

RECEPTION OF
new members



INTRODUCTION

Rev. Tom

According to our spiritual ancestors, the dour and self-serious Puritans, a church is more than a building. A church is more even than a group of people who consistently forgo Sunday brunch in the name of sitting in hard wooden pews for an hour. Rather, a church, according to the Puritans, is a two-way covenant. And covenant is just a church word for an agreement.

One of these covenants is vertical – a personal commitment made between an individual and God to live and grow in the way of Jesus. The other is a horizontal covenant – an agreement between an individual and a community to journey together, to offer support and mutual accountability as they live and grow in faith. This horizontal covenant is marked by declaring membership in a particular church.

And if there were any Puritans still alive today, they would be very excited for us this morning, because we celebrate this intersection of covenants as we welcome new members into our congregation. We'll begin by joining together in a communal affirmation of that threefold love of God, neighbor, and self that Jesus taught was at the heart of all true religion. This affirmation is printed on page 2 of your bulletins. Yours are the words in bold.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Rev. Tom

We believe in the boundless love of God, expressed through Jesus Christ.

All

We listen for God's Word in prayer and scripture, and we celebrate the Spirit pervading all creation.

Rev. Tom

We believe in engaging with people authentically, as Jesus did, treating all as made in God's image. We stand with the outcast and oppressed, seeking peace and justice, and preserving the church's prophetic voice.

All

We walk humbly with God, acknowledging our shortcomings and seeking to understand others.

Rev. Tom

We base our lives on the faith that in Christ all things are made new and that we are loved beyond our wildest imaginations – for eternity.

All

We claim the sacredness of our minds and hearts, caring for our bodies, and taking time for prayer, reflection, worship, and recreation.

Rev. Tom

We act on the faith that we are born with meaning and purpose:

All

To love boldly, serve faithfully, and live joyfully in God's ever-extending realm of love. Amen.

Rev. Tom

I would now like to invite forward all who are interested in becoming full, voting members of the church....

[Those who wish to join the church come to the front of the church. Incoming members who are joining online can unmute themselves.]

QUESTIONS OF THE INCOMING MEMBERS

Rev. Tom

Do you wish to make this community your spiritual home, the place and the people with whom you will seek to make sense of the issues of your life, your faith, your dreams, of who you are, and of who God is calling you to be?

Incoming Members

I do, with God's help.

Rev. Tom

Do you embrace the teachings of Jesus, who shows us how to love more deeply, seek justice, and extend mercy within and beyond this community?

Incoming Members

I do, with God's help.

Rev. Tom

Will you actively engage in our shared mission, striving to grow in the threefold love of God, neighbor, and self?

Incoming Members

I will, with God's help.

Rev. Tom

As a member of this community, will you help create a welcoming environment that nurtures spiritual growth and embodies the values of love and justice?

Incoming Members

I will, with God's help.

Rev. Tom

Recognizing that we are all imperfect, if there ever comes a time that you feel hurt or misunderstood by this community, will you give us the opportunity to make amends and work towards healing together?

Incoming Members

I will, with God's help.

Rev. Tom

Will you pledge to support this community with your spiritual, social, and financial resources?

Incoming Members

I will, with God's help.

QUESTIONS OF THE CONGREGATION

Rev. Tom

Will you who are witnessing these promises and affirmations, share the joys and sorrows of these new members, and do all in your power to support them as they walk in the way of Jesus? If so, please say: “We will, with God’s help”

Congregation

We will, with God’s help.

Rev. Tom

Do you welcome these new members into the communal life of our church, embracing their gifts, their needs, and their dreams? Do you recognize that their presence and participation will forever change the shape of this church body and help it grow in new ways? Will you support them in their journeys, and assist them in their ministries?

If so, please SHOUT: “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

Congregation

Yes! Yes! Yes!

BLESSING & WELCOME OF NEW MEMBERS

Rev. Tom

Beloved congregation, please join us in encircling these new members – _____, _____, _____, _____, _____ – with your energy, your joy, and your blessing hands - as we praise God for who they are and what they bring to this church, call upon the Holy Spirit to guide and empower their ministries, and as we extend the hand of Love through this official welcome:

Friends, today, we celebrate your full membership in Hillside Community Church. With joy and hope, we welcome you into this community of faith, bound together by love and shared purpose.

May you continue to grow in grace, to seek justice, to love boldly, and to find peace in the presence of God's unending love.

As part of this community, may you be both blessed and a blessing, bringing light and hope to a world in need. In Jesus' name, amen!