

Will the Real Church Please Stand Up

Instructor's Guide

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding of 1) How to determine what unites a church, 2) How to discern the purpose of a church, 3) How to understand the physical church, 4) How does one learn what a church really teaches, 5) What is the real substance of a church? The instructor needs to invest sufficient time to comprehend the materials and present them in a way so that the people understand the problem posed by each church and how that problem might infiltrate our churches.

In teaching advanced topics, it is important for the instructor to realize the goal of his teaching. The saving truths are presented in the Scriptures, but they do not benefit a person's soul unless they are transcribed from the Scriptures onto the wall of faith in the mind and heart of the believer. Ideally, a Christian's faith will be a beautiful mural of all the teachings of the Bible appropriately linked with each other to give the Christian a perfect knowledge of God's will. This mural will never be completed in this world, but it is important that the Christian and those who teach him or her work to make it more complete. While pastors have a well-developed mural based on long and systematic training, laypeople often have scattered facts from the Bible placed here and there on their wall of faith. Sometimes they are misconnected with each other, and sometimes wrong information learned from non-Scriptural sources will be intertwined with Scriptural truth. In his presentation of the Scriptural material, the teacher will always try to guide his hearers so that they will put it into the correct place in the mural and make the correct attachments to the other materials that are there. This is what makes teaching the Word of God challenging and rewarding.

This course is set up to be taught in eight 60-minute sessions, but the material in the lessons can be regrouped for any number of class periods that are available. This class is heavily based on discussion. The instructor needs to allow some latitude in the discussion but must keep the discussion on track and not permit the introduction of heresy.

From educational research we know that reading the material before the class, answering the study questions, and considering the issues that are being raised by the readings are essential to maximizing learning. Students should be strongly encouraged to do so. It is good to close the lessons with hymns written by Lutheran lyricists.

1. The Quest

One can start the course by asking, "Why do almost all people of any religion attend the worship services?" The answer is "personal validation." Believing in a set of doctrines and practices helps people to validate themselves or to find themselves. Moreover, we must also note that changes in practices can gradually cause changes in doctrine. In these lessons we will see the strategy of the demons to corrupt the church. People might expect their pet ideas will be challenged.

1. What unites The Quest? Good customer experience.
2. What is the purpose of The Quest? Journey with no destination.
3. Comment on any of the following:
 - The architecture: Auditorium, intended for communication
 - The floor plan: Spacious, big screens
 - The furnishings: Comfortable chairs with cup holders
 - The sights and sounds: Big screens, great sound system, good performance of service, praise band
4. Who is the audience and who are the speakers at The Quest? Audience: God; Speakers: pastor, musicians, videos.
5. The Quest was openly engaged in "sheep-stealing"? Is this practice justifiable? No, it hurts weaker

churches and plays to externals. Yes, if saving message is not being taught in other churches.

6. How can a congregation's success change its mission? Congregations are tempted to emphasize what they do well, even if it has little relationship to the Gospel.
7. What were the 5 steps of membership at The Quest? 1. Attend. 2. Membership. 3. Join a small group. 4. Join in "ministry." 5. Become a leader. How does this differ from Lutherans? The early church?

_. Nature of the church

1. The invisible church

- a. It is not possible for any of us to look into the heart of another person (*Although we pretend we can if the person belongs to the same church we do*). Therefore, we cannot know whether a person has a saving faith in Jesus or not. *{For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? 1 Corinthians 2:11}*
- b. Therefore, the real Christian church, which is composed of all believers and only believers during the entire history of the earth, is invisible and known only to God. *{God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his" 2 Timothy 2:19}* Jesus commissioned this church to be spread to all nations. *Matthew 28:19*.

2. The visible church

- a. To carry out the Great Commission it is necessary for people who identify themselves as Christians (*even if they are not*) to work together in physical organizations which are collectively called the visible church because its members can be seen by those around them. *The visible church is the active agent and therefore essential. {Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24–25}*
- b. For a visible church to be a "true church," it must preach the whole counsel of God's word and only God's word, using the word and the sacraments as Christ instituted them. *This is a very hard task. {Jesus said, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:20}*
- c. "False churches" are churches which preach less than what is in the Scriptures, add human ideas to it, and/or twist the Scriptures to corrupt their message. People who belong to false churches can be saved if and only if (*very iffy*) they believe the scriptural message rather than the false ideas about God's plan of salvation that their church teaches. *{St. John wrote, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. 2 John 10–11}* *This is why we have "close communion" and condemn heresy.*
- d. "Pseudo-churches" or "sects," like the Mormons, have the form of Christian churches, but deny or fail to preach that faith in Jesus' vicarious atonement is the only way to salvation. *They only look Christian. {St. John wrote, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1}*

A. Church marketing

1. Selecting an audience (*Old Lutherans sought farmers; modern Lutherans seek suburbanites*)

- a. To financially survive, a church must have members. Because providing adequate member services to a wide spectrum of people is impractical for any but the largest churches, a church must direct its advertising to a specific audience.
- b. For example, a church with a Christian school might target young families. [OR churches might cater to the elderly in Arizona or Florida.](#)

2. The allurement

- a. To get people through the doors of the church for the first time, churches might use “gimmicks,” (e.g., “great coffee,” “tuition discounts”) loosely defined as special offers or new-member benefits.
- b. The danger in this is that people usually stay with an organization for the same reason they came to the organization originally. If they come because of a school, for example, they may only stay while they have need for the school. [Being members does not imply being Christians.](#)

3. Church growth

- a. In the American mindset, bigger is better. Churches therefore have an emotional incentive to increase membership numbers and particularly to increase the involvement of people who will be contributing money and talent to the church’s efforts, [i.e., a bigger and better class of members.](#)
- b. Church growth, however, also increases the need for money to expand facilities and to add staff to serve the growing membership. It can be a vicious cycle. [It is foolish to think one can beat it.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. The Quest gave first-time attendees special parking spots so they could easily enter the facility. Is this a good or bad idea? [The endless parking controversy.](#)
- b. In general, how might a church address parking issues for its members and visitors?

2. Greeters

- a. The Quest had identifiable people trained for the specific purpose of meeting visitors before they even entered the facility and showing them around. Is this a good or bad idea? [Should a church have “intense” greeters or “casual” greeters?](#)
- b. How might this greeting activity have been handled differently at The Quest?

3. Amenities

- a. The Quest had coffee available to be taken into church like drinks at a theater. Is this a good or bad idea? Is this like having a beverage while watching television? [Is this too much like a theater?](#)

4. Management of children

- a. The Quest separated the children from the parents to improve the parents’ church experience. Is this a good or bad idea?

- b. Did the children benefit spiritually from their experience at The Quest? [What if they did?](#)

C. The program

1. Communication

- a. The Quest had its own logo that was on everything. Is this a good or bad idea? [What about mission statements?](#)
- b. The Quest used bold posters and videos to sell its message. Is this a good or bad idea?

2. Membership

- a. The Quest advertised its membership procedures before it presented its message. Is this a good or bad idea? The [Quest was very upfront and honest about belonging to it.](#)
- b. What was the purpose of each of the 5 steps of membership?
- c. Is a formal plan for deepening membership commitment a good idea? What does this say about the nature of the leadership in the organization?

D. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. The Quest's idea of worship was heavily oriented toward entertainment and creating a mood of excitement. What was missing here? [People should analyze the worship.](#)
- b. What is the role of an opening hymn in Christian worship? Is one necessary?

2. Use of liturgy

- a. The Quest did not have much that could be called liturgy. What things were missing that one might expect in a Christian church? [Mention of Christ and His work.](#)
- b. How "Christian" was the sermon? [Uncertain.](#)
- c. How effectively was the speaker able to communicate his message? [Very.](#)

3. Goal of worship

- a. What was the effect of the service on Ben and Jessica? [Energizing!](#)
- b. Why would people return for this type of service? [Energy, relating to the sermon.](#)
- c. Was the service facilitated by the comfortable surroundings? [YES](#)
- d. Was communicating the saving message of Jesus important to the service? [NO](#)

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. How was the Bible used in worship? [Associated with the movie.](#)
- b. Were the beliefs of those in the audience of any concern to the Quest leadership? [NO](#)

2. Fellowship

- a. What held the members of the Quest together? [The good feeling of being at a great performance.](#)

- b. Were the activities at the Quest aimed at deepening the attendees biblical understanding? **If so, it was not obvious.**

2. Parkside Community Fellowship Church

1. What unites Park Community Fellowship? **Friendly environment.**
2. What is the purpose of Park Community Fellowship? **Safe place for Christians to gather.**
3. Comment on any of the following:
 - The architecture: **U-shaped nave layout**
 - The floor plan: **Lots of space for activities**
 - The furnishings: **Little furnishing in the chancel**
 - The sights and sounds: **Praise band, lots of speakers, testimonials**
4. What are the advantages/disadvantages of internal publicity? **Advantage: People know what is available to do. Disadvantage: It places the focus of church activities on us.**
5. What was the focus of the activities at Parkside? **Keeping the members of the church protected and happy.**
6. How does Parkside differ from the local YMCA? **Not much, except people can attend a worship service.**
7. Compare and contrast the approach of Parkside and The Quest.
 - Parkside – Hominess, activities all week long.**
 - The Quest – High level of energy on Sundays, professionalism**

A. Churches as cloisters

1. Monasteries (**Began with hermits; organized by St. Benedict**)
 - a. Monasteries were created to separate church members from interaction with the world so that they could study the Word of God undisturbed by worldly cares. (**Issue: studying versus hiding**)
 - b. Monasteries became fortresses against the world in which its members could avoid the trials and tribulations of the world and, in the process, also their Christian responsibilities within the world. **Avoided service to others.**
2. The all-encompassing church
 - a. Desiring to grow is the American way. Churches are not immune from this desire, and a significant amount of time in many churches is spent striving to increase membership. **More activities □ more members**
 - b. People like to be involved in activities with compatible people. Many churches therefore feel it is part of their mission to provide as many activities as possible, even when those activities have no real connection to gospel ministry. **Clubs in the church? Sports in the church?**
3. Sectarianism
 - a. Churches want to protect their members from falling to the allurements of the secular world and losing their faith. There are indeed many dangers to faith. One approach that churches can use to accomplish this task is to provide their members with the whole armor of God through rigorous doctrinal training from the Scriptures. **Need workers who study God's Word.**

- b. An easier approach is for churches to keep their members so busy with activities within their own walls that they never have time to interact with the world outside the church. Unfortunately, this often also pulls families apart as everyone seeks their favorite activities. [It deemphasizes the Word of God.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. Parkside appeared to have adequate, but non-designated parking. How important is this for visitors? [No obvious problems.](#)
- b. The entrance to the church was not obvious from the parking lot. Is this a major problem or just a slight bump for visitors to navigate? [How to get into a big building can be an issue.](#)

2. Amenities

- a. Parkside had coffee available near the entrance and a place for people to congregate before the church service. Is this a good or bad idea? [Does this promote worship to only being an afterthought, an interruption in the fellowship?](#)
- b. Parkside also had food available before worship. Is this a good or bad idea?

3. Greeters

- a. At Parkside the primary greeter of new people appeared to be the pastor, who was also the tour guide. Is this a good or bad idea? [Contrast with the Quest.](#)
- b. The pastor seemed unconcerned about the rest of the worshippers. What does this say about the pastor's role at Parkside? [Denies members access to their pastor.](#)
- c. The pastor spent his time talking about the church facilities, of which he seemed inordinately proud, rather than the spiritual mission of the church. What does this say about the purpose of the church? [How to balance giving information with avoiding pride.](#)

C. The physical plant

1. The gym

- a. The gym was a multi-purpose facility intended to be used all week long. Is this a good or bad idea? What problems might this cause? [Does a gym help or hurt a congregation?](#)
- b. The pastor wanted to have the church facility be a "home away from home." What are the pluses ([being a safe place](#)) and minuses of this? ([Avoiding opportunities to spread the Word.](#))

2. The "fireside room"

- a. While this multi-purpose room had many resources, what was its major limitation? [It was a bottleneck where various groups had to compete for time.](#)
- b. What might have been done instead? [More space that is less elaborate.](#)

3. The youth room

- a. What does the youth room reveal about the wealth of the congregation? *It has money.*
- b. How will this room impact the relationship between the youth and the church? What sort of expectations will it build for their future religious life? *Church is a place where you go to be entertained.*

4. The sanctuary

- a. The sanctuary was not as modern as the rest of the building. Is this a problem? Does it send a message? *Not everything can be the newest.*
- b. The chancel furnishings were meager. Does this tell us anything about the nature of Parkside's beliefs? *It may mean that doctrine is not taught, but one cannot always judge a book by its cover.*
- c. Parkside's pews were arranged in a U-shape. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this design? How does it compare to the traditional design where all the pews face the front or to the fan shaped design? *It brings more people close to the speakers, but it is distracting to have people looking at each other.*

D. The program

1. Communication

- a. Parkside announced all its activities before the service. Is this a good or bad idea? *This can burden people with details they must remember during the worship service, and it distracts from Christ.*
- b. Numerous people participated in the announcements. Is this a good or bad idea? *Seldom good.*
- c. What was the attitude toward membership at Parkside versus The Quest? *Parkside did not mention the membership process.*

2. Activities

- a. Parkside's activities were plentiful and involved numerous groups. Is such a division of the congregation a good or bad idea? *It creates a lot of running around for parents.*
- b. Parkside's activities seemed to be tangentially related to religious training rather than centered on religious training. What does this say about the nature of the membership of the organization? *How seriously does Parkside take religious instruction? It is hard to tell.*

E. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. Parkside's worship centered around the good life at Parkside and the happiness it would bring the members. Are the inclusions of testimonials good or bad?
- b. Worship at Parkside was passive. *Similar to the Quest.* It happened in front of the congregation, which was minimally involved. Is there an upside to this type of worship? *Not usually.*

2. Use of liturgy

- a. Parkside had more liturgy than the Quest, but it seemed to make little impression on the Campbells. What things were missing? *The preaching of sin and grace.*
- b. How “Christian” was the sermon? *It wasn’t. Parkside is basically a social organization.*

3. Goal of worship

- a. What was the effect of the service on the Campbells?
- b. Why would people return for this type of service?
- c. Was communicating the saving message of Jesus important to the service? *In principle, yes. In practice, no.*

F. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. How was the Bible used in worship? *It was read.*
- b. Were the beliefs of those in the audience of any concern to the Parkside leadership? *Apparently not.*

2. Fellowship

- a. What bound the members of Parkside together? *Great community.*
- b. Were the activities at Parkside aimed at deepening the attendees biblical understanding? *It appears very few were.*

3. Mercy Hill Church

The Quest – Professional entertainment with a moral to create good feeling.

