

NEW MEMBER CLASS AND CEREMONY

Submitted by: **Center for Spiritual Living – Seattle, WA**

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Rev. Janet Garvey-Stangvik and Cathy Lindsay, RScP, developed our membership class about 8 years ago. I have worked with it and changed it some over the years—shortened it, too. Basically, the idea is to have expectations of members, so membership really means something for both the church as an organization and those who choose to become members. **Below is a copy of our class outline and some support handouts you may want to adapt. If there's anything you would like clarification on, please feel free to let me know.**

We don't have too many "bennies" for members, but one thing we do is divide the membership list up among the practitioners and they call each member on their list once a quarter to see if they have any prayer requests.

We celebrate new members by introducing them at our evening service (we have it at 6pm on Sundays.) We read their names one by one and have them come up front. Eric, our music director, found a great song called "Welcome to This Church of Truth" that we then serenade the members with, and Dr. Kathianne comes out into the congregation and turns with us to face the new members and does a sweet blessing. It's so great, and often the new members are in tears.

We have a potluck afterwards, created by the previous class of new members. It's really great! We used to have a bagels and fruit reception after our later daytime service, which really works best if you can have it in a separate area so they feel "special", with minister(s), practitioners and BOT members in attendance.

Another point of information: We used to have a rather high-touch but time-consuming way of having members "re-up": in January, we'd send members a letter with reply postcard to renew their membership. Those who did not respond within a certain time frame were called. Now we let folks know that their yearly pledge constitutes membership renewal. (and if they don't make a pledge, we call to inquire what's up)

Below find a copy of our Membership Covenant and Membership Vows.

Membership Covenant

Center for Spiritual Living

By declaring my membership in the Center for Spiritual Living I am stating that:

- I understand the church's philosophy and basic teachings, am aligned with them, and place a high priority on my spiritual growth.
- I am an active, involved member of this spiritual community and help to maintain its loving, accepting, and supportive atmosphere. I am a welcoming presence to **all** that visit my spiritual home.
- I actively support the church's vision, mission, and goals, including the church in my prayers, and value being part of something larger than myself.
- I include the church in my financial planning; I undertake my fair share through systematic and joyful giving; and reap the satisfaction found in generosity.
- I serve my spiritual community through my fair share of volunteer service, and experience the value of selfless service whenever possible.
- I act with constructive purpose toward the church, and my fellow members. If I feel upset with the church or a fellow member, I will seek inner guidance, then speak with the person(s) involved with the intention of finding a resolution.
- I participate regularly in the church's activities, recognizing that my participation is a gift that enhances the experience for everyone. I refrain from feeling guilty when I am unable to attend.
- I teach others through my example, by demonstrating growth and change in my life, and by sharing the Science of Mind principles with others when appropriate.
- Together with fellow members, I co-create with God the ongoing, dynamic life of the Center for Spiritual Living. I recognize that together we keep its doors open, expand its programs and services, and thereby bless and serve thousands of people. Through membership in the church, I honor the Spirit in me and the Spirit at work through the Center for Spiritual Living.

Membership Vows

Center for Spiritual Living

- I promise to* practice the presence of God by remembering that God is with me and in me at all times.
- I promise to* practice being still and listening to the voice of God.
- I promise to* practice unconditional love by treating others with respect and kindness.
- I promise to* be good to myself and not feel guilty if I sometimes forget to do the above.
- I promise to* use the resources of the Center for Spiritual Living so that I can continue my spiritual growth and development.
- I promise to* be a welcoming presence and host to all that visit my spiritual home.
- I promise to* support the Center for Spiritual Living with my time, talent, and finances so that it can continue to support me and others.
- I promise to* get the most I can out of membership.
- I promise to* remind myself often to stay open to the blessings of God.
- I promise to* share and live the message “God is Good and so am I”.

Pledging: Why we ask it; how it works

Why do we include pledging as an expectation of membership?

