

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

For the author of Hebrews Jesus has opened before us a great privilege. We can enter into God's presence without fear of dying because our sin betrays us. By faith in Christ we are cleansed of our guilt and can draw near to God in worship and in the hope of everlasting life. Furthermore, we have this great privilege to gather together for mutual support and encouragement so that we might live fruitful lives for Christ's purposes until He comes again. All too often we neglect the privilege of worship and study together and by that neglect we weaken the Body of Christ for mission in the world.

In our vows of membership, we enter into a covenant relationship with God and with the Body of Christ.

- We repent of our sin and confess our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord over all of life.
- We commit ourselves to living our lives as faithful followers of Jesus in whom the rest of the world sees Christ.
- And finally, we covenant with all of the members of the church to uphold this local congregation and the United Methodist Church worldwide by *our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.*

Discuss the following questions, perhaps in small groups of about three people each:

1. How does our presence in worship and other activities and events of the church impact others around us?
2. How does our absence weaken the Body of Christ?
3. What are some of the excuses we use for missing worship or meetings or Bible studies? What gets in the way of our faithful presence with the Body of Christ?
4. What is one thing the church can do to help you be faithfully present?
5. What is one change you can make in your life that will increase your faithful presence?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, for opening before us a new and living way! Thank you for brothers and sisters in Christ with whom to meet for mutual encouragement. Help us grow in faithfulness to be present with the Body and not neglect meeting together for the purpose of becoming more like you and loving and serving others in the world. In your name we pray. Amen.