

# What To Expect when you visit

## **Background**

We are a part of The Restoration Movement. Our goal is to "restore" the New Testament church in our time--to determine from the Bible what the church was like in the beginning, and to be like that. We believe this is a worthy and reverent goal.

We want to be a Bible-centered church, and we try to be. Our practices are formulated by commandments, inferences, and examples given in the Bible.

We're a diverse group, coming from varied backgrounds, and at different stages of knowledge and spiritual growth.

We don't claim to know everything, but we do know that God is the source of all truth, and we strive to worship Him reverently and according to His will.

To describe how we believe, this document will walk you through a typical worship service.

## **The Setting**

We offer informal Bible study classes for all age groups in smaller classrooms an hour prior to our worship service.

The worship service is conducted in what we refer to as the "auditorium" where you will see rows of pews for the worshippers. There are no reserved seats, so feel free to sit anywhere you choose.

## **Singing**

Near you will be a hymnbook for you to use. When the song leader announces a number, you can turn to that number in the hymnbook to find the words and music or you may view the song on the PowerPoint display when it is being utilized.

One of the unique things about churches of Christ--and something you might find strange--is that the music is a cappella. We sing without the accompaniment of musical instruments.

This is a conviction with us, not just a preference. Since we are seeking to worship according to the New Testament pattern and, since the New Testament leaves instrumental music out, we believe it's best to exclude it too (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18, 19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12).

You might consider us narrow on this point. But we believe you will respect our reason for it, and our conviction. And we think you'll find the singing meaningful, with everyone being invited to participate.

## **Prayers**

We will conduct several prayers during the service. And we might have special prayers for specific needs and requests.

## **Preaching**

You will notice that the preacher doesn't have a title. He won't be referred to as Pastor or Reverend. He will probably be referred to as brother or mister, or possibly just by his first name.

He won't be wearing any ecclesiastical vestments to set him apart. The reason for this is that the Bible teaches the priesthood of all believers--that we are all equal (Matthew 23:8-12; Galations 3:26-28; 1 Peter 2:5,9).

The sermon will likely be from 20 to 30 minutes long. We think you will find it refreshingly Bible-centered.

## **Invitation**

At the close of the sermon, the preacher will extend an invitation. This is simply an expedient time to invite those who need to do so to make a commitment or request prayers of forgiveness and support.

He will encourage those who wish to respond to come to the front of the auditorium while the congregation sings a hymn.

Don't feel ill-at-ease during this invitation. You will not be singled out in any way.

There may be several who respond, or none. Some might respond for baptism, some to confess sins, or some to ask for prayer for a specific need.

If anyone responds for baptism, you will witness the baptism during the service. The baptism will be by immersion (Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12), and it will be for remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

## **The Lord's Supper**

If you visit on a Sunday, the Lord's Supper will be included in the service. Churches of Christ observe this memorial every first day of the week.

Again, the reason for this observance is our desire to follow New Testament teaching. The first century church celebrated this observance on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

During this memorial, plates containing unleavened bread will be passed. The bread symbolizes the body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Each Christian will break off a piece of the bread and eat it.

Next, trays filled with small cups will be distributed. The cups will contain the "fruit of the vine" (grape juice) to symbolize the blood of Jesus. Each Christian will drink the contents of one of the cups.

If you choose not to participate, don't be embarrassed. Feel free to just pass the plate or tray to the person next to you.

## **Offering**

Also, if you visit on Sunday morning, we will pass plates to collect the weekly financial offering (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

As our guest, you are not expected to make a donation. Feel perfectly comfortable in just passing the collection plate on down the row.

### **What is Expected of You**

Nothing at all! You are welcome to participate, but don't feel obligated to do so--just observe, if that is your choice.

We might ask you to fill out a Visitor's Card. This simply provides us information so we can write or call to thank you for your visit. Supply the information if you are comfortable doing so. But feel free to decline this request if you prefer.

We would love for you to stay after worship services for a few minutes, if you can. We would enjoy getting to know you.

This material adapted from an article written by Joe R. Barnett, Copyright 1992 by Pathway, Inc.