

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Auburn notes from "Change that works" session, Northern California Church Alive Summit, May 4th 2013.

Key questions we asked ourselves that led to practical actions:

- 1 Are we successfully meeting the public hunger for community, stories, spirituality?
- 2 Have you ever considered the distinction between Christian Science and the Church of Christ, Scientist?
 - The Church is the mouthpiece. *CS is the movement of thought.*
 - The Church is the institution. *CS promotes, directs, establishes.*
 - The Church is for those the UNITE (rather than join) with it. *CS is for everyone.*
 - The Church is a community of worshipers. *Yet CS is 'as old as God'.*
- 3 What is the manifestation of structure for our church?
 - Community
 - Mission
 - Bylaws
 - Affiliations
- 4 Are our church practices inclusive or exclusive?
 - Fellowship?
 - Visitors?
 - Sunday School?
 - Receptivity to new ideas?
 - Membership process?
 - Seating & podium?
 - Facility size and décor?
 - Music?
 - Language (jargon? translations?)
- 5 Are we actively engaging with our public?
 - Location?
 - Public face?
 - Outreach?
 - Community events?
 - Branding?
 - Technology?

Sample Membership Affirmation Process

SECTION 1. DEFINED

A member is one who has followed the procedures for joining this church and actively supports it, as required in these By-laws, and who has signed the church Register.

SECTION 2. MEMBERSHIP BROCHURE AND AFFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP

The Membership Brochure presents the membership commitments agreed to by each member of our church. The Affirmation of Membership form is given to each applicant for his/her prayerful consideration prior to joining. The content of the brochure and the Affirmation of Membership are subject to membership review and approval.

SECTION 3. PROCESS FOR UNITING

- a. The applicant shall complete and submit the Membership Interest Card found in the Membership Brochure.
- b. The chairman of the Orientation/Membership Committee shall select two additional members, and conduct an Orientation meeting with the prospective member.
- c. At the conclusion of the meeting, the applicant may, or may not, choose to request an Affirmation of Membership form. If taken, it is to be prayerfully considered before signing.
- d. At such time as the applicant chooses to sign the Affirmation, it is to be returned to the church office.
- e. The President shall review the Affirmation for completeness, and promptly send written notification of the signed Affirmation to all members.
- f. Members have a metaphysical and supportive role in considering those affirming membership and desiring to unite with our church. Upon receipt of the notification, any member having a question as to the prospective member's Christian qualifications or sincerity should direct those concerns to the Board in writing.
- g. If after 10 days there are no unresolved questions brought to the Board's attention, the Affirmation will be Acknowledged and dated, as evidenced by the signature of the President. If a question arises, the Board shall investigate the issue in a timely manner and make a determination whether to accept or reject the applicant's Affirmation. Both the member and the applicant shall be notified of the determination in writing.
- h. At the first appropriate time, the individual will be invited to sign the Church Register and is thereby granted membership status. The date on the Church Register is considered the date of membership.
- i. A copy of the fully executed Affirmation of Membership will be given to the new member.

SECTION 4. THE ORIENTATION/MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

- a. The Administrative Board shall annually appoint a committee chairman who shall be a member of The Mother Church. At the time a membership interest card is received, the chairman shall select two additional members to conduct the orientation meeting with the prospective member.
- b. The committee's purpose is to help the inquirer confirm the sincerity of the applicant and help the individual determine his/her readiness to accept the commitments of membership. It is not to be judgmental, but should establish the individual's sense of the sacred nature of membership and of his/her desire to demonstrate those commitments to the best of his/her ability.
- c. The committee shall hold an Orientation Meeting with each applicant in the spirit of Christian fellowship to:
 - i. Review and discuss the Commitment of Members as outlined in the membership brochure.
 - ii. Give the individual a copy of our by-laws and review its entirety.
 - iii. Answer any questions relative to our church organization and branch church membership.
 - iv. Present the Affirmation of Membership form and review the significance of his/her signature upon it.

(From the bylaws of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Auburn, CA)