The Center for Spiritual Living is a dynamic, powerful, viable living community. Part of being a powerful living community is providing giving opportunities for its members. Planned giving follows the principles of the Science of Mind by offering each of us a channel to invest in making a positive change in ourselves and our world. Giving back to the source of our spiritual nourishment is part of spiritual practice.

As a practical matter, the church is an organization with staff, a building, and other expenses. Your pledge not only keeps our doors open, but also allows us to plan for the future: to see when and where we can add staff and programs to serve you and the greater community more fully. Knowing what dollars we can **count on** assists us in being mindful of our resources, ensuring a healthy church.

How does it work?

You will be asked to prayerfully and thoughtfully make a specific dollar pledge to be given during the remainder of 2001. You may give your tithe, offerings, or gifts on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. Please return your pledge card by the second night of class.

Does the money pledged pay for all the expenses in our church budget?

The answer is no. However, the intent is to cover most of the expected expenses. Generally speaking, the goal is to raise approximately 70% of the annual church budget through pledging by new members and the annual giving campaign. The balance of the money needed to operate the church comes from classes, seminars, workshops, and non-pledged gifts. Again, our efforts allow the leadership of the church to accurately forecast the income, which enables us to make better financial decisions. Therefore, more time can be spent to meet your needs and the needs of the church.

If my circumstances change during the year, can I change my pledge?

Yes. No one will be calling you about the status of your pledge. Once a quarter, you will receive a statement of your giving. You may increase or decrease your pledge at any time. This program is not designed to be a bill you owe, but rather a gift you give that transforms your life.

What if I don't think I can pledge right now?

Pledging is a requirement of membership. Ernest Holmes, Founder of Science of Mind, reminds us that what we can see in our mind becomes our reality. Simply stated, if we see ourselves with limited resources, then we are creating our limitations. Think about committing yourself to a goal and trusting the law of prosperity. The world is full of individuals who have trusted God to provide, based on their willingness to give. Do you have anything to lose?

I hear people talk of tithing. What is it?

Tithing is grounded in the Old Testament of the Bible. It was a law in which individuals were expected to give one-tenth of their harvest back to God. It was an expectation. However, Jesus never focused on the expectation or law, but what was in your heart. He stressed that giving is an avenue for people to grow and experience greater spirituality. For example, we all know that when we give love, we get it back. When we demonstrate kindness and we show understanding, we receive understanding.

The more we give, the more we receive. The principle is also true with our financial resources. Tithing is a principle where we give back to our Source. Individuals who tithe give 10% of their gross income to the church. When you ask someone why they tithe, you will always hear about the abundance tithing creates in their lives. They have abundance in love, friends, careers, peace, and financial resources. Tithing is about faith--the knowingness that God will meet your every expectation.

Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, running over shall be put into your lap. For with the measure you give, will be the measure you get back. (Luke 6:38)

Rev. Membership Class Outline

Night One

Supplies needed:

*Log/sign-in sheet; preprinted nametags, including nametags for TA's; sticky nametags
Marker & pens; index cards; rubber bands; sticky notes
Whiteboard OR 2 Easels & tape; appropriate markers.
Member packets; New member Data sheets*

As folks enter:

- ❑ **Welcome!**
- ❑ **Have sign in & take nametag**
- ❑ **Hand out packet & New member data sheet**
- ❑ **Ask to fill out data sheet right away**

Welcome/Overview 5 min

- ❑ Collect Data sheets & alphabetize

Small group Icebreaker 20 min

- ❑ Hand out index cards & pens
- Intro self, how long coming to CSL
- What value have you gotten from the church/ what miracles have happened
- (how has your life been transformed)
- what questions do I want answered tonight?
- ❑ Count # of people who signed in and cross out any no-shows

Vision/Mission/Fountain 20 min

Transformation—how we do it—(take from their sharing)—how we contribute to you; how you contribute to us as members

Historical Highlights 5 min

Church Structure 20 min

Admin
BOT
“Budget Presentation”

Eccles/Pracs—MOP

BREAK 10-15 min

- ❑ Collect index cards w/ ?
(Review ? during break)

Night One/cont

Membership Expectations/Requirements

15 min

Spir Practice:

Giving: Pledge

Service: Volunteer

Study: class or group

Host: Welcoming presence

New renewal procedure

Q & A

15 min

Small Group Discussion & Large Group Sharing

25 min

Why become a member?