Parkside – AcCommunity built around friendship and activities.

1. What unites Mercy Hill? *Feeling good because they are doing God’s work by helping the poor.*
2. What is the purpose of Mercy Hill? *Providing for the poor.*
3. Comment on any of the following:
 The architecture: *Classic protestant church, stained glass windows*
 The floor plan: *Traditional*
 The furnishings: *Classic church pews, Colorful hangings with Humanistic slogans*
 The sights and sounds: *Effects of the sun shining through the stained glass windows.*
4. What are the characteristics of “main-line churches”? (Besides being along a railroad)
1) liturgical, 2) Scripture with reason, 3) accommodating to the culture.
5. What is the “social gospel”? How does it mesh with the Christian gospel?
That the purpose of Christianity is to aid the physically poor & oppressed. It doesn’t.
6. What are the likely membership demographics at Mercy Hill?
1) poor, 2) legacy members from the neighborhood, 3) young, socially active people
7. Compare and contrast Mercy Hill with the Salvation Army.
The SA exchanges food for the hearing of the Gospel, MH just gives out food.

A. The estates in which people live

1. The church

- a. The ministry of the church must center on the Great Commission that Jesus gave in Matthew 28:18-20. People's eternal future depends on it. [The visible church points people to eternity.](#)
- b. People must hear the Word of God to believe it. {Paul wrote, "*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*" Romans 10:14-15} [Emphasis on hearing the Word.](#)
- c. The church also has a role in educating the children of its members. {"*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*" Proverbs 22:6} [Training the next generation is critical because the Christian church is only one generation wide.](#)

2. The state

- a. The government's primary responsibility is to protect the people of the land and promote domestic tranquility and, to the extent it can, prosperity. {"*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*" Romans 13:1} [Establishes and enforces the framework of life.](#)
- b. In addition, the government must give help to those who are incapable of taking care of themselves for whatever reason. [Provides for the general welfare.](#)
- c. In addition, the government has a role in educating the children of its citizens. [Training the next generation of citizens.](#)

3. The family

- a. The family has the primary responsibility of providing for its members physically. {Paul wrote, "*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" 1 Timothy 5:8} [Supporting each other.](#)
- b. The family also has the primary responsibility for educating its children, although the church and the state can help with this task. {"*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" Ephesians 6:4} [God gave specific children to specific parents.](#)

4. The Community

- a. The community is composed of groups of people that live and work in an area. This includes social groups, service groups, charitable groups, and businesses. [The "neighborhood"](#)
- b. Communities differ from the state in that they do not have the power to tax or to coerce people to act in the best interest of the community or of others. [Communities operate by "moral suasion."](#)
- c. Individuals in a community need to work with the various groups that exist to improve the environment of the community and help those who are receiving inadequate support from their families and the state. [The "village" needed to raise a child.](#)

[The community can be 1\) within the church or 2\) outside the church.](#)

The dilemma of helping the poor.

If you give a man a fish, he can eat for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he can feed himself for a lifetime. “Helping the poor” versus “demotivating the poor,” i.e., help that only entraps them.

Everyone has a life situation that they desire or are willing to tolerate and the amount of work they are willing to do to attain it.

5. The entanglement of the estates

- a. What is the nature of “community” today? How cohesive are communities? Where are they strong and where are they weak? What makes a community strong? **Communities have grown weaker.**
- b. Is a congregation inherently a community? **It can be.** What are the pros and cons of “communityness”?
- c. How might communities pull a congregation apart? **Different factions.**
- d. Can a community capture a congregation? How might it turn a congregation away from the Great Commission? **The church is always tempted to change to be more appealing to the community.**
- e. What is the church’s role in protecting the family? **1) Encourage strong parental leadership, direct people facing problems to the correct sources of help, 3) school the children.**

B. The entrance experience at Mercy Hill

1. Parking

- a. The parking lot was small, which would have been a problem if a lot of the members came from a distance. What does this say about where most church members live now and have lived in the past? **Most members have lived close by.**
- b. The parking situation was aided by the availability of public transportation. Should this be a consideration in siting churches? **Yes, particularly in dense urban areas.**

2. Greeters

- a. Mercy Hill had a traditional usher dispensing bulletins.
- b. After the service the minister took some time to chat with the Campbells. What would have been the result if the minister had not had time to talk with them? **They would have left the church confused.**
- c. What role did Bill play? Did he seem to be an official part of the program? **He appeared to be a self-activated recruiter.**

3. The sanctuary

- a. The sanctuary of Mercy Hill was old. What still made it attractive? **It was a classic design that had been maintained.**
- b. The decorations were vibrant, but not particularly Christian. What does this say about the teachings of the church? (Can you judge a book by its cover in this case?) **The signs identified that mission of the church was the social gospel.**

C. The program

1. Communication

- a. Mercy Hill announced all its activities before the service. How can this misdirect the focus of the worshippers? *It pointed them toward human activities.*
- b. One announcement seemed to set a tone that would dominate the theme of the service. Could such an announcement derail a service instead? *Depending on the announcement, it could.*
- c. How does the attitude toward membership at Mercy Hill contrast with that at Parkside and The Quest? *MH wanted anyone who would help; the others wanted people in their mold.*

2. Activities

- a. Mercy Hill's activities were less numerous than those at Parkside, but highly focused. Does this make the congregation seem exclusive in terms of the members it will attract? *Does not have anything for those who are not into the social gospel.*
- b. Does Mercy Hill have any purpose other than to help the poor and needy? How does this purpose affect even the worship service? *The service promotes the social gospel.*

D. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. Mercy Hill's worship centered around what the church members could do for the less fortunate in the neighborhood of the church. Did this affect the form as well as the content of the worship? *Specifics of the pastor seemed unimportant. Has Christianity become more appearance than substance?*
- b. Worship at Mercy Hill seemed to have enough elements to appear Christian, but it accentuated food donations. If this happened week after week, would this become something like a sacrament in which people gave rather than received something of value? *A sacrifice to obtain blessings?*

2. Use of liturgy

- a. The liturgy at Mercy Hill mimicked the liturgy of other mainline churches, although perhaps it was a bit shorter. The thing that apparently stuck in the Campbells' mind was the catchy phrase from Francis of Assisi. How can catchy phrases be counterproductive? *"Deeds, not creeds." "What would Jesus do?" Phrases often direct people away from the Gospel.*
- b. How "Christian" was the sermon? *It pointed to actions, not God's grace.*

3. Goal of worship

- a. What was the effect of the service at Mercy Hill on the Campbells? *They respected the work being done but felt guilty.*
- b. Why would people return for this type of service? *Feeling good about doing good.*
- c. Was communicating the saving message of Jesus important to the service? *No.*

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible
 - a. How was the Bible used in worship at Mercy Hill? *It was read.*
 - b. Were the beliefs of those in the audience of any concern to the Mercy Hill leadership? *Only to the extent that they emphasized “love in action.”*
2. Fellowship
 - a. What held the members of Mercy Hill together? *Desire to help the poor.*
 - b. Were the activities at Mercy Hill aimed at deepening the attendees biblical understanding? *No.*

4. First Church of Midway

Was Rev. Dr. Richard’s presentation a fair look at this congregation?

