process of becoming an official member of the Church.
- Yes
- Certainly.
- We would consider someone a member for the purposes of our Parish Directory of members, if they asked us to, even though we cannot enter them into the Parochial Register.
- Yes.
- The community considers Baptism requisite for adult membership.
- Yes
- YES. And as they journey with us, they finally are received and confirmed.
- Yes. We encourage all people to commit to baptism to become full members in the Christian family but we don't deny them communion if they wish to take it.

- Yes, generally. If a person is here and wants to be involved, we are more concerned with matching their gifts to appropriate ministries.
- Yes at times.
- By and large they consider anyone who is baptized and regularly receives the sacraments a member.
- Confirmation usually comes up if they are to be a delegate to convention or are in the discernment process.
- No
- Yes.
- WE WELCOME EVERYBODY just like Christ would. We don't exclude anyone because of baptismal status. We believe that if someone becomes part of our community and we do our job of welcoming them and helping them grow in faith, that baptism will follow!
- No. Baptism is the foundation for most of our thinking.
- yes
- Yes.
- No.
- For the sake of parochial reports, no. Functionally, yes
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes
- Yes, we do consider members of the worshipping community some individuals who are not baptized because our membership comes from the individual's affirmation of a sense of belonging (which they indicate when they fill out a membership form readily available on Sundays before worship). Realistically, this is a very small number because the largest portion of new parishioners in the past three years have already been baptized in other Christian denominations, and pastoral care and relationship-building helps orient those who are not yet baptized.
- However, we affirm our value of radical welcome and hospitality-there's no requirement to membership beyond a desire to be part of the community, an acknowledgment of belonging.
- There is one baptism... and if a person is baptized that person is baptized - and yes, we accept it. When a person joins and is received by the Bishop, we record the record of their baptism from the church where it took place in the Church Register. If a person is not baptized, the

invitation is made. I do not think we have anyone here who is not baptized. If someone comes who prefers for some reason not to be baptized, they will be accepted and loved and I pray that person will share with me their reasoning. It may just be a maturing of faith.

- Yes but only because they wouldn't want to say that anyone isn't. They don't, at least explicitly, say at a Baptism that someone has now become a member of the church who wasn't before.
- I would say yes.
- Technically the answer should be no. However, I am not sure how that canon has been adapted by diocesan canon or parish bylaw.
- Good question - we are a member of a larger church body, and that body has said that baptism is our rite of entrance. If somebody is not baptized, he or she would not be considered a member in our parish. That said, they may be actively involved in the life of the parish. As a common practice, we do not check somebody's baptismal record when they participate in our common life. We count somebody as a member when they consider themselves to be a member. (Pretty awkward telling somebody who considers themselves a member of the parish that - formally - they are not members yet)
- Yes., if someone is faithfully participating in the spiritual life of the congregation, attending services in-person or online, assisting in our many helping ministries to the community, studying scripture with us.
- Not officially, but unofficially the community does.
- When reporting in the parochial report, we do not count these persons as members, but we treat them as full members of the church and count them in our average Sunday attendance.
- We consider someone to be a member if they have been baptized with water in the name of the Trinity in our church, or have transferred their membership from another Episcopal Church, or have been confirmed or received by a bishop into the Episcopal Church.
- Yes.

What challenges have our current membership categories caused when completing the Parochial Report?

- In recording attendance, we don't count the members and non-members separately.
- None really. I believe we capture the folks above in the overall attendance numbers.
- I think the parochial report works best for those with the spiritual gift of list-keeping. I don't have that gift and must therefore apply as certain amount of "art"
- It is not always easy to discern the status of those who attend, unless they ask for information about making a formal connection to the parish.
- none
- No challenges I can think of. The Parochial Report is simply an annual "to do."
- It means I'm making informed guesses every year. I know I'm close, but I also know I'm uncertain. Particularly since we don't have a "member in bad standing" status.
- We have no idea who all the communicants are. Records are spotty and people do not withdraw or transfer when they leave. We're often not sure if someone who dies was ever listed as a member. So we cannot accurately count all our 'baptized members'. We just have a number that we add to or subtract from when new members join or known members die, but the total number is far bigger than the number of active parishioners. We do not know how many inactive people are lurking and thinking of themselves as members, but it's probably not as many as our 'total baptized members' implies. So that whole section on the parochial report is really meaningless. The only number that matters to a church, really, is active members, and everyone who is active in coming to church, donating, getting involved, etc is a communicant in good standing in our estimation. We don't have everyone's age, so filling out the number of people in each age group is also just a guess.
- Sometimes it's hard to figure out if what we mean by the categories listed is the "official" meaning.
- It causes my Administrator all sorts of worries. She wants to be accurate
- I'm not troubled
- Difficulty in assessing an accurate # of members
- The challenge is that the data collected in the parochial report doesn't really capture who we are as a parish and the vibrancy of our community presence.
- We are one of few churches in our diocese who keep track of active attendees not yet baptized, which we put in the parochial report. This is for people who haven't yet turned in a membership form or who are not yet baptized. I feel like in general, the church does not keep

track of this group very well, but this is probably the most important group to be discipling and including.

- Not much, remains close to the same.
- N/A
- There is what I suppose should be seen as a minor inconvenience of having to know the status of people in order to complete the PR, but that is not that much of a challenge (at least not in a small parish such as ours, in a small community).
- Since ordination in 2002, every Parochial Report with which I have been involved has used some form of guesswork to come up with membership numbers. The truth is that everyone is guessing.
- They result in continually requiring review
- I don't complete that report but the person who does has never expressed any concerns.
- Some of the categories are very difficult to determine with any sense of accuracy.
- I have people who consider themselves members who only worship online but don't give or attend in person. They aren't on our roles, but they check in each week. How do I qualify them?
- The difference between "lifetime" baptized Christian, every placed on the roll, and "active" category in the parochial report.
- It doesn't cause a problem, but my reports are probably not Canonically accurate. I interpret the spirit of the question and answer them as best I can with what I know of our community. We are a church plant and only a few years old, so those forms don't really reflect the data that is from our community.
- Anything connected to communicants or communicants in good standing is a problem.
- "All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing."
- What's good cause preventing them from attending? What is faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God? How much work, prayer, or giving does it take to be in Good Standing?
- Take out everything pertaining to communicants and communicants in good standing. If kids don't come because their parents don't bring them, is this a good reason to not attend?
- We can't accurately account for membership numbers, according to the current membership categories. We do our best, but it's a complicated puzzle, which takes an inordinate amount of administrative time and energy.

- The main challenge has been one of time and effort in trying to be sure that we are being consistent in how we record the numbers. It is hard to break down everyone into classifications we do not use on a normal basis. In other words, it takes time away from mission and ministry to focus on data entry and categories we do not find especially helpful in our normal operations.
- none
- As I said above, Mostly just trying to get the ways we actually track and measure our membership and participation to match the parochial report requirements in a way that doesn't undercount our members or minimize our vitality.
- It would be helpful if membership categories didn't come in quite as many flavors. This too easily leads to confusion and thus to inaccuracy.
- Different folks have prepared the report before I took my turn. I didn't have an understanding of where their numbers came from. I would like to 'start over' and make sure we are all on the same page.
- The folks who reported prior to me may not have understood the categories.
- Our 'attendance' remains stable (and has for years) with about the same number of folks arriving as leaving. Letters of transfer are rare from folks who attended another Episcopal Church.
- There have been no challenges.
- My eye cross when I complete this report - simply because I find it arduous to distinguish between the categories of membership.
- None that I am aware of.
- Given our focus on participation in terms of presence and activity, we would need to be overly formal in questioning people about Baptism, Confirmation, etc. to accurately complete the Parochial Report. In our case, these are more estimates.
- Accounting for all of those who are active participants in our community.
- The categories are challenging, especially when filling out the Parochial Report.
- We have "members" who are not canonically registered. We have members who have never transferred their membership from another parish -- despite repeated invitations.
- They really don't cause problems in the reporting.
- I think the biggest challenge is keeping track of affiliated members who don't fit the categories neatly. There is an assumption that people will transfer in from other parishes, that there is somehow neat codified membership across denominations, and that doesn't exist anymore.

