Membership Committee – new member interview process

From the Church Standing Rules Addendum under Committees:

Membership Committee
The membership committee shall:

A. Interview all applicants for membership. The chair or vice chair of the committee, at least one other committee member, and a member of the board of trustees shall be present for all interviews. (See Article I, Section 2C.)
B. Submit to the board of trustees, each January, a list of suggested guidelines to be used when interviewing an applicant.
C. Oversee sign-in at membership meetings to assure a quorum and encourage members to attend meetings as needed.
D. Keep the contents of the membership application updated and in line with our bylaws and standing rules. Any changes shall be submitted to the board for approval.
E. Follow up with the new member to be sure they have signed the register.
F. Introduce the new members to the congregation as soon as possible. (See Article IV, Section IV 7C)
G. Follow up with the new members to be sure they have had the opportunity to participate on committees of their interest and feel involved in our church. (See Article IV, Section 7D)

Detailed Process (Internal to Membership Committee)

1. Applicant gives completed, and signed application to clerk, including endorsements from two current church members. If there is a letter of withdrawal from a former church, this should be turned in at the same time.
2. Clerk scans the application and supporting documents and emails it to the board contact and to the membership committee chair.
3. Committee chair reaches out to the applicant to schedule the interview.
4. Committee chair sends an email to the committee with the date the interview is to take place and requests participation from members. Per Standing Rules, there should be at least one committee member and a board rep in attendance, in addition to the committee chair. More committee members are encouraged however.
5. Committee chair sends confirmation email to all participants.
6. If the regular board contact is unable to attend the meeting, he/she is responsible for finding an available board member to replace him/her, and communicating that to the committee chair.
7. During the interview, the committee chair or designated member takes notes and provides a written summary for the committee chair to forward to the board rep and clerk.
    a. Each applicant will have a separate interview. In the case of two spouses joining at the same time, the committee will arrange separate interviews, either simultaneously or on separate days. If the interviews happen at the same time,

another board rep and additional committee members will be needed to conduct that interview, in another location in the church.

b. Occasionally, it is necessary to conduct an interview via Zoom. If this is the case, request a Zoom link from the Clerk or other individual such as the board chair, and send the link to those on the committee who will be attending the interview, and to the applicant.

8. The interview should be warm and inviting, and informal in nature. Interviews generally take about 20 – 30 minutes, and a private room should be used. A good room to use is the small Sunday School room across from the reception desk in the Sunday School lobby area.
9. The interviews are all unique; however, certain basic information should be included:
    a. Applicants are asked to share their journey in Christian Science, and perhaps a healing that was especially meaningful.
    b. We like to know what attracted the applicant to our church.
    c. They are asked about how they're interested in serving the church – what committees they would like to be on.
    d. The committee explains how some duties are the privilege of all members – ushering, Reading Room, childcare and tellers – (see Article VI, Section 2 of the Standing Rules).
    e. The committee explains that members have access to the church at any time via a code to a lockbox by the side door that contains a church key.
    f. Applicants are asked if they have ever been a Reader in a branch church and if so, would they be willing to have their names added to the substitute Reader list.
    g. Applicants should be asked if they have any questions for the committee – anything about the church, how we operate, etc.
    h. The committee chair will go over with the applicant the next steps once the interview is complete (summary provided to board, letter sent to membership, members have seven days to respond, Clerk notifies applicant after seven days).
10. After the interview, the committee chair will confirm with the other members whether we should move forward with a recommendation to the board – a quick "thumbs up" is sufficient after the applicant has left.
11. Board contact shares the committee's recommendation with the rest of the board and if approved, the clerk sends an email to the church membership recommending the applicant for membership in our church.
12. If after seven days there are no objections or questions regarding the applicant, the Clerk notifies the applicant by email that they've been accepted as a member of our church, and includes a welcome packet, with Church By-Laws, church activities and a committee list, etc.
13. Per the Standing Rules, the Clerk arranges for the new member to sign the membership book. For the book signing, at least one rep from the board (more are encouraged) should be present, along with the committee chair and clerk. Some membership committee reps may also be present. This activity is not to be too formal, but it is a special time. It can take place in the clerk/reading room office, or up front of the church during the official greeting. It's best if it happens as soon after the new member has been accepted, so that the new member can participate in church activities such as

business meetings and committee work. A new member must have signed the book prior to being eligible to vote in meetings.

14. Committee chair schedules an official greeting and asks support from the committee for this activity. The greetings usually happen when there are several new members to greet. Committee chair works with the Clerk to arrange these. The Clerk arranges an announcement to be read from the desk the Sunday and Wednesday prior to the greeting, and again on the day of the greeting. The greetings happen after the service on Sunday morning, at the front of the church. The membership lines up in the center isle to greet them. Each new member should have a rep from the membership committee to help introduce the new member to everyone in line.
15. Clerk/board members schedule committee assignments and notify the new member of his/her new duties, based on interest and need.
16. A nametag should be created for each new member. Check with the clerk on who should make them.
17. Membership committee members should occasionally follow up with new members to make sure they're feeling welcomed, included, and embraced by the congregation.