Were Ben’s and Jessica’s views biased by their friendship with one of the members?

1. What unites First Church of Midway? *Social validation*
2. What is the purpose of First Church of Midway? *Being noticed by important people.*
3. Comment on any of the following:
 - The architecture: *Classic beautiful exterior, well maintained.*
 - The floor plan: *Sufficient space.*
 - The furnishings: *Appropriate*
 - The sights and sounds: *Professional worship, more formal than The Quest.*
4. Would First Church of Midway be regarded as a mainline church? *Yes*
5. Like Mercy Hill, First Church promotes the social gospel. What is the difference in their approaches? *MH – workers with the poor; FC – organizers of efforts to help others.*
6. What are the likely membership demographics at First Church? *1) Rich & socially important, 2) people living in the neighborhood.*
7. Compare and contrast First Church with community service clubs (e.g., Kiwanis, Optimists). *Both promote community good & have prominent members. First Church gives moral sanction to the effort.*

4. First Church of Midway

A. The church political

1. What’s in a name? (Reference Shakespeare)
 - a. Including the word “first” in a church name might mean it was the first church in the area or that it was the first of its specific church body. However, it can also be used in an effort to claim superiority to other churches. Comments? *Most prominent.*
 - b. The inclusion of the name of the community in the church name can also be an attempt to indicate that loyal or important residents of the city or village attend that church. Comments? *Most important to the community.*
2. The membership game

- a. It was very clear that The Quest played the membership game by telling new attendees that many people moved from other churches to The Quest. [Better worship experience.](#)
- b. How did Parkside Community Fellowship play the game? How did Mercy Hill play the game? [PC: Safe Community. MH: Moral rightness & compassion](#)
- c. In what way did First Church of Midway play a different game? [A “graduate” church for the successful.](#)

3. Volunteerism

- a. What should motivate common (that is, general) volunteerism? [Visible need for help, compassion, use of talents, giving back, good feeling.](#)
- b. How should volunteering in a church differ from common volunteering? [It should be motivated by faith in Christ.](#)
- c. How do some people game volunteering, that is, use it to their advantage? [They seek showy roles in highly visible projects.](#)

4. The church as a stage

- a. One can have a position in a congregation where one is barely noticed all the way up to a position where nothing is done without one’s consent.
- b. How can a person increase the importance of his/her role in the church? [1\) engage in more activities, 2\) have outside contact beneficial to the church.](#)
- c. Compare and contrast the ways in which people might increase the visibility of their roles at The Quest, Parkside, Mercy Hill, and First Church. [TQ – move up the membership ladder, PF – lead activities, MH – volunteer more, FC – become involved in a higher social group.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. Like Mercy Hill, First Church of Midway did not have enough parking space for its membership. What creative way did the church solve this problem? [Used the parking lot of another group.](#)
- b. Churches often borrow parking places from businesses and other entities in the community. Is this a good or bad idea? [Unused space is only going to waste.](#)
- c. How did the extra parking space of First Church seem to say something about the church? Were the Campbells reading something into the situation that was not there? [Was using government parking space improper? No. The Campbells were judgmental here.](#)

2. The welcoming attitude

- a. The church ushers were “kind and friendly but not overly accommodating.” What might the reason for this be? [Ushers may have thought the Campbells were “not appropriate” for the church.](#)
- b. Ben and Jessica were quickly introduced to other church members after the service, yet something seemed strange. Were they introduced so they would learn the names of the other

members or so the other members could evaluate them? *They were steered to a particular social group so they could be evaluated.*

- c. First Church clearly was a place that valued status. What is the problem with this? *St. James condemned the practice of giving more attention to the wealthy.*
- d. Having people with political contacts can be valuable to a congregation in carrying out its religious activities. What are some examples of this? *1) ease of working with the government, 2) getting discounts* How might a congregation balance attracting members with useful skills with universal outreach? *A difficult question.*

3. Amenities

- a. First church had fellowship with coffee/food apparently following the service instead of preceding it. What are the pluses and minuses to this approach? *It seemed to put the emphasis on worship.*

4. Management of children

- a. First church did not appear to have any program for children during the fellowship time, or at least, no one mentioned it. What does this show about First Church's attitude toward younger couples? *The church seems to be for people who have moved beyond children. However, we must be careful because the Campbell's visit was during the summer.*

C. The program

1. Communication

- a. The activities of First Church were communicated through the bulletin. What does this say about the stability of the congregation? *Members had been there a long time.*
- b. First Church identified by various means those who had contributed to the church. How did this fit the nature of the congregation? Is this something a church should do or might do? *Emphasizes status, something a church should not do.*

2. Membership

- a. The members of the church appeared older and wealthier than the average person. What does this imply about how the church gains new members? *It attracts prominent members from other churches.*
- b. How to become members was not openly presented. Why might this have been? *New members probably come through referrals from current members.*

3. Activities

- a. The important activities at First Church seemed to be organized by status and wealth, such as raising money for college scholarships. Is this a common situation in congregations? *We hope not!*
- b. While the activities at First Church had positive stated purposes, they also seemed to exist to establish a pecking order among those who participated in the activities. Is this a problem only in wealthy congregations? How might this occur in any congregation? *Cliques, fundraising activities, prominent volunteer activities.*

D. Worship

1. Nature of worship

- a. The worship at First Church was professional. The pastor, the musicians, and all the other worship leaders were highly polished in the performance of their tasks. *Good worship experience.*
- b. Nothing in the worship seemed to catch the attention of the Campbells. Unlike the previous churches, they did not find anything worth commenting about. Is it significant that new attendees have no memorable connections to anything in the service? *Hard to say. Seemed to be a pro forma attitude toward worship.*

2. Goals of worship

- a. The first goal of worship at First Church was to emphasize its standing as a place with first-class worship. Is this good or bad? *Form rather than substance.*
- b. The second goal seemed to be to set the stage for the fellowship gathering after the service. Everyone would be prepared to play their roles in the church social structure. *Like a play.*

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. The use of the Bible was not mentioned in connection with the worship service. Does that mean it was not used? How might the use of the Bible become pro forma in our congregations?
- b. Ben and Jessica did not react at any time during their visit to First Church as if they had encountered the Word of God. It did not appear to have been displayed anywhere, certainly not on the giving wall. What does this omission say about the congregation's focus? *They did not mention Christian symbols. Were they just overwhelmed by the social climbing?*

2. Fellowship

- a. Fellowship at First Church revolved around status and wealth. It is natural for people with common interests to talk with each other. Does this mean that a congregation is fated to become cliques? *People gathering because of common interests can be a problem.*
- b. Is it better to encourage general interaction among members or to allow or encourage natural groups to form? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach? *Can one manage the social structure of a congregation?*

5. Cornerstone Community Church

1. What unites Cornerstone Community Church? *Moralistic competition.*
2. What is the purpose of Cornerstone Community Church? *Arriving at a self-defined utopia.*
3. Comment on any of the following:
 The architecture: *Office building influence*
 The floor plan: *Space for lots of activities, various buildings*
 The furnishings: *Comfortable but not extravagant*

The sights and sounds: Coffee area, praise band, announcements before the service, quiet during sermon

4. Would Cornerstone Community Church be regarded as a mainline church?
No. This is an "evangelical" church, even though it does not preach the Gospel.
5. How does Cornerstone differ from First Church and Mercy Hill?
FC: social gospel, selective, exterior ladder to respect
MH: social gospel, no ladder
CC: Personal moral improvement, interior ladder
6. What are the likely membership demographics at Cornerstone?
Perhaps upscale, with interest in success
7. Compare and contrast Cornerstone with First Church.
CC exerts moral pressure while FC exerts financial pressure on members.