- Since an active communicant is defined so loosely- we tend to over-report our membership because we technically include people we see 2-3 times a year, who do not give or contribute but are on our books as members. We do membership audits yearly and try to keep them accurate. Our active membership is around 500 people that we see regularly; the contribute and participate in worship at least once a month. There is another 200-300 that claim us, but we see them a few times a year.
- It can be time-consuming and adds unnecessary complexity.
- First of all, let's acknowledge the Parochial Report is not helpful to parishes... at all. It's an annual, anxiety-producing pain, and constantly changing the specifications makes it worse. Vestries must approve it, but most members' eyes roll to the back of their head when they examine it. All they tend to do is "rubber stamp" what the people who prepare it do, or make their lives far more complicated by questioning items they have no intention to help calculate. Make the parochial report extraordinarily simple, stop changing it -- or, better yet, do away with it completely. "Three Kinds of Lies: Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics"
- The real challenge is that the number listed for Baptized Members has not been proven for over a generation. Each year we add the additions and subtract the deaths, transfers, and departures to arrive at the new number. For myself, I don't make the adjustment to a provable list of Baptized Members because that would result in my baptized members showing a dramatic decrease when in reality the decrease is really the accumulation of missed decreases over many decades. I think the church should consider declaring a year to correct baptized membership to an actual provable number or adding a category like corrections to prior year that a congregation could use to make that adjustment.
- Again, it's just not very useful.
- Young people
- We are a small congregation and not one person fits precisely in any of the categories. We go through the our list of members and frequent attenders and pledgers and then say, "Okay, this one kind of fits Helen and we've counted her here, so cross her off the list so we don't count her again somewhere else." But it's almost entirely arbitrary how we decide which category each person goes in because few of them really fit. The parochial report is my best guess.
- Someone from my church helps me to go through the book and make sense of membership - but like I said, it means sometimes what is reflected in the Parochial report isn't what is our lived experience of worship and life together.
- Find the correct data of adults who come to our community, who have been part of another confession of faith.
- We don't always know if someone is baptized. The non-member category is impossible to accurately determine.
- Current baptized members has no basis in reality.

- There are so many different ways of counting membership, and most of us have lots of people on our rolls who don't attend. And then we have lots of people who do attend who are not on our rolls. Most of the challenges here are based on the nature of human beings rather than the nature of the membership categories. The other challenge is that most people they have no idea when they were baptized, and asking them that question can be a barrier to formal membership. And yet, baptism is the foundational sacrament of membership. So that does leave us in a bit of a quandary.
- Lots of guessing. THANK GOD for our treasurer who did this each year!!!!
- None.
- Not much.
- No problems (but concern and guilt). Few active Youth and children.
- Separating out the active members and those who do not attend regularly but do send monetary support to the church,
- It's mostly the priest and secretary who deal with the parochial report, but it's a pain in the neck! All these different categories, trying to decide which one a person fits into.
- One example: a couple who haven't set foot in the church since we elected a married gay bishop but whose "letters" are here--do we count them as "members"? How about the lesbian woman who was baptized in the Episcopal Church as a child but felt shunned as she came out, left the church, came back when we elected a married gay bishop and is slowly beginning to trust us again, but has not sought to get her letter transferred (from a now defunct parish, BTW) because she didn't know it was a thing? Does she NOT count as a member when they do?
- Who is actually functioning as a part of the Body of Christ?
- None
- None
- There have been no challenges with the Parochial Report.
- Determining the actual number of members is an art, not a science.
- SO DING DANG CONFUSING!
- The person who completes this section of the report tells me that it has not really been a problem.
- none
- It's a big guessing game.
- A whole lot of guessing.

- How many members do we technically have versus how many do we say we have? Based on a reasonable pool of people that could attend, we probably have around 200-250 members. Based on all of the people that are still technically members, that number jumps to between 700-800. As a result, we have to choose between what is technically right and what is realistic. The Parochial Reports, then, are inaccurate and because of their inaccuracies, may not be terribly relevant.
- As we prepare to conduct a capital campaign, we've struggled with the issue of who to include in the "every member canvass." Who are they?
- At least one previous rector ignored the Index in the Parish Register opting instead to create his own system for tracking membership. Additionally, his handwriting is illegible. As you might imagine, this adds a frustrating problem that could've been easily avoided. In practice, looking for any record from that time period requires sifting through very difficult to read names one page at a time.
- Because all of these records are recorded on paper, there is no search function that would simplify the process. An electronic means of tracking membership would be immensely helpful, and perhaps could even include a TEC-wide database that could further simplify the process of moving membership from parish to parish. (Church Windows, for all it can do, does not provide an easy and intuitive means of tracking this same information)
- As is the case with many historic records, women are very difficult to track in older parish registers. We have many examples of "Mr and Mrs. John Doe" with no reference to "Mrs. Doe's" own name, neither first nor maiden.
- It's challenging. Very challenging.
- None that we are aware of.
- The distinction between active baptized members and communicants in good standing is meaningless to the way we interact with our members.
- Online attendance does not currently count under ASA.
- As I addressed above, the fact that people are still considered a member here but do not live here or no longer attend. Our membership numbers are artificially inflated.
- Hard to count accurately with any reasonable sense that we are correct.
- None that we are aware of.
- They do not take into account that it's not easy to track non-members. It's not intuitive to track anything and Covid made it worse. How and when do you track eyeballs on Facebook?
- The Parochial Report makes a distinction between the "communicants in good standing" and "others active" (whose baptism is not recorded in an Episcopal register). I understand the importance of this distinction, but it does not match the lived reality of the congregation.

Some of our most active 'members' had to be counted in the "others active" category. I appreciated that the Parochial Report for 2022 did not make this formal distinction and approached membership based on how people live their lives within the context of the parish.

- The challenge that comes most easily to mind is how a hybrid in-person/online community who not only worships but studies and ministers together can be reflected in the Parochial Report.
- Confusion in who goes into which category.
- Because of the transient nature of our church community (we are located in a military town), we often don't know if a parishioner is a member of record in another church or if they are baptized or confirmed.
- none
- Most of the numbers feel like an estimate in terms of membership, ASA is still a valuable metric.

Is there language that would make defined church membership clearer or easier to understand?

- A clear and consistently applied definition of membership would be helpful.
- Not that I can think of, other than articulating the difference between membership in the Body of Christ and organizational membership in ECUSA or a particular congregation.
- There must be.
- A pamphlet or other resource might be helpful to have available for membership classes or to help fill out the annual report (if those categories continue). This might also be helpful for educating Vestries.
- No
- Not that I can think of.
- As plenty of our denomination's liturgists have noted, we have a conflict between what the BCP says is church membership (Baptism) and what the canon say church membership is (confirmation). This has to be fixed. Many doubt that the bishops will allow it. If we make the canons match the BCP, and we agree that baptism is full, complete membership in the body of Christ... then the bishops will feel they have nothing to do at parish visits. This of course is wrong-headed: We're the only denomination in the world that requires bishops for confirmation. Even the RCs don't require a bishop to confirm. We have to get over it--and that will take us a huge leap forward toward fixing this problem.

- Define anyone who does not attend church outside of Christmas and/or Easter and who does not donate to the church as an "inactive member." I think it is important to identify inactivity. People who don't attend church and don't donate need to be identified as inactive and they shouldn't be counted as members. A member, or communicant needs to participate.
- No need to define communicant vs. communicant in good standing. Who's going to keep track of all that? Either the person is active and known to others in the community or they are not. All who are an active participant should share the same membership.
- Categories like regularly attend with a definition (3/month) irregular, rare.
- Pledging and/or contributing
- Engaged in parish ministry (teach, outreach, altar guild, etc)
- Involved in bible study or Sunday school
- Some indication of activity inside parish or parish outreach to world.
- I don't think language is a problem. I think our decade long of putting discipleship and evangelism on the back burner (or not even on a burner) is the problem.
- Drop the communicant in good standing, or at least clarify it - make it three times communion and active in the life of the church, or something like that.
- It can get confusing sometimes, if a member wants to join the episcopal church and they were baptized in another faith. But, we just ask of guidance from the bishop or the cool committee.
- "Communicant in Good Standing" should be removed. It's not really understood by most and, in Family sized parishes, it's not really applicable
- I am not sure the language is the issue; sometimes the concept of different categories can be confusing or surprising, but it is not so much a matter of needing to be (re)defined as just needing to be more easily shared.
- Remove all language about church membership. That would be the clearest approach of all.
- Plain English (not "legalese" / ' Church talk")
- I'm not sure. Communication across the community can be difficult. We all too often hear what we want to rather than what has been spoken.
- I think separating membership from the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism would help.
- Active participant versus inactive participant is easier to report. People these days report being just as active attending once a month as others who attend every week. People active in a ministry counts, not just active in worship. Who is more active, the person who attends worship every week, but does not respond to the world as Christ, or the one who responds to the world as Christ every day, but does not attend worship?

