

Membership Sunday

Why Join His Place?

May 23, 2004

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

- One of our Core Values is cultural relevance.
- Substance should never be hindered by style.

The substance of God's grace and mercy as expressed through Christ shouldn't be obstructed by out-of-touch techniques. This church has been on this corner for 21 years - I've been on it for 40! I've witnessed many transitions and transformations.

- In the people, the approach, and the place itself.

Here's an embarrassing photo: I'm standing in the center aisle, about three rows from the back ... 27 years ago. [Photo: Young Bruce spray-painting car parts]

Ken: Who do you remind me of? You remind me of someone. [Photo: Dutch Boy]

Ken: Yeah, that's it.

Bruce: I'm thinking about bringing that style back. [Photo: Adult Bruce with Dutch-boy haircut]

- And this is why cultural relevance is so fundamental!
- My substance would be greatly hindered by this hair style!

Like the disciples, we must not be afraid to use innovative methods to accomplish our mission; and Our Mission is this:

To embrace and embody the love, grace, and truth of our Lord, and to relevantly and effectively assist in transforming non-believers into believers, believers into disciples, and disciples into mature, fruitful followers of Christ.

FIVE-FOLD MANDATE

That's a mouthful; so, we've shortened it to a motto:

- Our Motto: To model Jesus Christ to our community.

Modeling Christ means so much more than merely looking, dressing, or acting the part.

We've assembled a five-fold *mandate* from two sources:

1. The great commandment Christ quoted:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself. - *Luke 10:27 NIV*

2. The great commission Jesus declared:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. - *Matthew 28:19-20 NIV*

We can distill these passages into a five-fold mandate of:

1. Worship (prayer & praise)
2. Fellowship
3. Discipleship
4. Ministry
5. Mission

We are committed to embracing and pursuing intimate relationship with God (through His Word, Spirit, and people) so that our very character will be increasingly transformed into His likeness.

- To become like Christ we must connect with God *and* believers.

COMMITMENT AND CONNECTION

This congregation (and any) can be separated into three groups:

- 1) Visitors
- 2) Attenders
- 3) Members

Q: Do you know which group you belong to?

Q: If you're a visitor you probably do. But, what separates an attender from a member?

A: Commitment, connection, and accountability.

- Members are more participators; attenders are more spectators.

THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Some wonder what the big deal is. Aren't all believers members in Christ? Yes; but look at Paul's statement to the Romans:

... so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, **and** individually members one of another. - *Romans 12:5 NAS*

Paul identifies two Biblical types of membership. The first, "**one body in Christ**" can be viewed as "positional membership." This is the invisible bond, the invisible union with Christ and His body, which happens at the instant of our conversion.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. - *Ephesians 2:19-20 NIV*

And when Paul says, "**individually members one of another**" he's describing what we'll call "Participating membership." The N.T. urges "positional members" to gather in specific, local fellowships in order to look after, encourage, and spur one another on to visible spiritual growth.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. - *Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV*

So, membership isn't about adding numbers to a register, drumming up support, or convincing people to join a church. Membership is about *identifying* those in our midst who are already (or plan to become) participating members ... and then affirming and celebrating the fact.

- Membership is all about making the invisible visible.

There are quite a few responsibilities involved in making the invisible visible.

1. First, we need to be a "positional member," having surrendered to the Lordship of Christ in our private life.
2. Then, we need to be committed to modeling Christ through worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission.
3. And also, we should be active contributors of our time, talents, and treasure.

It's natural to wonder what the benefits are. And there are benefits – some are listed in the manual, some have to do with leadership and decision making.

But, the primary reason to become a participating member isn't to gain a *personal advantage*; we're not joining a club ... we're committing ourselves to each other.

- Your participating responsibilities are *my* benefits
- My participating responsibilities are *your* benefits

A Christian community isn't built on the promise of compensation or convenience; it's built on a conviction to advance a Kingdom.

And membership is not an act of conformity, but it is very much about identifying yourself with a group of like-minded believers. There're a hundred ways to do church right; each reflecting a different preference or personality.

Q: The big question isn't "Should I join a church." That's a "Yes!" The real question is: "Do I fit the church I'm joining?"

- This is where we'll pick up at the membership class.

We have 16 core values that identify and unify our members. Here's a couple:

1. The Gospel should be shared simply and creatively

Jesus held attention and stirred emotions with images of pigs and pearls, eyes with protruding logs, and tea cups with camels.

Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. - *Matthew 13:33-34 NLT*

Mark tells us that the crowds listened to Him with delight.

2. Children and youth should be given high priority

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." - *Mark 10:13-14 NIV*

Children are not *only* the church of tomorrow; they're the church of today. And their needs are just as significant as any adults.

Q: Do you agree?

We have 14 more core values that will help you decide if this is the specific, local fellowship that you're ready to commit to.