A. Moralism and biblical Christianity

1. The moral law

- a. The moral law is the eternal will of God for mankind that He wrote into man's heart when He created man. Obeying this law would have allowed man to live a perfect life, but man lost both a proper understanding of the moral law and the ability to keep it when man fell into sin. [What God expects of mankind.](#)
- b. The moral law was given again by God from Mt. Sinai to the children of Israel (Exodus 20). This presentation of the law is often called the "Ten Commandments," although they include much more as Martin Luther explained in his catechisms. [It applies to everything in life.](#)

2. Civil righteousness

- a. Civil righteousness is the willingness of members of the community to follow major portions of the moral law for the purpose of making the community a pleasant and supportive place to live. People do things because "they are the right thing to do," instead of for personal reward. {*"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."* Proverbs 14:34} [Thinking of society first.](#)
- b. Young people are born completely self-centered and must over a period of years be trained in how to get along with others and build a community environment from which they will ultimately profit. [No tabula rasa, children need to be trained to improve in social graces.](#)

3. Moralism

- a. Moralism teaches that rules should be kept for the sake of the rules themselves. People's images of themselves are built on their meeting some predetermined standard and avoiding moral lapses. [Being good for goodness' sake.](#)
- b. In its extreme, moralism becomes like Pelagianism, in which people try to earn God's favor by rigorously keeping rules which have little or no social merit, but merely demonstrate the strong discipline of the moralist. The Pharisees are frequently seen as an example of this. [Morality for the sake of showiness.](#)
- c. Moralism is often competitive. Like athletics, people want to excel to show that they are superior to others. This competition can lead to exclusivism, in which those who cannot meet

some arbitrary level of performance are excluded from social groups and other activities. [Tends to be competitive.](#)

- d. Not all efforts at self-improvement are moralism. College and technical education, for example, can permit people to get better jobs, and continuing education is essential in many fields to permit people to adapt to new devices or practices. [Improvement for an external purpose.](#)

4. Modern Gnosticism

- a. Gnosticism rose in the eastern Mediterranean area about the same time as Christianity. In fact, the Gnostics, whose name comes from the Greek word for knowledge, used some of the same terminology as Christians, but the words had very different meanings.
- b. Gnostics believed in a great good god, but they also believed in many god-like beings. They claimed that the god who created the world, the Demiurge, was an ill-tempered god and Jesus had been sent to free humanity from him so they could return to the great god. [Mixed up message.](#)
- c. Gnosticism tried to infiltrate Christianity by claiming that believing in the work of Jesus was not enough for salvation. People needed the secret knowledge that only the Gnostics possessed. The church battled this false teaching for several centuries. [Jesus is not enough.](#)
- d. Gnosticism has continued in various forms throughout the centuries. Always it teaches that there is special knowledge, unknown and even ridiculed by world, that is essential for man to reach his full potential. [Secret knowledge is needed for salvation.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. The parking for the church seemed adequate and sufficiently close to indicate it had been planned with some forethought.
- b. The entrance to the building was initially a mystery, but signs were soon found to give the options for the attendees. Was this good enough or might signage have been handled better?

2. Amenities

- a. While greeters were scarce, there was coffee so that people would feel welcome.
- b. After the service, there were more refreshments available to lure people to hang around and perhaps buy a book or get involved in a discussion of the sermon.

3. Management of children

- a. Cornerstone had an alternative program for children during the worship service, although the Campbells did not take advantage of it.
- b. Unlike at The Quest, there was no real effort to separate the parents and the children. Based on the nature of the congregation, does this appear to be an oversight or to be because the church regarded children as less important to membership decisions? [Based on the need for quiet during the sermon, it is surprising that more effort was not made to keep children out of the service.](#)

C. The program

1. Communication

- a. Like most of the previous churches, there were announcements before the service as if these were of first importance. *A recurring problem.*
- b. After the service, however, the heavy selling of the books available and often created by the senior pastor took place. How did this activity reflect the purpose of the church? *To create a strong bond between people and pastor.*
- c. How might this activity actually be a member recruitment effort? If so, is it a good or bad idea? *Buy in by getting a book, and you will want to come back.*

2. Activities

- a. The activities of the church seemed to be centered around self-improvement in worldly matters. What relevance does this have to the Christian message? *Not relevant; even harmful.*
- b. Even the children's activities appeared directed toward improving their character. How will this be good for the children? How will it be bad? *Aesop's fables versus the story of Jesus.*

3. Deepening involvement

- a. The purpose of the church seemed to revolve around self-improvement. If the church was successful, won't people "graduate" and stop coming to the church? *Members were kept on a treadmill.*
- b. What is the trick that was being used to lure the people to keep coming back for more even though they should have been making progress? How is this like the Roman Catholic system of indulgences and acts of penance? *The church kept moving the goal posts so members would keep striving to improve.*

D. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. The service seemed balanced, with music and Scripture-reading before the sermon and music after the sermon. However, there was no mention of prayers. Why might prayer be deemphasized at Cornerstone? *Who needs prayer if you can fix it yourself?*
- b. In what way was the sermon and the worshippers' response to it radically different than what we saw in the other churches the Campbells had attended? *People paid close attention to the sermon.*
- c. Like at some of the other churches, the music was all performed by a praise band without congregational involvement. What are the advantages and disadvantages of handling music this way? *Praise bands tend to reduce congregational participation in the service. Lutherans sing.*
- d. Does it appear the music was appropriate for the way the worship at Cornerstone was carried out? *Yes.*

2. Goal of worship

- a. The message of sin and grace did not appear in the sermon and perhaps not in the whole service. What does this say about the real religion of Cornerstone Community Church? **Self-centered, not Christ-centered.**
- b. The goal of worship seemed to be to sell both the ideas of the senior pastor and the books that were developed from his sermons. Is this a fair assessment of the worship of Cornerstone? Might the use of note-taking and compiling sermons into books be used legitimately in the Christian Church. If so, how? **Is note taking good? Should sermons be compiled?**

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. Was the Bible used at all at Cornerstone? **Yes.**
- b. Why was the sermon not based on a biblical text? **Not a biblical church.** Might the pastor been able to preach the same sermon by using an appropriate biblical text? **Not likely.**

2. Fellowship

- a. Was the fellowship at Cornerstone really Christian fellowship even though the sermon was discussed much more than in most Lutheran churches? **No, but Lutherans should discuss sermons more.**
- b. What makes the “fellowship” at Cornerstone somewhat like that at First Church? **It was competitive.**