- Having received Communion should also not be a factor.
- Active members and Contributing members both seem like categories that would be more important to our understanding of our resources (human and financial).
- For membership it is helpful to know if a member is active or inactive. Our understanding is that an active member is in good standing, but an inactive member is one you don't want to lose touch with and need to keep on the roles for communications and pastoral touches. I can see how it is helpful for record keeping to distinguish between baptized and unbaptized members, but the rest starts to fall into too much detail. There are lots of details within member profiles that is helpful to a church, but these details do not need to be reflected in larger tracking of membership.
- The language of Communicant vs. Member in Good Standing is probably the most confusing as to what the difference is, so at the very least that should be made more clear.
- I am not sure how to change the language of this category on the report. In order to get a good demographic breakdown, you need age categories and markers.
- I'm iffy on having defined church membership at all. I don't entirely see the need, and I think it can be an impediment in the post-Christian context, where people's journeys into church can be slow and muddy and tentative.
- If we really have to have one, I'd suggest something really minimal and functional, like: Participates in the church's common life at least once a quarter, and contributes financially. But as minimal as that is, it would be complicated to implement! Who tracks participation and what happens if someone's participation falls off? - if somebody loses mobility, for example, and can't get to in-person worship anymore (in a parish without regular online worship), do they lose membership? And what about the people who support but don't participate - and the ones who participate but don't support?
- The only times I see real utility, in parish life, to a defined "member"/"non-member" or "not-yet-member" line in actual parish life are a) for new people who *want* to know what to do to become a member, and b) to know who votes at Annual Meeting.
- I'm sure there is; this is where a small working group could bring some good vision and discernment to bear.
- Good standing: In our congregation we have good standing members - attend every Sunday, participate in church functions, serve the community, receive communion - but they may not be 'members'. Not all of our folks pledge.
- It is currently clear.
- Yes -- using the words "attend" or "participate" or "financially contribute" would be helpful.
- The Canons are clear as they are written.

- See earlier comments/suggestions.
- Probably.
- Reduce the number of categories
- Yes!
- I don't think so
- Probably three categories:
 - Active Baptized membership
 - Inactive Baptized members
 - Affiliated Members whose baptism is not recorded.
- I think Member (baptized) and Average Sunday Attendance are the two most important metrics.
- Perhaps we should not focus so much on membership? Maybe we've arrived at a "post-membership" age in the church? It would be a little better to concentrate on overall attendance than membership. Ultimately, the fruits of the ministries a church operates is even more important.
- I cannot think of any.
- I think a member is someone who attends, and they should show up more than three times a year.
- I'm unsure on this one. Perhaps a committee could come up with something.
- See the College for Congregational Development manual for the module on church participation. The categories are:
 - 1. "Mature Practitioner" meaning they are involved at pretty much all levels of the church
 - 2. "Sunday Sacramentalists" meaning they attend church and pledge, but do not participate otherwise
 - 3. "Occasional Attenders" meaning they are Christmas and Easter people or maybe will do a one-off event, but are not involved in the broader life of the parish
 - 4. "Vicarious Members" meaning they are loosely affiliated either through occasional Sunday Worship OR because a friend brings them to events enough that everyone knows them, but they have their own church OR they show up to receive community resources and/or volunteer so their lives are shaped in some way by the church, but they are not necessarily Episcopalian or even Christian

- I wonder whether we really need to know church membership? What difference does it make? Where do the parochial report numbers go anyway, except to "The Church"? I understand wanting to know trends in the church, and I know we are called to baptize - but couldn't we report average Sunday attendance and how many we baptize in a year and do away with membership as a category?
- We try to clarify the themes and issues proper to the Church with our people to the extent that they can understand.
- From a denominational standpoint, it's important to know how many people are enrolled in the church. At the parish level, it's more important to know how many people consider us home.
- Get rid of the "member" language and use "participants" instead. "Member" seems like an exclusive club.
- We talk about people who are baptized who support the church through regular worship and financial support. (At the same time we welcome the unbaptized actively).
- ASA and budget are MORE than enough quantifiable variables to measure and track.
- In our context, requirements for membership are clearly defined. This is especially helpful in responding to concerns regarding eligibility for voting during the annual meeting. Members do not seem to have any difficulty in understanding the definition as currently presented.
- In a rural area like ours, all the churches of all denominations are rather fluid, we all know each other and are connected to each other and people float amongst the various churches depending upon circumstances. The current definitions work for reporting purposes.
- None at this time.
- None that I can think of at the moment.
- "There must be. This old-fashioned system is ridiculous in present times."
- "This tendency to pigeonhole people and base a lot on how much money they give is not consistent with my understanding of our faith."
- Simplify simplify simplify. What is the PURPOSE of so many different categories? It comes across as a kind of caste system. Not helpful.
- No
- Not necessary
- The language seems to be clear as it is written.
- A clear simple definition of what it means to be a member of the Episcopal Church would be helpful. It would also be useful to understand whether a parish church can have a different definition of member than what is defined in the Church canons. Also, when we talk about

membership in general, does the Church make a distinction between membership for ministries and membership for voting at Annual Parish Meetings? One other question: we consider 18 to be the age for voting at St. John's. However, we consider children "members" of the Parish and they participate in ministries. This distinction between participating in ministries and voting and an age requirement should be clarified.

- Make it one category
- We feel that this is probably a much bigger concern in the larger churches.
- Just member
- I think attending member, baptized member, and confirmed member might be easier with the current Canons.
- I'm not sure.
- Yes, but more emphasis should be placed on simplifying the categories.
- Maybe, although not all of us here are comfortable with categorizing people. Perhaps, seeker and baptized?
- I'm agnostic on the value of defining membership.
- In all honesty, I don't have a good answer to this. I recognize that an institution like The Episcopal Church or a diocese would seek specific membership requirements, such as baptism and communicant in good standing (i.e., regular attendance and pledging). In my opinion, there is room for parish membership to be more welcoming and encompassing than other memberships (e.g., to the diocese, the Church).
- I think membership needs to include residency. I baptized a child last year and the family has moved. That child is member until... I did inform the family they need to have his membership transferred when they get a church in their new city.
- A child of God who actively participates in our church and offers their time, talent, and treasure, as a way to enrich the fellowship, worship, and the work of our community in Christ.
- Yes. Members are baptized communicants. Communicants are baptized but are not members. Perhaps re-wording the language of the current categories is helpful. I like the current categories. They are clear to me. But they don't seem to be clear to my congregation.
- I like this definition of church membership: members in good standing are those, who "have received Holy Communion at least three times during the preceding year" and are faithful "in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented," and "in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God."
- This language focuses on how members live their life within the context of the parish, and pays less attention to formal benchmarks: are they baptized, and has their baptism been recorded (if so, where); have they been confirmed or received by the Bishop.

