

Membership Information



WILLIAMSBURG UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Welcome!

The Path to Membership Is a Journey to Deeper
Commitment

Congregational membership represents a deeper connection with your faith community. To help you discern if membership in Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists—WUU—is right for you, we encourage you to carefully read the information in this packet, speak to our minister Jennifer Ryu, and attend an Orientation class. When you decide to become a Member, WUU will be ready to welcome you.

Seeking: High Commitment Members

Who can join? All individuals are eligible for Membership, and we expect all members to share responsibility for the mission, vision, and financial health of the congregation. This is what is meant by *high commitment Members*. While everyone is welcome to worship with us, including friends, visitors and non-members—it is Members who accept a greater degree of responsibility for the vitality of the congregation.

Carefully consider the responsibilities of membership before you make the commitment. Members readily and generously give their time, talents and financial resources toward fulfillment of the Church Mission—because they want to, because this is their chosen faith home. This spirit of generosity and commitment develops over time and is the result of active participation in our programs. Are *you* prepared?

If you decide to join us, we will welcome you and hope that your relationship with Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists will be spiritually, intellectually and emotionally rewarding. Members who are at least 18 and have made a pledge during the current year have the right to vote at congregational meetings

Getting Involved: The Key to Membership with Meaning

Attending the worship service on Sunday is a very special experience, but most members find that over time it is not enough to sustain their commitment to WUU. We know of no better

way to deepen your connection, as well as increase your reward, than by active engagement in a church program that most closely matches your needs. Don't wait! Find a group, program or activity in which to involve yourself as soon as possible. This is how you will start "feeling a part" of the congregation, and in return, the people of WUU will become a community for you. Here's a small sample of the opportunities for personal and spiritual growth:

- Singing in the Choir
- Teaching in Children's Religious Education
- Supporting Sunday Morning services by ushering, greeting, serving coffee, or serving as a Worship Associate
- Helping with Building and Grounds maintenance activities
- Participating in picnics, circle dinners, and other social activities
- Contributing to Social Justice programs such as helping WUU become a "Green Sanctuary."

To see many opportunities for involvement with WUU, look at the "Time and Talents" form (available on the Web site and in membership information folders). To discuss alternatives and get help making contact with people associated with the interests you choose, please speak with someone on the membership team or e-mail Membership2009 at wuu.org.

Your Pledge Is Your Financial Promise to WUU

Members annually pledge to support this congregation with their financial contributions. Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations are self-sustaining institutions. At WUU, about 80 percent of our budget is met by the generous pledging of members and others who participate in our faith community.

Stewardship: Showing That We Care

We recognize one of the great truths of all the world's religions: *generosity* is central to a healthy spiritual life. We believe in the ancient practice of giving as a spiritual exercise, used like any other meditation practice to deepen and strengthen the soul. Members who give generously—to this church and elsewhere—tell of the joy and empowerment they feel when they live out of a sense of abundance. Our faith calls us to welcome the stranger at the door, to share resources with others in need, and to care for our planet. This is the meaning of Stewardship.

Members Renew Their Pledge Annually

Your pledge is the means by which you support this church and the broad range of worship experiences, educational programs, community building and social justice programs that it provides. When you join WUU as a *new* member, you are asked to make your first financial commitment to the church by completing the membership forms. The pledge you make upon joining is for the remainder of the current pledge year ending June 30. Then, each spring, during our annual fund campaign, you will be asked along with all other congregants to make a *new* financial pledge for the *next* fiscal year.

Some Thoughts about Pledging

Since each of us is at a different place financially, we ask members to *consider* making a pledge equal to 5% of their income. For many, 5% is not a problem, and they can easily reach this level of commitment, or surpass it. For others, such a goal may be a real challenge. If so, we ask them to *consider* starting an initial pledge at 3% and increasing that amount by 1% each year, until 5% has been comfortably reached.

This year our average household pledge is \$1727, or \$144 per month. Does this sound like a lot? Think about this: what would you expect to pay for a membership in a health club, or to dine in a good restaurant? Certainly WUU exercises your mind, and feeds your soul and spirit. How much would you pay for such a feast? What is it worth to you? These are questions of spirit and generosity, and we ask you to carefully consider this important aspect of Membership.

