

COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERSHIP AT HUS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In last year's adoption of the Visioning Plan for Hus Presbyterian Church, one of the items included was for the session to develop and articulate the practical essentials for being an active member of Hus Presbyterian Church. The idea was not to make this congregation an exclusive club, but to help membership to become more meaningful, faithful, responsible, and missional according to a biblical understanding.

Later in the fall of 2005, session discussion focused on the guidelines for membership in the present Book of Order were very well outlined. These are stated in the Presbyterian Church USA *Book of Order*, section G-5.0102, entitled "Membership as Ministry."

A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church.

Such involvement includes

- a. *proclaiming the good news,*
- b. *taking part in the common life and worship of a particular church,*
- c. *praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church,*
- d. *supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,*
- e. *participating in the governing responsibilities of the church,*
- f. *demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,*
- g. *responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,*
- h. *living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,*
- i. *working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.*

While these are good and well-stated objectives for anyone who is a member, the question is how best do we as a congregation help our members fulfill these expectations in practical, non-coercive, and easy to understand ways. Therefore, the following four "covenant guidelines" have been adopted by the session in its capacity as the spiritual leaders of Hus Presbyterian Church. These guidelines are fair, practical, understandable, doable, and most of all, encourage each member in their goal to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

- 1) Worship: attendance in worship.
This would be regular attendance (over 50 percent of the services)
- 2) Fellowship: participation in a small group fellowship.
This can be any form of small group, such as Lunch Bunch or Bible study, but is considered primarily to mean a group of members who gather together regularly (around twice a month) for friendship, study, and prayer.
- 3) Growth: spiritual development in an accountability ("covenant") group.
This means covenanting with two to three other persons of the same gender to share with one another how things are going in their spiritual life and to share guidance in prayer for one another.
- 4) Service: involvement in active service to others.
This simply means being involved in something that is for the benefit of others, such as serving the homeless, teaching the Bible, arranging activities for the elderly, singing in choir, or being an intercessor in prayer.

None of these four primary practices are out of line with the spirit of the *Bible*, our *Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. In fact, they are quite central in helping our members to be faithful to the commitment they profess as members of Hus Church and the church of Jesus Christ. These are clear, simple, biblical, and reasonable expectations.

These four practices are now the essential and basic guidelines for all new members at Hus Presbyterian Church. As clarified in our Visioning Plan, these are highly recommended to our present members but not required. From this point on, people desiring membership with Hus Church will have these practices in place upon becoming a member. If one or more are lacking, the session will instruct the candidate to wait until all four expectations are sufficiently present and active before pursuing membership.

This approach to membership not only places more responsibility on the person seeking to become a member to take seriously their commitment to Jesus Christ and His mission, but it also places more responsibility on the present members to take seriously their commitment to reach out to non-members, and to support and encourage new members. Fellowship groups must be more open, worship services more hospitable, and individual members more willing to invest their time and energy in others.