- We struggle with the word "membership" itself. We are not a club or civic organization, but an Episcopal faith community striving to be a place of welcome and belonging.
- Active or Nonactive - with a clear definition of each. In addition, note age, race, gender, baptism, confirmed.
- We don't have alternate language to offer, but membership sounds very clubby -- exclusive rather than inclusive. Talking about membership does not seem to follow the idea of God's grace extending to everyone.
- There is a lack of clarity around the importance of the rite of Confirmation. Under the current definitions, confirmation seems to be more important for people who come to the Episcopal Church from other denominations. The necessity for confirmation seems to be less important for those baptized into the Episcopal church. The expectations around confirmation should be strengthened and clarified.
- Not sure.
- Making changes to membership categories would likely impact both The Episcopal Church and Diocesan canons as well as parish bylaws. What challenges and opportunities do you see in shifting those categories? Are there places in your local canons where you can identify current or potential conflicts?
- Practically and theologically, the notion of 'membership' becomes a complex issue. Organizationally, the national Church and parishes of different sizes and ministry complexity will have different needs, to which tracking and categorizing participation by a variety of characteristics (baptized, communicant, financially contributing, etc) make sense. For others, such as ours, the categories neither help nor hinder. Theologically, I would put emphasis on the number of people we are reaching with the Good News who are present on a regular basis. Baptism remains the critical outward sign of committed relationship in Christ.
- None, especially if the TEC publishes diocesan canon and parish bylaw verbiage/language recommended for adoption. Make it easy on everyone!
- I am not sure. I would not to consult the canons of the Diocese.
- N/A
- It would be easier to answer this question if I had an idea of what the categories might change into. What we use now makes sense for a Parochial Report and, although these categories don't necessarily affect the way our ministry is handled, they provide a basis for the Parochial Report.
- Again--the major conflict is between the BCP and the Canons around confirmation. That will be the hardest thing to deconflict, because all kinds of scholars (from Ruth Meyers to Jim Turrell) have recognized that bishops don't want to give up the "right" to preside at confirmation.

- But making changes is essential. And IF changes aren't made--clergy are going to keep doing their own thing anyway, and just guess at the numbers in the annual report.
- I don't know.
- Most "parishes " have fewer than 70 people
- Realistically daily life is survival mode. The record keeping is not important to them.
- We're a healthy secure parish 150 asa. I'm glad to fill out the paperwork but really it's not important to me
- I care about people growing in God and faithfully doing ministry. I'm trying to be faithful. Trying to assess if someone is in good standing who stopped attending because her kids play sports now isn't of concern to me. Connecting with her is.
- I just do not see any benefit is officially changing the membership categories of the Episcopal Church. It may be well meaning, but I think it would have unintended consequences. In particular, it has the potential of diminishing the centrality of baptism in the life of those who follow Christ.
- I don't think so
- N/A
- While I am in favor of any steps that will help the church grow, I have to wonder if these changes will be those sorts of steps. I see this creating necessary change to fit the new categories at all levels, but how is creating some newly defined form of member going to strengthen the church. Are we truly finding that our issue is people discover they are not considered a communicant in good standing after staying away from the church for more than a couple of services over several years, and so we believe they will be on their way back into the fold and to the front of the parish if we create a new label for them to have fitted upon them? I see not so much conflicts in the current situation as the inevitable frustration of those who resist change, coupled with the fact there will be considerable work to align canons and parish bylaws without necessarily seeing the desired result of strengthening/increasing our rosters.
- If we honestly see ourselves as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement, then we will get rid of membership categories. These things do not come from Jesus. I hope we will be radical and faithful enough to reform our church to align with the early Jesus movement. In the Gospels, we never see Christ turning people away because they were not "members" of his movement. The Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement exists to serve everyone, no matter who they are. Let's write this into our canons.
- No

- Perhaps we don't need to change these categories but do a better job of explaining what is meant by each one and possible responsibilities are associated with each. It could be similar to what is done with/for vestry members.
- For me clarity would simply benefit us.
- I don't see any challenging conflicts in our context. It is mostly an administrative change unless we met resistance from people who do not like the suggested changes.
- The biggest challenge will be the "old guard" who feel the current categories are necessary to judge if the church is dying or growing.
- I believe our clergy compensation committee is considering ways to rework some of the canons around compensation tiers... which would make our compensation more just across the variety of parish configurations. Membership numbers may no longer matter in that regard at least.
- We see this as a relatively easy issue to remedy with an amendment clarifying the new language that can be added to bylaws and such. I am sure that those who focus on the canons more closely can identify potential conflicts, but that is not what I have chosen to focus on in the past.
- There are challenges in every change that occurs. Changing canons is not a simple process but it is achievable.
- This is above my pay grade!
- I should be more familiar with local canons and am unable to offer an opinion on this.
- I would love to see the language simplified, while honoring the spirit of the canons,
- We worry that changes would make the process murkier and more difficult for churches. Now more than ever, we need clear expectations of membership and discipleship. It is important that certain standards such as the necessity of baptism be maintained, as well as a record of financial giving.
- I would really like to see clarification to the TEC Canon 17, Section 2 (a) and Section 3. This is my go-to material for completing the Report and I find it confusing. Does this mean that actually receiving communion 3 times per year makes one a communicant/member? I have people in my congregation who attend regularly (and give), yet don't receive communion. I am also unclear about what it means to be prevented for good cause from worship.
- Shifting membership categories would be a whole new way of thinking, and confusing for the more traditional members of TEC who do not like change. I understand that opportunities might open up to make welcoming people as members in other congregations more simple and obvious to outsiders, but I do not see the necessity in my parish.

- Not sure about Diocesan Canons; no conflict with local bylaws. At the parish level, we would see no major challenges in shifting categories to something like we have described, with the opportunity to better understand exactly how people (and how many people) are truly involved as members. Of course, if some other set of categories is decided, this may not be the case.
- There could be conflicts with our state law concerning the Episcopal Church. A lot of rewriting would be needed, but a thorough job should eliminate conflicts.
- Not sure
- N/A
- Nope
- There would need to be some changes, but this is simply language shifts. Nothing to challenging just time-consuming.
- Communicant in Good Standing is often confusing for folks.
- One challenge in our context is dealing with people who perceive that membership in the church (and particularly long-time membership) allows them to make decisions and have authority without doing any work. They are often resistant to visitors and the work of evangelism and growth, because they don't want to give up the "power" over the institution they purport to love. Instead of the current categories, have Active Members, Inactive Members and Active Non-members. Make the definition as "Active" as being present (in-person, not online) for no less than half of Sunday services for the year. Receiving communion three times in a year as being a "Communicant in Good Standing?" That's just silly.
- The canonically important number for my diocese is average Sunday attendance, so a change in membership definitions would not have a canonical impact.
- Voting members are defined by our canons, but we generally allow anyone at the Annual Meeting to vote.
- The broader you make it to be member of the church, the more people you'll get because not everyone is the same and not everyone will see it necessary in a modern sense that being baptized for example is a be all end all for being a member of the church.
- Frankly, any streamlining would be helpful.
- I don't know enough about canons or bylaws to know what it would change, except perhaps priest pay scale - we use a category based scale based on church membership. Frankly, I think this needs to be overturned anyway - I think all priests should be paid a flat rate. Parishes, missions, etc - our work is different, but should be paid the same.
- Any change that is made in the categories of members should be thinking about the welfare of all and try to affect as little as possible the proper functioning of the parishes.

- The current categories are irrelevant and ignored. If that is an issue then the categories should be updated.
- I believe that the Episcopal Church needs to affirm baptism as the central category of membership more. We need to clearer about what baptism means. We need to teach baptism, invite people into baptism, and share the baptismal faith. I understand that not everyone will be able to make the plunge, but they want to be part of a community for whom baptism is normative, and we need to do a better job as a church at showing everyone what that means.
- See above.
- This is difficult to answer without knowing what changes are being considered.
- If changing categories is a problem, don't do it. It is not a problem for us. We fit our circumstances into the reports we make.
- None.
- Not that I can see.
- Probably, but conflict is part of life. Make the changes and fix the conflicts as they come along. Don't we already do this for other things?
- None
- May be more trouble than it is worth. My only problem as a relatively new priest is trying to fill out the parish register correctly.
- I think one of the opportunities would be that members who are unable to attend frequently may be able to serve in other platforms such as vestry.
- St. John's is currently out of alignment with the Diocese. We will need to revisit our by-laws once this task force completes its work.
- no challenges here
- Here, also, we feel that these issues would be more of a concern to the larger churches.
- All that membership should require is a Love of Jesus Christ , a profession of faith, witness to love and serve your neighbor, regular attendance to the Word and Sacraments of Holy Communion
- The biggest area is that opening vestry and deputy roles to baptized member would open up more people for ministry.
- If changes are made, I think having diocesan chancellors/staffs direct possible language changes for parish bylaws would be good. We have so much administrative work happening at the parish level and having somebody who is a professional tell us what language we need to use would be good.

