

Care to Join Us?

Membership Book Sunday

September 30, 2007

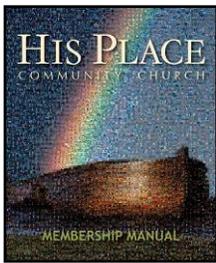
THE MEMBER SHIP



Q: Did you get a postcard in the mail this week?

Q: Did you figure out the secret message?

- It's a *ship* made up of *members* ... it's a *member-ship*!



And, this is what's on the cover of our membership manual.

But, it's more than a manual ... it's a manifesto! It's a declaration and a celebration of our principles and our purpose.

For almost three years now we have prayed over and poured our heart and soul into this book.

The goal was to distill, and encapsulate a thorough description and definition of who and what God has called His Place to be.

- The assignment that God has given us.
- The strategy to achieve that assignment.
- The core values that govern all we do.
- The structure that holds us accountable.
- Our theology; condensed but comprehensive.
- The history of how the Lord has led us.
- Our position on 36 different topics, including:
 - Women in leadership.
 - Speaking in "tongues".
 - Consumption of alcohol.
 - Gambling and lotteries.
 - Divorce and remarriage.
 - And, the death penalty ... (how's *that* for controversy!)
- And, the commitments we expect each and every member to make.
- And there are a lot of pictures!

Twice I thought I was finished, only to realize that a major piece was missing.

I can not tell you how excited (and relieved), and thankful I am to be putting this practical, powerful resource into your hands this morning! This is the single most difficult, meaningful, frustrating, rewarding thing I've been involved with here. And it will give us the words to express what we experience here!

I'm not going to speak long (I'll bet), and you're going to be excused early (I'll bet) so you can get a copy for your family.



And then you're gonna sit down and read it, cover to cover! And the ushers are gonna lock the doors till you're done! They're only \$24.95! No, ... actually, today they're marked down to ... free! I just thought you'd appreciate it more if I said that first.

These books are *not* intended just for those who are joining.

- If you already are a member, you *need* to read this book.
- If you want to become a member, you *need* to read this book.
- If you're a regular attender, you *need* to read this book.
- If you're a curious visitor, you *need* to read this book.

This manuscript will not attempt to talk anyone into joining. Whether someone reads it and says, "Wow! I want to be a part of that!" or, "Wow! I do NOT want to be a part of that!" it's done its job - it's a success.

- A. It's meant to help us recognize and realize the specific things that the Lord is doing right here in our midst.
 - [Because] We should appreciate what God is doing.
- B. And, it's designed to help us clearly communicate to our friends and family why we practice our faith the way we do.
 - [Because] We should articulate what we are doing.

My mom bumped into an old friend in town; she asked why the church went out of business. Mom was puzzled. The lady said, "It's some kind of a furniture store now." Mom told her that the church had put the chair on the roof. The lady asked her why. Mom said, "So people like you would ask why there's a chair on the roof." Then she explained about the parables, and invited her to church.

Q: Why are there so few religious icons in this sanctuary?

Q: Why do the greeters say, "I want to welcome you to *my* church?"

Q: Why do we break our praise and worship into two parts?

Q: Why does Ken poke fun at me while I'm speaking?

- The answer is on page 43!

I believe this will help us to appreciate more fully what *God* is doing - and articulate more clearly what *we* are doing.



- I believe the Lord will use this to *knit* us together.

My desire would be that everyone says, “Wow! I want to be a part of what God is doing at His Place!”

But: Membership is *not* about numbers.

It’s about helping you to identify whether or not God is calling you to join arms and actively participate with the like-minded believers of this particular body!



- It’s not about conformity, it’s about unity.

Unity among believers is worship! And a unified body is a healthy body, with a strong sense of direction.

Membership is an enthusiastic expression of connection and commitment and contribution and accountability.

- This is what separates visitors and attenders from members.

It’s about joining forces and focusing on our God-given mission:

To pursue ever-deepening devotion and spread authentic, joy-filled passion for God by modeling Jesus in a relevant fashion in Skagit Valley and beyond

We use words like “**pursue**” and “**ever-deepening**” because “**devotion**” is not a destination ... it’s a day-to-day journey that takes the encouragement of those you are connected and accountable to.

It’s not just “**passion for God**” - it’s “**authentic**”

On the Sunday Brad Thompson shared about his battle with sexual addiction there were two separate women who attended for the first time. One was a believer who stormed out saying she’d never attend again because of the “pervert” on the platform. The other was an unbeliever who said she was coming back because she was so moved by the honesty and vulnerability that she hadn’t known could exist in church.

With all respect, that first woman can go back to a congregation where masks are worn and sin is hidden. I’m staying here; where we treasure transparency, authenticity, and truth! Our passion has to be authentic, or it won’t be: “**joy-filled**”

Several Bible passages equate joy with *vitality*.

... the joy of the Lord is your strength. - *Nehemiah 8:10 NIV*

And we spread this passion for God by “modeling Jesus”.

Not just on the outside, like a *fashion* model; but transformed, inside and out, like a *role* model. That’s the goal here.

Not hiding from the world in a Christian sub-culture of our own making, but engaging our culture “in a relevant fashion”.

This requires seeing ourselves as *backyard missionaries* both here “in Skagit Valley and beyond” (Mexico and the Philippines).

I believe we are experiencing a God-appointed bench mark.

After the Lord spoke to the prophet Habakkuk, He said:

Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. -
Habakkuk 2:2 NAS

The idea being that they would run with the news to others.

If you care to join us, this is our moment to run!