- Write answers on whiteboard
- Copy down from whiteboard
- Be prepared to share own experience

Consider your own answers for next week

Closing; Homework:

10 min

- Preview Covenant
- Look over expectations
- Look over Volunteer Info & see where are drawn
- Pray about pledge and fill out card to turn in next week
- New Mbr Sunday Info—refer to packet
- Be ready for photo
- Bring any questions

Between class 1 & 2:

- Redo attendance log, adding new names and deleting no-shows
- Check off on log anyone already volunteering (from data sheet)
- Check off anyone already pledging/confirm w/bookkeeper
- Make additional nametags as needed
- Make up numbered sign/in ID sheet for photos
- Liz: Request digital camera/make sure ready to go

Night Two

Ceremony set up in Sanctuary or other room:

- ***Chairs in circle***
- **Candles, tray, fireplace matches, kitty litter in separate container**
- **for extinguished matches**
- ***Boom box & CD from Liz***

Supplies/Handouts:

- *Digital camera gotten from Ronn/Krishna*
- ***Covenant with signature lines on card stock***
- *Evaluation forms*
- ***Index cards & pens***
- *Food, balloons, Polaroid, extra film & digital camera*
- *Numbered ID/sign in sheet for photos*
- *Rubber bands; sticky notes*

Welcome back

5 min

Questions

- Collect pledge cards and alphabetize, *instructing those who previously pledged to fill out card w/that info, including name of spouse/partner*
- Count # of cards & write on sticky on top of stack
- Count # of people in attendance; highlight/circle 2nd night no-shows
- Through evening, check off cards against attendees, noting anyone who did NOT turn in a card

Sr. Minister presentation

15-20 min

- Thank for pledge
- Why members are important to you:
- What keeps a church healthy
- church growth/transformation/reaching the 35,000
- how to make shift for growth
- any new stuff
- As volunteer reps arrive, welcome and have stand to the side until we're ready.
- Count number of attendees, including Liz, to check # chairs for ceremony

Volunteer Fair (volunteers as reps)

25 min

Each rep intros self and ministry briefly

- Ushers/Pathfinders
- Empowerment Group Facilitators
- Compassionate Heart
- Children's Church
- General
- Add/delete chairs set up for ceremony as necessary

Night Two/cont

Break

10-15 min

- ❑ Have fill out service sheet, collect and alphabetize, mark in column on log sheet, noting anyone who did NOT fill out.

Reading of Covenant

10 min

Review New Member Sunday Instructions

- ❑ Take names of anyone unavailable that day

Ceremony

30 min

Alleluia tape playing on boom box w/in Liz's reach if poss

Vows ready to hand out

- Opening Prayer
- Explain vows: Collective → Individual
- Vows
- Lighting candles/sharing of gifts
- Looking at the light

- ❑ Set up for celebration

Food (cookies, nuts, soda water)

Balloons

Digital camera, Polaroid, paper for ID list

Celebration

15-20 min

- ❑ Take photos
- ❑ Have each person sign-in on ID sheet
- ❑ Have fill out index card: "why I'm becoming a member"
- ❑ Have fill out evaluation
- ❑ Lead "backstage tours" as desired
- ❑ Schmooze/congratulate!!
- ❑ Camera returned to AV cabinet with reminder note left for Ronn

Before New Member Sunday

- ❑ Create display
- ❑ Final form check
- ❑ Confirm ushers put out signs
- ❑ Call any folks who couldn't attend previous New member Sunday & invite