- Any change to how we categorize membership would necessarily lead to a considerable amount of work and time to bring TEC and diocesan canons into line. But we feel it would be well worth the effort.
- Our canons do not conflict currently. If TEC made a change, the diocese would follow.
- Not sure the current categories have meaning. Changing our language might include more people which is a good thing. Voting issues would arise. That most certainly would be a challenge. Membership matters. We would like everyone to feel like they belong. On the other hand, for significant issues that require a vote, a serious commitment to the church is important. This is challenging.
- None that we see.
- Nothing comes to mind regarding local canons. Shifting might impact some clergy compensation guidelines.
- I believe the challenge is in turn an opportunity. What does it mean to belong to a community of faith? When we witness that ALL are God's children (no requirements for membership in the family of God), then defining categories of who belongs based on different actions within the institutional church can be counterproductive. The challenge continues: institutions want categories, while our faith witness breaks down categories. We have an opportunity to make a theological statement of welcome.
- For example, our diocesan canons currently have the following categories: Member (which refers to baptized members), Communicant, and Communicant in Good Standing.
- I might recommend that we change the current category: "Member" to "Baptized Member" keeping the same definition: "Any baptized person who is a member of The Episcopal Church and whose baptism is recorded in the records of the congregation, and who regularly participates in the worship of a congregation shall be deemed a member of that congregation." I'd recommend adding a category called "Member" defined as: "All who discern a desire to join a worshipping community are welcome as members, indicated by a process determined by local parishes."
- By establishing that all can be members, we align our faith with our institutional organization.
- Not sure.
- If changes are to be made, they should be substantial and work to be proactive by looking for solutions for a future where church attendance across all denominations will continue to be in decline. Hurdles to membership should be eliminated, or at the least greatly minimized. We should be focusing on inclusion of all without the need for labels or categories of membership,
- I can foresee a lot of confusion. I can see the shift as a kind of way to affirm behavior already in practices in parishes that make membership about "being known to the treasurer."

- I do believe that baptism needs to be maintained for what it is: a rite of initiation into the Christian body., Beyond that, membership is determined by how and where the baptized practice their faith and spirituality. Membership categories beyond the question 'is this person baptized' are in most cases not helpful to the life of a parish. For instance, diocesan canons require vestry members to be "confirmed communicants in good standing." In a small rural parish, where the pool of people willing to serve on a vestry is already small, requiring confirmation sounds ideal but is not practical.
- I believe we will be able to overcome these challenges. It is important to try to keep things simple and clear.
- These changes would mostly be wordsmithing and making sure that our canons are not in conflict in differing areas. Making changes would be time consuming but more in keeping with the idea of opening our church doors and welcoming all.
- I would like to see us uphold the traditional understanding that a full member in the Episcopal Church is a baptized, confirmed, communicant, who is faithful in regular worship attendance and stewardship.
- The biggest change is creating a new paradigm that moves away from a country club atmosphere of counting members and moves to something more like the Book of Acts that was a church with less physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries.

Are there any other comments or thoughts you'd like to share with the Task Force?

- I am grateful for your work in exploring this complex topic. Blessings.
- I'm glad you are taking on this work. Thank you!
- I think it may prove helpful to focus not on categories but on the lives and ministries touched by the local church communities.
- We cannot divide people
- Praying this helps!
- Yes. At the end of the day, I don't care about my membership numbers. In no particular order, I care about 5 things: 1. Are people coming to Sunday worship? 2. Are people contributing financially? 3. Are people engaged in serving and supporting the mission of the parish? 4. Are people growing in their knowledge of Scripture and practice of prayer? 5. Are people being cared for by the clergy and lay pastor teams?
- I've served as a priest for 26 years--and every parish I've served, has grown every single year of my ministry. I'm not a particularly charismatic individual; I'm not charming; I don't look like

an Italian soccer star. But focusing on people's spiritual growth and spiritual care--and also getting them to engage with 1-3 above--has proven to be a plain vanilla recipe for numerical growth. This is the priority, not tracking membership. Make the membership language easy and accessible.

- It's great that this is being considered, because the parochial report time is universally disliked by clergy, especially those who do not have organized staff or lay leaders to handle all the details of membership.
- If we truly welcome everyone, we don't need to make a big deal about who's in and who's out and who's a more perfect communicant than another.
- Not right now.
- This is a tough task
- As people are aging and younger folks are less strongly church people it's hard to figure out whose part of us.
- Beware of trying to construct categories which deceive-like pretend the deep decline isn't a decline by finding new ways to count and fluff up the numbers.
- We do daily morning prayer and four bible studies. Non parishioners come but they don't need to be counted as members; just attendees.
- I understand the desire to perhaps add the categories of "not yet baptized" and "baptism not yet recorded" but I don't think there is much to be gained in this. Don't you think a more important use of time would be addressing the drastic drop in membership over the past few decades which has accelerated in the past few years? The drop in membership has nothing to do with the categories we use. In fact, I'm concerned that changing categories is a way of not holding our feet to the fire as pertaining to the decline of the Episcopal Church (as measured by membership).
- Thank you for the work you are doing, to better all and bring us all to understand the process.
- I have taught confirmation to both youth and adults, and the results have always seemed to "work" in terms of helping the confirmands understand the context of their actions and their own parish in the greater church. I have heard people being confirmed proudly announce that day as a moment of personal achievement and celebration, and I think that suggests the current categories do work. In my parish, at least, there are those who are active supporters of our mission who take part regardless of their assigned membership category, and I do not believe it will change in this church.
- Let's be serious about what it means to be "church". This is not a club. There should never be membership categories which define who is "in" and who is not. That is the thinking of "the world" in opposition to the reign of God. Everyone belongs to God and we are gathered together to serve the world, therefore everyone belongs in the Church!

- I'm glad you are trying to get creative. The old guidelines don't work these days. I wish I had more insights, but I do know that "membership in Church" is less important than actually being the Church.
- Should it be reworked, the data collected by our parochial report, would help us reconsider the ways we invest/allocate TEC resources - to support and encourage mission and ministry with, to, and by marginalized communities.
- We are glad that you are examining these membership categories which seem outdated and unclear. It feels as though we can free up hours of time and effort if we can simplify these overcomplicated categories and move on to more important matters in ministry.
- It was pretty upsetting this past year not to be allowed to count our Zoom members. I understand that online worship is mushy terrain. I would just stay that there is a HUGE difference between the folks who participate in our Zoom service - reading lessons, praying for and with one another, present, visible, named, and active - and whatever Facebook counts as "views" when somebody broadcasts their service over Facebook. To me, my Zoom participants' level of engagement and investment is virtually indistinguishable from that of my in-person worshippers; the only difference is the lack of regular sacramental participation, per se. I know that "grading" online worship participation is a sticky topic - do Zoom worshippers count as a full human for purposes of ASA, livestream viewers as 75%, Facebook "views" as 50%? I don't know how to handle this. But I know my Zoom worshippers count in my ASA, and next time I'll just count them as such, whether invited to do so or not.
- Insofar as the Parochial Report seeks demographic information, especially with respect to race or ethnicity, such efforts are absurd. The suggestion that worshiping communities conduct a survey to allow people to "self-identify" is, frankly, laughable given how few people actually respond to such surveys.
- I comment you for taking a look at this and look forward to feedback from what you learn.
- Thank you for your time.
- I am so glad you all are looking at this language! Just thinking about the Report and the classification of membership gives me a headache. I recognize the importance of baptism and confirmation, but I simply don't think it is helpful to spend my time tracking this. I would prefer to spend my days (my agreement is for 3/4 time) welcoming all people to worship.
- I am tremendously grateful to you all for taking on this topic and for asking good questions. Thank you!
- Personally, I cannot understand why changes in the rules/Canons are necessary to define membership in TEC. I feel that I attend a very inclusive parish in an inclusive Diocese in an inclusive Church. Perhaps other church parishes have different experiences.
- Thanks for asking!