6. Peace Bible Church

1. What unites Peace Bible Church? **Common political association**
2. What is the purpose of Peace Bible Church? **Advancing a political agenda**
3. Comment on any of the following:
 The architecture: **More modern church**
 The floor plan: **Traditional**
 The furnishings: **Not mentioned**
 The sights and sounds: **Bulletins with a lot of political inserts, preservice announcements, liturgy, political sermon**
4. Would Peace Bible Church be regarded as a mainline church? **Probably not, but some churches are.**
5. In what ways is Peace similar to Parkside? **It feels threatened by the world around it and trusts itself for solutions.**
6. What are the likely membership demographics at Peace? **Cross-section of a suburban community.**
7. Contrast Peace’s central message with that of Cornerstone’s. **Both are human-centered. Peace: build a better community. Cornerstone: build a better me.**

A. Moralizing the state

1. Utopianism

- a. Everyone would like the world to be perfect by their definition of perfect. Peace, justice, civil order, freedom, liberty, free enterprise, fair wages, and more might be attributes of the world in which people would like to live. [Personal view of a perfect world.](#)
- b. The difficulty in reaching utopia is that not everyone prioritizes the attributes of utopia in the same order. As resources become available, to which characteristics of human betterment should they be first applied? Disagreements might become heated. Many people are willing to accept more wealth than they create, but few are willing to accept less. [Who gets the benefits as society grows richer?](#)
- c. An even greater struggle is likely to arise on how to produce the resources needed to build and sustain the utopian society. If “it takes money to make money,” whose money is going to be taken to create wealth that will flow into the common chest? [Who gets taxed?](#)

2. Calvinistic values

- a. For many decades beginning in the middle of the 16th century, Geneva Switzerland was probably the most law-abiding city in the world, certainly in Europe. The Calvinist reformation wedded the church and the state so that the church proclaimed God’s laws, and the state enforced them. [State works for the church.](#)
- b. In Calvinist society, success is a gift given by God to the upright. One proves that one is part of the elect by living a very moral life, and God rewards such behavior with visible prosperity. {Solomon wrote, “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*” Proverbs 14:34} [God is obligated to bless His people physically.](#)

3. Humanistic values

- a. Humanistic values make the needs of each human being the top priority of every society. Each person should see himself or herself in the form of every other person and treat that person in the same way he or she would want to be treated. Humanism values the Golden Rule. {Jesus said, “*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” Matthew 7:12} [“Needs” trump everything.](#)
- b. The humanistic view of what constitutes the inherent rights that must be extended to all people has grown as time has passed. Nor is some people’s antisocial behavior any longer being regarded as justification for reducing these rights to them. [Everyone gets maximum rights.](#)

4. How should the church respond?

- a. The church cannot deny the importance of righteousness in the life of the individual or the community. Nor can the church be without mercy on those struggling against poverty or injustice. [The church must acknowledge that poverty and injustice exist.](#)
- b. The church must preach that we all are totally helpless before God so we should show mercy as He shows mercy, yet it must also preach the law as a curb to doers of evil. [Weighing mercy versus lawlessness.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. Parking seemed adequate at Peace Bible and did not merit comment by the Campbells.
 - b. The church sign, however, was so political that it might have made other first-time attendees rethink entering the church to join the worship. Was it too much? [Size of the sign and flags would be viewed by many negatively.](#)
2. Greeters
 - a. Greeters were present and dispensed bulletins at Peace Bible – no problem.
 - b. The bulletins themselves, however, were a big problem – there were too many inserts. What types of materials belong 1) in the text of the bulletins, 2) as inserts in the bulletins, and 3) as handouts after the service? [How many inserts should a bulletin have?](#)
 3. Amenities
 - a. No amenities, like coffee, were mentioned at Peace Bible. This might mean there were none or other events distracted from them being noticed. Are amenities necessary? Are they helpful to the church or a distraction? [These are all good questions to discuss.](#)
- C. The program
1. Communication
 - a. Peace Bible excelled at communication; however, what they communicated might be regarded as of questionable merit by some people. Peace distributed a lot of materials with their bulletin. How much of the information would the typical worshipper read? All? A good portion? Almost none? What can we say about information overload? [Can people handle this much information?](#)
 - b. The information continued with announcements before the service. Might this approach be intentional to put the people in the mood for the type of sermon that they were about to hear? [Did the announcements set the tone of the service?](#)
 2. Membership
 - a. Like most of the churches we have previously encountered, the path to formal membership was not mentioned to new attendees. Instead, involvement was empathized before the people considered membership. Is this a good approach? [Are beliefs important at Peace? Is it selling the organization rather than the Gospel?](#)
 3. Activities
 - a. While Peace Bible might have had some among its activities which were related to the Bible, that was not obvious from the Sunday morning agenda. No specific activities to attract or occupy children were apparent. [Religion was secondary.](#)
 - b. The primary activities at Peace were politically related. The caucus meeting that was held in the church with the church's blessing appeared to be more important to the organization and its mission than other activities. That a politician involved in the caucus process gave the announcements causes all of them to be linked to politics. What are the issues here? [The church is limiting its membership to those who agree politically.](#)

3. Deepening involvement

- a. The purpose of the church seemed to revolve around state and local politics. If the church were successful in promoting its values through this means, what are some of the possible effects on its membership and standing in the community? [How will its politics affect the church?](#)
- b. What are the varying effects that the strong political component that existed at Peace likely to have on its current membership? How might it affect new attendees like the Campbells? [Getting new members = political evangelism.](#)

D. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. Worship began with announcements and an emphasis on a non-religious part of the church program. What effect would this have had on worshippers? [Made the Campbells edgy.](#)
- b. Peace featured much more congregational participation in the worship than in the other churches we have seen, except for the food offering event at Mercy Hill. Was this good or bad or some of both? What is the proper role of lay participation in a worship service? [Discuss correct lay involvement.](#)
- c. The sermon seems to have blurred the Campbells' memory of the rest of the service. Does this often happen with good sermons? Bad sermons? Or is it the sermon that is erased by the concluding portions of the liturgy? [How should the sermon and the liturgy interact?](#)

2. Use of music

- a. The worship contained simple musical responses by the congregation. In most of the previous congregations it appeared the praise band performed without any congregational involvement. Peace involved the congregation, but was there substance or as it just "ja (yah), ja, ja" singing? [Did the people "sing" or "pray" the Word of God or just respond?](#)

3. Goal of worship

- a. The goal of Peace's worship seemed to be to build a community around moral values shared by the congregation and Representative Miller. Is this a fair assessment?
- b. Even though God was not shut out of the service, how did the worship lead people away from the message of sin and grace? [What was the church really doing?](#)

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. The Bible was read and obliquely mentioned in the sermon. Why was this not enough? [Not really.](#)
- b. Are there Bible accounts or verses that can legitimately be used to support political purposes? What might be some examples?

