

June 17, 2011

The following is called a Take Two. It is an attempt to expand on some of the things that happened during recent Sunday sermons. That's it.

But, the most interesting sermons are often those that happen in the minds of people in the congregation. So, feel free to respond to this email as you see fit.

Dear Friends (Known and Unknown),

In Sunday worship we are currently considering some of the main themes of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the tradition of which Kingwood Christian is a part. Last Sunday we talked about the importance of Covenant, of the holy promises that bind people to God and to one another.

Below is a portion of a book by Jan Linn, a Disciples of Christ educator and pastor. Jan's congregation Spirit of Joy practices an approach to church membership called "covenant membership". It approaches membership in the church as a commitment to spiritual growth and development where people are connected to one another through Christ in a relationship of mutual support and responsibility. Members are asked to renew their covenant membership each new year.

His description of it comes from pages 12 and 13 in his book *Rocking the Membership Boat*:

"The most widely known covenant pledge people make today is the marriage vow. Marriage rests on promises made and promises kept, promises that are specific and unambiguous. "To love, honor, and cherish for as long as we both shall live." Nothing unclear or equivocating about that. It is a model for covenant membership in the church. Churches help members in faithfulness to God, one another, and themselves by making expectations specific and unambiguous.

"At Spirit of Joy we have chosen to use the following covenant membership statement:

*"By God's grace given in and through Jesus Christ, whom I have confessed as Savior and Lord of my life, I joyfully commit myself to being a member of the Spirit of Joy T.E.A.M. This means for this year I am willing to give my **time** in attendance, my **energy** in ministry, my **attention** in prayer, and my **money** in support, all to the building up of this community of faith and its witness to Jesus Christ in the world.*

"In making this covenant I am consciously pledging to love and serve the Lord, and to trust the Holy Spirit to lead me in all things to witness to my faith through word and deed.

"If there should be times when I feel like I am being stretched in uncomfortable ways, I will also trust the Spirit to use them to nudge me toward deeper spiritual maturity.

May God bless me and all who share in this covenant, that together we may be a blessing to others. Amen."

What do you see as the plusses and minuses of such an approach? What do you think taking such a covenant seriously in your life would look like in practice?

Peace in Christ,

Robert