- Thank you for asking the question.
- The parochial report really needs to be simplified. But do not go away from Sunday Attendance or Weekly Worship Attendance as a prime metric.
- I've been ordained over 17 years -- serving as a parish rector for almost 15 years of that time -- and this is the first time I've ever been chosen to complete a survey for the "national church." I've often wondered how many other priests (like me) who get through their entire career without ever being asked their opinion or included in a "task force". I imagine there are plenty of talented people whose experience remains untapped as they have never/will never be elected as a deputy to General Convention. My question to the Task Force is admittedly critical. Are you willing to ask the difficult questions and do the difficult work or are you simply an echo chamber -- listening for only what you want to hear and enjoying positions of perceived importance?
- No
- I wonder if these categories of participation could be considered person by person. Like, all the people go in the left hand column and the different qualifiers go in the rows across the top and for each person you could check yes - baptised, yes - pledges, yes - active member, no - not Episcopalian, . Then you could see "this church has 200 active members and of those 200, 176 are baptised and 20 of them don't consider themselves Episcopalian". The national church could even provide an online importing site with the boxes to check already in place, so they just have to copy and paste all their people in and then check the boxes. In order to do the parochial report, we are already combing our directories and membership rosters, anyway, so the work is already being done. This just ensures that the questions are more straight forward and that we don't worry about counting people twice because we can count them in the multiplicity of ways they appear in our context but the national church knows it's still just one person.
- Thank you for your work!
- We appreciate this work and the consideration of taking into account the opinion of our Church.
- I would like to see a liturgical mechanism for recognizing people as "members" other than confirmation which happens no more than every year. We need something where we say, "you are a member". It will go a long way to making folks not ready for confirmation to feel as though they belong.
- In our associational culture, the very idea of membership is already a gift from the wider culture. We need to do a better job at teaching what makes membership in a Christian church distinctive from paying one's Netflix bill or gym membership etc. I think that simplifying membership to affirm that actively living out one's baptismal faith is the point of membership. We can still retain the need to record baptisms. And we can still ask people for that information

where they have it. But we can also promote the reality of a living an active baptized faith that while conceptually similar to a communicant in good standing, puts the focus back on baptism. Perhaps there is a way to ask people whether they are wanting to live out the baptized life of fellowship with Christ, rather than whether they remember their baptism date. Some will be able to record their baptism date, but more will be able to answer 'yes' to whether they seek to follow Christ in living out the baptismal covenant.

- More information regarding the changes being considered would be helpful. Anticipating possible challenges or opportunities is not possible without more specific information.
- Perhaps you could add categories without problem, We also have people who are several denominations or faiths. Such as Roman Catholic and Episcopal, or Congregational and Episcopal, or even Buddhist and Episcopal.
- The exclusivity of denominations does not seem to be beneficial, but it is working as is and I would not want to have to list everyone's different faith journeys.
- None.
- None
- We are committed to hospitality, to "making room" as our priest says. There will always be people who resist that--but Jesus was pretty clear about the expansiveness of the Kingdom of God. Changing language/categories will break old patterns of thought and help us recognize a wide variety of commitments, so that every person is given the opportunity to do ministry as they are called, equipped and able.
- Dig down and ask WHY do we need this demographic reporting? How is it proclaiming the good news, seeking and serving Christ in every person, respecting the dignity of every human being, promoting justice and peace, etc?
- To what degree is this desire to keep track and categorize reflect the values of EMPIRE and not KINGDOM?
- From the rector: I was moved to tears by the passionate responses of those involved in crafting our response. They DON'T CARE about the categories and the boxes and the labels and reject the idea that they are in any way part of the mission of our church. There are various levels of engagement, because people have lives; all are trying to do God's work in the world. As one person wrote, "All I know in the church certainly spread God's love and the message of the Good News. I've never asked anyone for credentials."
- no
- Spend less time defining categories and more time on spiritual formation
- While we already take an expansive view of membership, we do have concerns about potentially lessening the role of Baptism and Communion in the definition. We hope the Task Force will find a good solution for this.

- We have an average of 8-10 members in attendance on most Sundays. There are very few young people and they don't attend on a regular basis. Most of us are retired. What is most important for us to keep working together as a community and to also be a presence in our community is for each of us to be willing to give of time and talent. The number of people for whom receiving communion on a regular basis is important to their spiritual well being is also very important to us in this community.
- If we treated our membership like they were loving family members things would be much better.
- Our categories and means of tracking membership are antiquated and do not reflect the reality on the ground of parish ministry. The current system is exclusive and anachronistic and needs to change. For example, given advances in technology, why do we still use carbon paper?
- This is a difficult issue. On the one hand we want to be inclusive, but on the other hand we want to take seriously what it means to be a part of the church. We would add that we think the current language around membership is not well understood by most members in the church. At the end of the day membership is about commitment. Do the current categories fully identify folks who are committed to God and God's church.
- Grateful that the Task Force is asking these questions.
- I'm grateful to get to contribute in this process, and I pray for your leadership and discernment in this work for the Church!
- I believe I have shared what I can. Good luck. God bless your efforts - you have a daunting job.
- As part of our current strategic planning process we are wondering if there might be other ways to define membership or other ways for people to become members of some parts of the life of the parish almost like a subscriber or like someone who is a regular donor to a local arts organization, for example. Could they support our food pantry as a "member"? Could they support our music ministry as a subscriber to a concert series? Just ideas and wonderings for now!
- I do not believe an unbaptized individual should be denied communion.
- Please don't change the categories. Engage them more. Explain them.
- I applaud your work. I wonder if rethinking membership can be done separate from the question of 'open communion', which is a sensitive/controversial question.
- I appreciate the work of the task force. This is important work for better understanding and more accurately reporting membership.
- The idea of noting a parishioner's age, baptism and confirmation make sense, but these notations really don't have much to do with membership. We would like to think that parishioners are members of our church family as soon as they walk in the door. There is no need for membership categories as a threshold to serve.

- Because of the transient nature of today's society, the idea of a letter of membership with one church seems archaic. Aren't we all part of one Anglican Communion? If the commission decides to keep these letters, at the very least transferring a membership could be offered digitally rather than by paper. The process as it is now is very cumbersome.
- It would be a departure from the historic teachings of the faith to do away with the requirement that members be baptized in the name of the Trinity and be expected to make a mature public affirmation of their faith with the laying on hands by a bishop in apostolic succession. (Canon 1.17.1c) What the Episcopal Church needs today is a greater sense of commitment and responsibility from our members, not a fast track to nominal membership.
- Thank you for doing this work.

Is there something that would make transferring membership simpler or more streamlined?

- A central database of membership would be helpful. Dealing with multiple parish records can be unwieldy.
- Would it be crazy to keep a national register? Could this perhaps just be a simple online form, provided by TEC. Anything that can be done on the national level is helpful to small parishes.
- The forms are straightforward and easy to complete for sending/receiving transfers.
- Not that I can think of. Like the Parochial Report, letter transfers are simply common practice.
- emails are fine in this day and age.
- For us, so few people use the form it's not something that's onerous when it occasionally happens. But all a new church needs is the new person's contact info including email, the dates for the ledger and maybe also a reason for transferring
- Contact the church they are transferring from and let them know.
- Having small parishes staffed to do it
- no
- We just write a letter on letterhead, include baptism, DOB, and any relevant information
- Not Sure
- The Letter of Transfer is believed by most to be needless bureaucracy