Enrollment Forms: To Be Completed Before Joining

- 1. New Member Information form:** Please print clearly. The information becomes part of our database. *Each individual who wants to join must complete her/his own form.*
- 2. Pledge form:** Pledging is a very important component of joining Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists. *Family units may complete **one** pledge for their family.*
- 3. Time and Talents form:** Please note that when you fill out this form, you are expressing possible interest—not making a definite commitment to do something. *Each individual who wants to join must complete this form.*

Governance Overview

The Williamsburg Unitarian Universalist congregation is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (uua.org). Each congregation within the UUA is self-governing, with the congregation being the source of authority for the governance and operation of the church. Unitarian Universalists refer to this as congregational polity. As an example of congregational polity, each Unitarian Universalist congregation “calls” its own minister, using a process that culminates in a congregational vote. This is in contrast with some denominations, where the minister is assigned to serve a church by a central denominational authority.

WUU is also a member of the Thomas Jefferson District (uua.org/tjd), which comprises UU congregations in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. We represent more than 9,000 adult members and 3,226 children and youth.

WUU is run democratically. There are annual and special meetings of the voting membership. WUU is organized according to by-laws available at the church office. WUU operates on a Policy Governance form of organization. A seven-member Board formulates the policies of the church. The minister is an ex-officio member who regularly attends meetings. The Board members are elected by the congregation to serve staggered three-year at-large terms; the executive positions (president, vice-president, and secretary) are elected by the Board from

within its membership. All Board meetings are open, and anyone can speak on any church-related issue at the beginning of the meeting.

At WUU, the minister's role is to teach, preach, and provide pastoral care. The Board's role is to set policies and oversee church finances. In addition, teams of WUU members handle responsibilities in different areas (e.g., a caring ministry, communications, and music), and team leaders meet monthly to exchange information and coordinate activities, keeping within the Board-established boundaries of covenant, budget, mission, and policies and meeting needs identified by the minister. In short, leadership of our community is shared. We encourage you to become involved!

Honoring the Journey

Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists form a religious community that focuses on living meaningful lives of service, integrity, and joy. We welcome people of all religious backgrounds and those of no religious background. We welcome people of all races, classes, cultures, ages and affectional orientations. At Williamsburg UU, those who gather in our sanctuary for worship do so with hearts and minds open to the mysteries of love and to the wisdom of truth. With historical roots in Christian and Jewish traditions, but drawing from the world's religions, from nature, from science, and from modern thought, Unitarian Universalism is a liberal, "non-creedal" religion. We do not ask anyone to subscribe to a particular dogma. In our faith tradition, we encourage each individual to develop a personal system of belief. We believe that in the end, religious authority lies not in a book, person, or institution, but in ourselves. At Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists, religion is an ongoing search for meaning, purpose, value and spiritual depth in one's life. We believe that although each person is on a personal spiritual path, we are all moving toward the same goal of social transformation and spiritual transformation. Our differing gifts and strengths connect us together to make a vibrant and loving community which we hope you will join.

Our Flaming Chalice

Like many UUs, WUUs find a central symbol in the chalice. The lighting of the chalice provides a way to focus inward as the service opens. It unites and inspires us to hope, to embrace all, and to care for each other and the world through our vision and connectedness. We are a community bound by our principles and tied to the larger community of UU churches and fellowships.

Our WUU Covenant

We promise to each other:

- To respect ourselves and the inherent dignity of all human beings;
- To support each other's search for truth;
- To help each other grow in mind and spirit;
- To teach ourselves and our children the value of religious thought and feeling;
- To act responsibly toward the society in which we live;
- To renew ourselves through shared educational, artistic, and spiritual experience;

- To care for each other;
- To try to live morally and deepen our spiritual lives.

The Mission of WUU Is to Serve:

- Our members and friends by providing a welcoming, inclusive community to explore and encourage personal spiritual growth;
- Greater Williamsburg by promoting religious, racial, and social harmony;
- Liberal religion by embodying Unitarian Universalist values within our congregation and in society at large;
- The global community by participating in transformative action to achieve a sustainable and humane world.

The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equality, and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalist Six Sources

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions that celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

We Ask That You:

- Actively pursue your own spiritual path
- Contribute your time and talents to the life of the congregation

- Make an appropriate pledge or contribution of financial support as your circumstances allow.

How to Enroll in Membership

- Please speak to the head of the Membership Team or e-mail Membership2009 at wuu.org when you decide you want to join.
- Enrollment in membership takes place on the first Sunday of selected months.
- Complete the forms listed here and bring them with you on the appropriate Sunday. At that time, you will be able to sign the Membership Record Book.
- We look forward to welcoming you into the WUU community.