2. Fellowship

- a. Not much was mentioned about the fellowship at Peace, but based on the sermon content, is it likely members were discussing deep theological truths after the service? [The Campbells ignored the fellowship.](#)

7. Trinity Church

1. What unites Trinity Church? [Denominational heritage](#)
2. What is the purpose of Trinity Church? [Denominational promotion](#)
3. Comment on any of the following:
 The architecture: [Brick building, modest steeple](#)
 The floor plan: [Typical](#)
 The furnishings: [Large digital screen outside](#)
 The sights and sounds: [Denominational pins, etc., pictures of past national presidents, engaging sermon.](#)
4. Would Trinity Church be regarded as a mainline church?
[Maybe. If so, a small denomination. But probably not.](#)
5. In what ways is Trinity very different from the other churches we have seen?
[Its focus was on spiritual work. It had a strong denominational link.](#)
6. What are the likely membership demographics at Trinity?
[Older members, families with denominational heritage.](#)
7. Contrast Trinity with First Church.
[Status by denominational linkage rather than social position.](#)

A. Churchism (Ecclesiasticism)

1. Denominations
 - a. Each congregation is an independent gathering of people who think of themselves as Christians, although some congregations may be part of a multi-campus organization or a bishopric. [Congregations are local.](#)
 - b. Some congregations remain free of loyalty to any larger group, and several of the churches that we have seen in this book might fall into this category. Such churches need to find the people who staff the professional positions in the congregation (e.g., pastor, music director) without outside help. [Unaffiliated congregations have clergy recruitment issues.](#)
 - c. Most congregations have some level of affiliation with a denomination or association of churches [for 4 reasons](#). Congregations seek such affiliations [1\)](#) so they have a ready source of trained church workers, [2\)](#) so they have access to a wide range of support materials, [3\)](#) so they can carry out distant mission projects, and [4\)](#) so they have places to transfer their members who move.
 - d. Dominations demand loyalty in terms of [1\)](#) doctrinal principles taught, [2\)](#) church practices, and [3\)](#) financial support of their activities. [Congregations have these 3 responsibilities.](#)
 - e. Dominations also have their own set of idiosyncrasies, which have more to do with historic roots than the faith they practice, although denominations often deny this. [Non-scriptural habits.](#)

2. Congregations and their denominations
 - a. Some congregations, particularly in rural areas where there is little turnover in membership, have very little interaction with the denomination to which they belong. They are more of the “pastor’s church” rather than a member of a larger group. [Strong pastoral influence.](#)
 - b. Larger congregations, which have a significant turnover in membership or in their preaching and teaching staff, are more likely to have strong interactions with their denomination and to promote the program of the denomination more strongly. [More need for central church body.](#)
 - c. Congregations which have several of their members involved in denominational activities, like Trinity, may effectively be captives of their denomination, putting denominational priorities before their own and serving as a testing ground for denominational initiatives. [Special relationship.](#)

3. The denominational effect ([Members need a strong local congregation. Doctrinal soundness is local; working together is national.](#))
 - a. Small denominations often suffer from nepotism. Members of one congregation may have relatives in other congregations of the denomination. If the denomination runs a common high school or college for members of its congregations, young people will meet and marry members of other congregations in the denomination. This type of network, particularly among church leaders, may make church discipline difficult and lead to gradual denominational drift in doctrine. Such a denomination is basically an extended family in which bad uncles and rebellious brats are tolerated to prevent rending the organization.
 - b. The larger the denomination is, the stronger its church politics. Leadership positions and prize pastorates are limited, so competition, all done in a “churchly manner” of course, can become intense. Rather than protecting the heretics, hunting them becomes more popular.
 - c. A person can have a position in a congregation where he/she is barely noticed all the way up to a position where nothing is done without that person’s consent.
 - d. The danger with denominations of any size is that the organization of its operational issues can undermine its theological positions over time. [Operations trump doctrine.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking
 - a. The parking lot was large and the entrance of the building easy to find. What might be some reasons for such a large parking area in an older residential area? [Is this congregation declining?](#)

2. Greeters
 - a. The first greeter was not human, but a large digital display where messages for all to see could be posted. Is this a good type of way to greet people coming to the church? [How boisterous should a church sign be?](#)
 - b. The church had an official greeter-couple, but they did not seem too active. Can this be a problem with official greeters?

- c. An unofficial greeter seemed more engaging. Was he really trying to greet them or was he just being nosy about strangers? [Did the church feel it necessary to vet visitors?](#)
- 3. Amenities and children ([Same issues as at Peace, but it was summertime so can't judge.](#))
 - a. There was no evidence of coffee or food. Perhaps the Campbells just missed these.
 - b. There was no mention of children's activity or religious training.
- C. The program
- 1. Communication
 - a. The communication of the denominational identity was immediate and strong. It appeared in numerous places, so that even if people did not know what it meant, they could not ignore it. Is this a good idea or counterproductive? [What about Luther's seal?](#)
 - b. The announcements were given before the service and seemed to set the tone for the service. The pastor announced not only major initiatives in the denomination's program, but also introduced an honored guest. What did this say about the real message of the church? [Not Gospel first.](#)
 - c. The communication was very thorough, down to the ability to get charitable credit for the specific offerings being sought. Is such detail a good idea for church announcements or might it be handled in some other way? If so, how? [Too much detail is disruptive.](#)
 - 2. Membership
 - a. The church seemed more eager to learn whether the Campbells were somehow already involved in the church rather than to try to get them to join. What are the good and bad aspects of trying to fish for a connection with visitors? [This has many aspects to discuss.](#)
 - b. Why might the church have taken such a seemingly unusual approach to the Campbells? Might our churches unwittingly do the same thing? [Desire for strong denominational financial support?](#)
 - 3. Activities
 - a. Aside from the Bible college, Trinity did not seem to advertise any activities. Might this indicate something about the membership of the congregation? [Might summer be a factor?](#)
 - b. Based on the over-adequate size of the parking lot and the lack of announced activities, might this be one of the churches losing members to The Quest? [Is Trinity becoming an "insider church"?](#)
- D. Worship
- 1. Order of worship
 - a. After the announcements, the service followed in a manner common to most of the other churches the Campbells had visited. Is this an example of "doing just enough religion" to satisfy the consciences of the attendees? [Was there enough in the service to be Christian?](#)

- b. The sermon and the prayers stayed on the theme of the announcements. Did Christ get squeezed out? [It would seem so. No praise band.](#)
2. Use of music
 - a. Except for the mention that the hymns were more modern, nothing more was mentioned about the music.
 3. Goal of worship
 - a. The goal of the worship seemed very clear; it was to promote loyalty to the work of the national church denomination. [Promote denomination and Bible college.](#)
 - b. Was there an implication that the care of the souls of the local congregation was not very important to its purpose because the senior pastor was missing half the time? [Was there a lack of shepherd-sheep bond?](#)
- E. Theological considerations
1. Use of the Bible
 - a. Like in other churches the Campbells have visited, the Bible was read, but what was read must not have been memorable or its relationship to the message of the sermon was unclear.
 - b. Do our churches also have biblical readings which are forgotten as soon as the pastor closes the Bible? [The Bible is read in most churches, but is it important?](#)
 2. Fellowship
 - a. The people gathered after church in the narthex. The regulars seemed to gather there but no more is said about the gathering. [Little information.](#)
 - b. The Campbells' experience with the man in front of the national church presidents' pictures reinforced the feeling that the purpose of the church was to push the national agenda. Why might this be expected to discourage potential members? [Can make them feel like outsiders.](#) Is it bad to have pictures of previous church leaders or pastors on the walls of a hall? [Would having pictures of past pastors and important Lutheran theologians and their message be harmful?](#)

8. Immanuel Church

1. What unites Immanuel Church? [Saving Gospel of Jesus Christ](#)
2. What is the purpose of Immanuel Church? [Preserving the members' faith](#)
3. Comment on any of the following:
 - The architecture: [White church with steeple, in need of maintenance](#)
 - The floor plan: [Traditional](#)
 - The furnishings: [Oak pews, standard chancel with crucifix](#)
 - The sights and sounds: [Graveyard with leaning markers, church smelled like an old building, Lutheran worship, poor organist.](#)
4. What was the point of the author using a simple church like Immanuel? [None of the fancy stuff really matters.](#)

5. Does a church have to be small and remote like Immanuel to be a faithful church?
No, but smaller congregations are easier to keep on track. Visible church vs. invisible church.
6. What are the likely membership demographics at Immanuel? Farmers, older than average.
7. Which churches that we have seen *might* be closer to Immanuel than at first appears?
Trinity might have Bible classes/Sunday school. First Church might have sound sermons.
It is difficult to evaluate a church in summer.