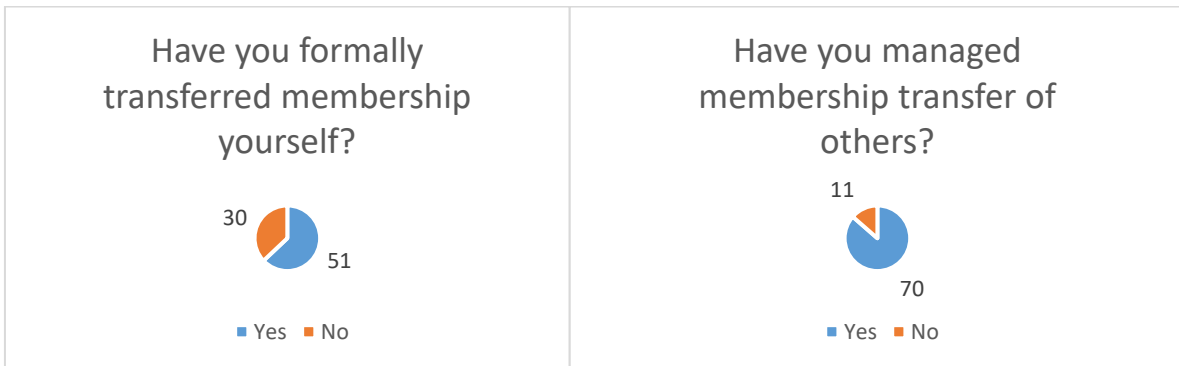
- I had ease transferring my membership thanks to the church I was leaving taking the lead; I am now Senior Warden in a church currently without a Rector, and so I have handled the transfer in and out for members of our Parish. That has been simple, but I did not know about the Episcopal Letter of Transfer; making that more evident would make it even easier.
- No
- An Online fillable pdf - "fill out and send" type format.
- Online forms to be sent via email?
- I simply have them fill out an information form.
- Not having to do it!
- No
- A national database where these changes can take place. These would be helpful with record keeping also.
- It's fine when it happens. It just almost never happens.
- Letters of transfer reveal the occasional sloppy or incomplete record-keeping of some Episcopal churches, especially when data concerning baptism, confirmation, and more is expected. Should, then, the transfer paperwork be simplified? Perhaps - or perhaps we need to reexamine the rationale for requiring this paperwork and adjust our requirements to meet the goals of completing these forms.
- Not Really
- It was very easy for me.
- Either not worrying about it or making it really clear to both the exiting and receiving parish that this is truly important. Too many times our Church Administrator has requested letters (at the request of a new member) only to never get a response.
- We really don't do it often enough to make a difference.
- We use a letter we created for transfers of membership. This is becoming less common over time.
- We use our own letter.
- There could be a "website-based tool" developed which has the standard fields for transfers between churches. Each church could have its info registered and when a transfer is completed, an email is generated to the appropriate contact with the form. No more paperwork necessary.
- No need to rely on the USPS.
- Better education for the members so lay people know to request that letter of transfer.

- I don't really know that it's necessary anymore. Clergy do each other the courtesy of checking in with the new member's previous rector. That really covers the information needed.
- No - I appreciate having the forms on the Diocesan webpage
- A letter of transfer.
- If there was an intra-Episcopal computer system rather than a cumbersome system of triplicate that would save money and time for many of our transfers, most of which are old timers wanting to update their letters.
- No, I also send a letter of introduction when transferring people.
- Let transferees carry the Letter of transfer, acknowledged by incumbent Priest through signing and returning it.
- To clarify above--I have used the Episcopal Letter of Transfer form but do not any longer because it is almost never returned.
- No
- Not really
- We generally have ignored this concept. It would be useful to have the Church weigh in with its view of how important this is.
- Why do we need it?
- Most of our most recent additions have been receiving people from other backgrounds whose churches have closed or they have moved to this area.
- Online option would be helpful
- An online form/database.
- Yes, modern technology (PS - This survey was considered by various members of the congregation with varying degrees of expertise. The priest filling out the form has much more than some of those consulted. As such, we selected options as a sort of average of the group present)
- Not really. Many folks come from traditions where there is no letter of transfer.
- Having an online form
- No. It went well.
- Online access
- An online form
- A way to do it electronically from one parish to another would be helpful.

- Our former church secretary recommends digitizing this process so a parishioner can do it online themselves.
- Eliminate the letter of transfer.

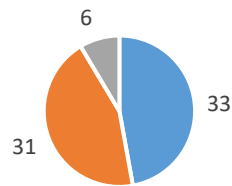
What is your personal experience of membership

- Have you *formally* transferred membership yourself
 - Yes 63%
 - No 37%
- Have you managed membership transfers of others
 - Yes 86.4%
 - No 13.6%



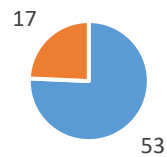
- If yes, how often do you manage the membership transfer of others?
 - Several times per month 8.6%
 - Several times per year 44.3%
 - Less than once per year 47.1%
- If yes, Do you use the Episcopal Letter of Transfer form when managing the membership of others?
 - Yes 75.6%
 - No 24.4%

How often do you manage the membership transfer of others?



■ Less than once per year ■ Several times per year
■ Several times per month

Do you use the Episcopal Letter of Transfer form when managing the membership of others?



■ Yes ■ No

Is there something that would make transferring membership simpler or more streamlined?

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- Not really
- no
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- I simply have them fill out an information form.
- No
- Not having to do it!
- To clarify above--I have used the Episcopal Letter of Transfer form but do not any longer because it is almost never returned.
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- Better education for the members so lay people know to request that letter of transfer.

Demographics for your parish

- Is the area:
 - Urban 28%
 - Suburban 36%
 - Rural 36%

- Who filled out this survey:
 - 45 out of 81 filled out by clergy only.
 - 8 out of 81 filled out by a Warden, parish staff, or other leader of the parish, or both, with no involvement from clergy.
 - 28 out of 81 filled out by a team of clergy, staff, warden, and other lay leadership.

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Membership in The Episcopal Church

Submitted by The Rev'd Carlos de la Torre

For the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church 2021

Historical Development

The Genesis of Canonical Membership

The 1981 edition of Edwin White's and Jackson Dykman's *Annotated Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* (revised and updated by the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons of the General Convention) reports the first canonical enactment concerning the discipline and membership of the laity as appearing in Canon 12 of the 1789 General Convention:

If any persons within this Church offend their brethren by any wickedness of life, such persons shall be repelled from the Holy Communion, agreeably to the rubric, and may be further proceeded against, to the depriving them of all privileges of church *membership*, according to such rules or process as may be provided, either by the General Convention or by the Conventions in the different States.¹

Subsequently, this canon would be amended during the 1808 General Convention to make deliberate mention of Dioceses, which was excluded from the original version. In 1817 and 1832, the Canon was further amended for greater clarification on its implementation by Dioceses.

Transferring Membership

In 1852, General Convention enacted a new canon, Canon 13, "Of Removal of Communicants from one Parish to another," reading as follows:

A Communicant removing from one Parish to another shall procure from the Rector, (if any), of the Parish of his last residence, or if there be no Rector, from one of the Wardens, a Certificate stating that he or she is a Communicant in good standing, and the Rector of the Parish or Congregation to which he or she removes shall not be required to receive him or her as a Communicant until such letter be produced. (p. 386)

This was the first legislation of General Convention regarding the removal of communicants from one parish to another. In subsequent General Conventions, amendments were made, including renumbering the canon as part of general canonical revisions.

During the revisions of 1904, the canon on the Regulations Respecting the Laity (the canonical title used till this day for the section that describes membership in The Episcopal Church) was amended to make it the duty of the laity to certify their membership, and transfer their membership from one parish to another. The Canon was renumbered to Canon 39 and amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1. A communicant in good standing removed from one Parish to another shall be entitled to and shall procure from the Rector or Minister of the Parish or Congregation of his or her last residence, or if there be no Rector or Minister, from one of the Wardens, a certificate stating that he or she is a communicant in good standing; and the Rector or Minister of the Parish or Congregation to which he or she removes shall record him or her as a communicant when such letter is presented, or on failure to produce such letter from no fault of the communicant, upon other evidence of his or her standing sufficient in the judgment of the said Rector or Minister. Notice of the above record shall be sent by said Rector or Minister to the Rector of the Parish from which the communicant has removed.

“The canon as amended made it the duty of the rector to give such a certificate. The canon also permitted a rector to record as a communicant one who did not produce the certificate of transfer, provided that it was no fault of such communicant, upon evidence satisfactory to him that such person was a communicant of the Church.” (White and Dykman 388)

Further amendments were made in 1910 and 1919 that clarified language and phrasing.

Baptized Members, Communicants, and Communicants in good standing

In 1931, a concurrent resolution amended the canon on Regulations Respecting the Laity, inserting the words "or baptized member" after the word "communicant" so as to regulate not only the moving of communicants from one parish to another but that of baptized members of the Church.

In 1934, in a resolution from the House of Bishops, there was an attempt to define the word “communicant'.” This seems to be the first, or at least the first formal exploration via a

resolution, to clarify and define membership in The Episcopal Church; an on-going and evolving need that continues till the present day and that this Committee will be exploring.

For historical context, White and Dkyman comment:

“[During the 1961 General Convention] Resolutions calling for canonical definition of the terms "member," "communicant," and "in good standing," as they relate to members of the Church, were introduced at the Conventions of 1952, 1955, and 1958, but failed of adoption on each of these occasions.

