

Over the years, speakers have used black boards (and other colors) to write upon and help their message. After that came overhead projectors and film strips, and now it is not unusual to have Power-Point projections. Even more recently, songs have been projected onto screens (one congregation has at least eight such screens appropriately located) so song books might eventually become obsolete.

Pews have gone from hard wooden seats to cushioned furniture. Carpets have been added. Air conditioning is vital some places. And, most recently, announcements are regularly made to “silence your cellphones,” a statement that never would have been made 20 years ago but now is considered important.

Times change, but the word of God never changes. When

we look at how we worship, let’s remember that the overriding desire is to please God and not let secular matters interfere.

Morris Fraser

NAVARRE MESSENGER

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We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ

8490 James M Harvell Rd
Navarre, FL 32566

Place Stamp Here

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible Class for all ages_9:00 AM

Morning Worship Service_10:00 AM

Evening Worship Service_6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages_7:00 PM

This entire publication and previous issues are available online at

navarrechurchofchrist.net

along with some more useful information

VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

Part II

In the previous issue we discussed the beginnings of worship by Christians in and following the first century, and the eventual use of buildings used specifically for worship. We also saw a contemporary

account of what second century worship was like.

Because the word was designed to be spread throughout the world (Mark 16:15), we can understand that not all nations, times and civilizations would have (or be able

to have) buildings like we use today. Throughout countries even in modern times, because of economic or political considerations, Christians may meet in open-air concrete buildings (that is a usual location in Nigeria), in private residences (Romania is one country where Christians may

not meet or teach publicly), or in secluded woods away from cities (China still forbids any unauthorized meetings).

Americans are fortunate to be able to worship as and where they want, and so Christians can have their own identifiable buildings devoted to worship. But from place to place, there may be other options. A newly formed congregation may begin meeting in someone's house or in a rented hall or even in a leased building. No scripture exists that forbids such arrangements.

Normally it is likely a congregation has some sort of structure it owns and controls. It may be simple or relatively ornate. Usually, local building laws dictate certain aspects of construction and contents (restrooms, water fountains and the amount of floor space able to contain a certain number of attendees). From that point on, the congregation decides how it will conduct services, always in

accordance with what the Bible reveals.

We recognize this concept, but often we take it for granted. For instance, if a sermon is always 25 minutes long, or the service is always an hour long, we come to believe that the time may not be changed because, somehow, it is "scriptural." If there are a prayer and three songs before the Lord's Supper, we come to think of that order as sacrosanct; it must not be changed. If we are accustomed to standing for a song before the sermon, likewise we feel that is the way it must be.

We need to be careful about forcing non-ordained activities into the worship. We are aware from Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 that the singing we engage in is to be done without instruments. We know from Acts 2:42 that worship involves certain acts devoted to God and that secular activities such as concerts should not be part of

that.

Briefly, let's look at a typical order of worship.

In many places, someone stands before the group and calls it to order. He may provide a list of those who will be leading various segments of the worship – song leader, one who will lead a prayer, those attending to the Lord's Supper, the scheduled speaker. He may announce those who are ill, in order that all may pray for them, or who are out of town, or any other activities associated with the congregation. He may also tell of activities at other nearby congregations. These all are normal events at many meeting places, but any or all of them may be dispensed with or information given in some other venue, like a bulletin or at the end of the service.

Usually, a number of songs are then sung. There may be one, there may be three or

four. The number is never stated in scripture, other than the fact that Jesus and the apostles sang a song before going into Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30).

The Lord's Supper usually is next in order. Certain statements are made in keeping with the event, although they may be brief. Because men are in place to serve the elements of communion, often it is convenient to pass trays for the offering. But that is not a required order; there could be a misconception about the collection being an integral part of the Lord's Supper. It would not be unscriptural, and it might teach the difference more easily, if the collection were taken at a different time in the worship. A few congregations don't even pass a tray; they have a secured box where offerings may be deposited after the service.

Sometimes the Lord's Supper is observed at the end of the service; on rare occasions it

may be observed at the beginning. This is the decision of the congregation and is not ordained by scripture.

The sermon is usually considered the main event of the worship, but it doesn't have to be. Recall Justin Martyr's second century report (noted in the previous bulletin) that someone would read "as time permitted" from the apostles' letters or other works. But the sermon does provide a thoughtful way to present thoughts from the Bible.

It is traditional to offer an invitation after the sermon, aimed at those who want to become Christians or Christians who have sinned. That is so ingrained in our habits of worship that not to do so would jar many people used to it. Yet that specific act, combined with an "invitation song," is not mentioned in scripture.

It certainly is a worthwhile

act to do. It is so valuable that it might even be accomplished at another point in worship, such as at the beginning. Would anyone object to offering an opportunity to become a Christian, getting a response and baptizing a penitent believer before the first song?

Beyond those activities which are part of the normal worship, we also arrange the physical features of the auditorium as to their importance to us. We center the baptistery so everyone can see a baptism. We center the table upon which the bread and fruit of the vine are placed. We center the pulpit so the speaker can be seen easily. But those are variables. Some baptisteries are set to one side, perhaps because of the expense of moving plumbing to accommodate it. A pulpit may be placed to one side to visually balance the table placed on the other side – perhaps not a demanding reason, but allowable under the silence of the Bible.