A. Christianity and worship (What make people feel Christian?)

1. Misguided reasons people go to church – Focus on worldly self
 - a. Church is a place to go where one finds people like oneself. In this way it is like a tavern, a restaurant, a golf course, a gym, or a country store. Common concerns can be expressed, and personal experiences can be shared. Like a retreat, comfortable.
 - b. Church is a place where people can be entertained. In this way it is like a disco, a concert hall, or a theater. Music, lights, and dynamic speakers can raise attendees' mood and send them on their way feeling invigorated. Place of entertainment.
 - c. Church is a place where one can bond with others to carry out important tasks for the general good or for those in need. In this way it is like a community service group, a political caucus, or a business retreat. People try to build up each other's commitment for the group's cause. Organization for service to others.
 - d. Church is a place where people support each other. It is like Alcoholics Anonymous, a psychology group therapy, or a group of old friends. People lean on others to help them to get through difficult situations. Self-help group.
 - e. Church is a place that gives one a sense of moral wellbeing. It is like other positive habits that a person has which make the world seem better (e.g., brushing one's teeth, showering, putting everything back in its place, and showing up for work on time.) It helps wash away the bad taste of sins committed. Get a sense of moral wellbeing and remove "dirt."
2. Misguided reasons people go to church – Focus on religious externals
 - a. Worship is inherently a performance. The pastor, the musicians, and those supporting them are all playing roles in a pageant, much of which was scripted by others either in ancient times or at distant locations. Performing the pageant well makes everyone feel good. Theater performance.
 - b. While different liturgies have different parts, getting all the parts in, rather than whether the parts accomplish their intended purpose, often seems to drive the implementation of the liturgy. Whether the attendees retain anything from what was presented is a seldom asked question in liturgical circles. Innovation and art in worship.
3. The significant parts of the worship service
 - a. God's Law must be preached in all its severity and in a manner so that it applies to the people in the congregation. The members of the congregation must be led to accept their personal depravity and their inability at self-help. Preaching the Law, not preaching "about" the Law, is essential for the Gospel to be meaningful.

- b. God's Gospel must be preached as an accomplished fact and freely available to all who have sinned and cling to Jesus rather than their own dead works. [Objective and Universal.](#)
- c. The Gospel must be applied to the members of the congregation, first by asking for their confession of sins and then by giving them God's absolution, by word and/or by sacrament, as appropriate. [The Gospel is "for you."](#)
- d. People must be asked to confess their faith in the Triune God or in key doctrines of the Scripture as they were presented in the sermon. [Remind themselves of key beliefs.](#)
- e. People must be given the opportunity to praise God in manners that strengthen their faith and/or link them to their brothers and sisters in the church throughout the ages. [Hymns are to instruct, to confess, and to bond.](#)
- f. Common prayers must be offered for fellow Christians and concerning those things that affect the church ministry, mission, and environment. [Ask for God's help in all things.](#)
- g. God's blessing should be placed on God's people. [Granting of God's favor.](#)

4. Teaching the message

- a. Formal worship is not the most important part of a church's activity; helping people grow in their faith is. Spiritual growth can only come through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit only works through the means of grace, particularly the study of the Scriptures. [This cannot be overemphasized.](#)
- b. Formal teaching of congregational members of all ages by the church is essential to their spiritual growth and understanding. [Classes for all ages.](#)
- c. Studying God's Word at home is every bit as important as attending worship services. There is no better insurance against divorce, rebellious children, and the falling away from faith than gathering together daily at the Savior's feet to learn from Him. [It also gives temporal blessings by strengthening the home.](#)

B. The entrance experience

1. Parking

- a. To park at the church, one must first find the church, and that took some doing for the Campbells. Would signs telling where to turn off the main road have helped? [Signs directing people to the church are essential.](#)
- b. The parking lot had adequate space. It appears the congregation was small.

2. Greeters

- a. The first greeters were a flaking church sign and leaning tombstones. Did this lack of maintenance say anything about the quality of the church? [Poor first impressions.](#)
- b. How were Jerry and Helen different from previous greeters? What was good and what was bad about this? [They had met Jessica previously. No encounter with the pastor is mentioned.](#)

3. Amenities

- a. The amenities consisted of questionable coffee. What was questionable about this whole situation? [The church was unprepared for visitors.](#)

C. The program

1. Communication

- a. The means of communication was a bulletin with typographical errors. What does this say about the church? *Cute, but...*
- b. No announcements, *even after church*, were mentioned, as the Campbells' minds had gone to other things. Might they have missed something important?

2. Membership

- a. Partaking of communion was linked to membership in the congregation. This is what is called "close communion." *Good.*
- b. There seemed to be little interest in the congregation in obtaining new members. This might explain why rural congregations are dying. What could Immanuel do to attract new members without compromising its doctrine and worship? *Of course!*

3. Activities

- a. No activities were mentioned. Was this perhaps a result of the size of the church? *It was also summertime.*

D. Worship

1. Order of worship

- a. The order of the service followed what is often called the "common service," a variety of which has been used in the Christian church for centuries.
- b. The service empathized the preaching of relevant strong law and gospel. The absolution and confession and the communion portion of the service seemed to particularly impress Ben and Jessica. *Focused on what was important.*
- c. The presence of a large crucifix in the front of the church seemed to set the tone for worship. Is it better to have a crucifix or an empty cross? Why? *There are theological arguments on both sides.*

2. Use of music

- a. Traditional hymns were used. The skills of the organist were not very good. This is a common problem in smaller congregations in rural areas. Is the problem worth addressing with technology? *Hymnsoft?*

3. Goal of worship

- a. The immediate goal of the service was clearly to proclaim God's law and gospel and be sure that the attendees would receive God's forgiveness for their sins. Any comments?
- b. What was the ultimate goal of the service? *Preparing God's people for heaven.*

E. Theological considerations

1. Use of the Bible

- a. The Bible was read as at other churches.
- b. Material from the Bible was used in the sermon to illustrate the pastor's points. [Good!!!](#)

2. Fellowship

- a. What happened after the service was not reported. It is uncertain whether other members showed interest in the Campbells. Why would this interaction have been important?
- b. There was no mention of the Campbells interacting with the pastor. Wouldn't this have been significant enough to mention if it had occurred? Did the author goof at this point? ([The author may have fallen down here. A bit more was needed.](#))