At the Convention of 1961, after a decade of contention and debate, the Church finally gave meaning to the terms "member," "member of the Church in good standing," and "communicant in good standing." **The Church, by that legislation concerning three types of members, sought to end the confusion created by many dioceses giving their own canonical meaning to these terms without regard to the manner in which such terms were used elsewhere in the Church.**

However, the Journal for the 1961 Convention had not even been distributed when criticism of the various definitions began. Many of the tests were thought by many to be unrealistic and impossible of ascertainment.

Is a person who has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, but whose baptism has not been recorded in this Church because a Church official has neglected his duty, any less a baptized member of the Church? A mere definition cannot take away that which was received forever by the administration of the sacrament.

In 1961 and increasingly since that date, there has been little awareness within the Church of the requirement of the canon entitled "Of The Due Celebration of Sundays" (Title II, Canon 1), and few parishes attempt to test the good standing of their members by ascertaining the extent to which such members have kept the Lord's day by regular participation in the public worship of the Church and by hearing the Word of God read and taught.

The Convention of 1979 reviewed and debated the definitions adopted in 1961, and referred to the Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations for study and report to the 1982 Convention resolutions involving changes in Title I, Canon 16. The definitions now in place do not appear to define and recognize present standards of Church support and are not now meaningful in measuring Church membership and participation.” (White and Dykman 391)

A 1979 Book of Common Prayer Church: The Last Four Decades

In 1982, the canon on Regulations Respecting the Laity (then Title I Canon 16, now Title I Canon 17) was substantially revised to reflect the language and theology [and the historical and social context] of liturgical reforms in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, specifically “the concept of Christian initiation and Church membership indicated by the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.” (White and Dykman 1991 supplement, 35)

These revisions in liturgy, theology, language, and phrasing are foundational to our present version of the canon on Regulations Respecting the Laity; including our understanding and definitions of memberships.

Here is a side-by-side comparison of 1979, 1982 (post prayer-book revisions) and the 2018 canon: the most recent version of canon describing membership in 2018:

1979 Version	1982 Version	2018 Version
<p>Sec. 1. All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and whose baptism has been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.</p>	<p>Sec. 1 (a) All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.</p> <p>(b) Members sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult members.</p> <p>(c) It is expected that all adult members of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public</p>	<p>Sec. 1 (a) All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.</p> <p>(b) Members sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult members.</p> <p>(c) It is expected that all adult members of this Church, after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands</p>
<p>Sec. 2. All baptized persons who shall for one</p>	<p>Sec. 2 (a). All members of this Church who have</p>	

<p>year next preceding have fulfilled the requirements of the Canon, "Of the Due Celebration of Sundays", unless for good cause prevented, are members of this Church in good standing.</p> <p>Sec. 3. All such members in good standing who have been confirmed by a Bishop of this Church or a Bishop of a Church in communion with this Church or have been received into this Church by a Bishop of this Church, and who shall, unless for good cause prevented, have received Holy Communion at least thrice during the next preceding year, are communicants in good standing.</p>	<p>received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year are to be considered communicants of this Church.</p> <p>(b) For the purposes of statistical consistency throughout the Church, communicants sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult communicants.</p> <p>Sec. 3. All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.</p>	<p>by a Bishop of this Church or by a Bishop of a Church in full communion with this Church. <i>Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another Church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this Church, rather than confirmed</i></p> <p>Sec. 2 (a). All members of this Church who have received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year are to be considered communicants of this Church.</p> <p>(b) For the purposes of statistical consistency throughout the Church, communicants sixteen years of age and over are to be considered adult communicants.</p> <p>Sec. 3. All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.</p>
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Final Comment

From a brief historical survey, it is clear that the Church's understanding, let alone its formal definitions, of membership have been constantly evolving. Underlying this development, and reflected in the Canons definition of membership, are larger historical, social, liturgical, and theological changes in the life of the church. Canonical language, phrasing, and instruction regarding membership has also changed to create a shared understanding of membership among different Diocese and their canons, as well as bring ease among clergy in understanding the parameters surrounding membership in The Episcopal Church. As this Committee examines the topic of membership, we are doing so in lockstep with previous members of General Convention who have sought to ask and answer the question: What is the state of membership in the Church?

Present State of Membership

The 1981 edition of *Annotated Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* recounts an attempt at 1961 General Convention to define the terms “member” and “communicant in good standing.” Seeking to end confusion created by Dioceses and their own canonical meaning. Not only were these new definitions met with criticism, but it seems that confusion regarding membership has only grown. Further, it seems that these definitions are no longer serving the needs of the Church. To quote the above mentioned now forty year old book:

“The definitions now in place do not appear to define and recognize present standards of Church support and are not now meaningful in measuring Church membership and participation.”

While substantive revisions were made to the canon pertaining to membership in 1982 to reflect the theological and liturgical developments of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, much has changed in the life of the church over the past forty years. Let alone the last two years since the start of the pandemic.

From a brief historical survey, it is clear that amendments and revisions to the canon dealing with membership have all been shaped by three things: theological and liturgical reforms; a desire for uniformity and pragmatism; and historical and social developments. Over the last forty years, and just these last two years, we have seen major shifts in these three arenas. From conversations on prayer book revisions; to shifts in denominational loyalty and membership decline; to geographical and cultural diversity in the Church; to the on-going impact of the pandemic on worshipping communities, there is a lot that’s happened and still happening that beckons us to reexamine membership in The Episcopal Church.

Information from Conversations with Deputies

From conversations with members of the House of Deputies, it's clear that our present definitions and understandings of membership as they appear in the canons do not play a significant role in the day-to-day life of a parishes. A lay deputy and full-time church employee from Delaware shared that in his experience he thinks of the criteria for what the canons define as a communicant in good standing - All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.

CANON I.17.3 - when assisting in vestry recruitment. As it is common that the phrase "communicant in good standing" not only appears in the canons of the Church and individual Dioceses, but also in parish by-laws to define whose names may appear in the parish's rolls at a congregation's annual meeting or who is eligible to serve on vestry. Further, as pointed out by a deputy from Virginia, many Dioceses to this day have a system of representation at their annual convention that gives extra seats to parishes that exceed a certain membership level (baptized members and/or communicants in good standing). The present definitions of membership, and its three tier system of baptized members, communicants, and communicants in good standing seem to only have relevance when dealing with church business: vestry and parish meetings, Diocesan conventions and boards of governance, and General Convention and Executive Council.

Outside of matters dealing with church governance, deputies shared that their parishes are more aware of canonical definitions when it comes time to fill out the parochial report. As it is required to report the the number of baptized members - All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.

CANON I.17.1 (a) - and communicants in good standing.

While the parochial report provides instructions and cites the canonical mandate, there is still a great deal of confusion among parish leaders. A deputy from Oregon shared that it is a hard report to fill out accurately. He writes "the question that trips us up the most is the question on membership... The report is very specific about people that are baptized. Unfortunately we just don't have that information on everyone. If that piece was re-structured, the report would not be so bad. I hate feeling that we aren't giving absolutely accurate information, but

the best we can do is guess.” The pandemic has increased the difficulty around this language as many individuals were not able to meet the communicant criteria as outlined in the canons - All members of this Church who have received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding year are to be considered communicants of this Church. CANON I.17.2

While the pandemic created a new problem for our definition of membership in the Church, it also revealed many of its existing flaws; flaws that have existed for decades. Not only can it be difficult to sort out who's a baptized member and who's a communicant in good standing, but in many parishes the information needed to report this accurately is simply not there. Not only are letters of transfers not sought out by lay members when transferring or moving parishes, but changes in society and our present religious landscape have created situations that were not previously considered or imagined. For example, people attending church, or multiple churches, for nearly two years from the comfort of their home; individuals attending parishes and purposely not seeking to transfer their membership; and for many who were not raised in The Episcopal Church, specially those not raised in liturgical traditions, any formal baptismal records may simply be non-existing.

While it can be argued that the canons offer some wiggle-room for some of these situations, these situations are no longer a rare exception to the norm. Changes in church and culture, especially in a post-pandemic world, requires us to think creatively on what it means to be a present and future, active and engaged, member of The Episcopal Church. The Church should not simply change our present definitions and understandings of membership because the world around us is changing, but because the Church should be constantly evolving.

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