

Guests are always welcome at the Hickory Knoll Church of Christ! It is an honor to have you join us for worship or any other activity. Coming to any new place can be difficult. Unfamiliar practices can be intimidating. This brochure might be helpful in letting you know who we are and what you can expect during your time among us.

BACKGROUND

Hickory Knoll is a Church of Christ. This is a pre-denominational, world-wide fellowship of several million people. We believe that the Church Jesus founded, the one described in the New Testament, can be restored in our day and time. Some may see this as ideal, but we see it as an essential and worthy goal. Because of this goal, we seek to be a Bible-based, Christ-centered fellowship.

As a Bible-based church, we are happy to accept and hold out God's Word as the pattern for life. We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where it remains silent. There are no "extra" books, councils, or rules that dictate what we believe or practice. You need not be an expert in the Bible to fit in here, but we do encourage everyone to become the best Bible student they can be.

Jesus is at the center of our lives. We "want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, share in His suffering, conform to His death" (Philippians 3:10). Obedience is essential in this. Jesus reminds us that, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15). We try to follow Him in all we do.

"For you have also been called for this reason, since Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Indeed, "The one who abides in Him ought to walk even as Jesus walked" (1 John 2:6).

Devotion to Jesus and faithfulness to the Scriptures blend us into a close-knit fellowship like the early church (Acts 2:42-47). This means sharing our joys and sorrows (Romans 12:15), our material blessings (Ephesians 4:28), the work of spreading the gospel (Philippians 4:15), and even one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). This common life builds a strong bond between believers. Many of our guests appreciate the closeness we enjoy here at Hickory Knoll.

WORSHIP

One of the comments we hear most from visitors is that our worship service has an elegant simplicity. This is not an outgrowth of taste, but a reflection of our devotion to the Bible.

Song books are located in a rack under the bench seat in front of you. A number will be announced and congregational singing will begin. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No instruments accompany our music. You might find this unusual. We sing *a cappella* because the New Testament directs us to sing (Mat. 26:30; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15; James 5:13). We add nothing to that.

Prayers will be led for specific needs and requests at different times during the worship service. We talk to God not only because He requests it, but also because we deeply desire to approach God's throne of grace in our time of need. The Scriptures will also be read at various times so that we might hear and follow the Voice of God. We need Him every hour and our worship reflects this attitude.

The sermon will be Bible-centered and applicable to today. At the end of the sermon the preacher will offer a specific opportunity to respond for those who may have any need. Those who wish to do so will be invited to come to the front of the auditorium. Someone may come to confess sin and request forgiveness. Another might respond to ask for prayers or encouragement. A person may also make a commitment to Christ and decide to be baptized for the forgiveness of his or her sins. Several people may respond, or no one may respond. Don't feel uneasy during this time. You will not be singled out in any way.

On every Sunday morning we observe the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted it on the night He was betrayed (Mt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; et al). During this symbolic meal, unleavened bread represents Christ's body and the fruit of the vine (grape juice) represents His blood. Those who choose to participate may do so by breaking off a piece of the bread as it is passed to them and then by drinking the juice of one of the small cups,

returning it to the tray, as it is passed. While we hinder no one from participating, we encourage everyone to take it in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-32). There is no need to feel embarrassed if you decide to not participate. Either way, simply pass the tray to the person next to you. You will notice that this is a quiet and respectful time full of meaning and purpose.

An offering will be collected every Sunday morning as well (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). It is a separate item of worship, but usually done at the same time as communion for convenience sake. We encourage every member to contribute to the work of the church. There are many good reasons for this (Mt. 6:33; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:7; et al). Since you are our guest, you are not expected to make a donation. Feel free to pass the tray along the row as before.

BIBLE CLASSES

We believe that "All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness; that the man of God might be adequately equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Because of this we strive to study and teach the Bible thoroughly and accurately (2 Timothy 2:15). Bible classes for all ages are taught Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. For the children the classes are divided into: Nursery, 2 & 3 year olds, 4's & 5's, 1st & 2nd grade, 3rd & 4th, 5th & 6th, and Teens. There are several adult classes, including one taught in Spanish, one for young adults, and one for ladies only.

A Bible study is also conducted at the building on Tuesday morning. Several studies are conducted in homes on a regular basis. We invite everyone to participate in our Bible school program.

LEADERSHIP

The head of the Church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). God has seen fit to also organize each congregation to have leaders of its own (1 Ths. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17). These men are to be servants and not lords (Luke 22:24-27). These men also answer directly to the Lord. No governing structure between a congregation and the Lord is given in the New Testament. Each congregation, with its leaders, is autonomous, answering directly to the Lord (Rev. 2, 3).

The elders are the highest leaders of a congregation. These men are also referred to as shepherds, or its synonym pastors, and overseers, or its synonym bishops (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Their qualifications and work are described in detail (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They serve as a group. They guide, care for, and protect the flock. They answer directly to the Lord in this. It is a demanding task, but these men serve with joy and honor.

Preachers, also known as evangelists, serve each congregation as well. The preacher clearly proclaims God's Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Whereas elders have a direct authority to lead the congregation, preachers have a delegated authority that comes from accurately teaching and using the Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15). Since the preacher is not referred to as pastor or

reverend in the Bible, neither do we call him by such titles. These men work under the elders to help the congregation grow.

Deacons also assist the elders. Their qualifications and work are given in such passages as: 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6. The word deacon literally means servant, or minister. These men are entrusted with certain jobs to help the congregation function smoothly. They lead by example.

Many guests observe that we do not have an official priesthood, separate and above the membership, as do many other groups. This is with good cause. No man is to have such an elevated place above his brethren (Mt. 23:1-12; Acts 10:25, 26). The New Testament teaches that all Christians are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession" (1 Pt. 2:9). John says that Jesus has made all believers "to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). This is a status held by all who expect to share in the resurrection (Rev. 20:6). Paul well noted that every part of the body must perform its function in order for it to grow (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:12-20). We encourage every member to be vital and important.

FELLOWSHIP

All types of people gather at the Hickory Knoll Church of Christ. You will find them young and old, rich and poor, happy and sad, friendly and unfriendly, and so on. Some of us are mature

Christians, some new Christians, some struggling Christians and some non-Christians. There will likely be many other guests. The fellowship of Christians is bound together by love: God's love for us, our love for Him, and our love for all mankind, especially those of the household of faith.

We don't claim to be perfect, nor sinless. We are sure that those in fellowship with God through the blood of Jesus Christ are cleansed from sin (1 John 1:7-10). We know that everyone needs the forgiveness offered only in Jesus Christ. That is why we make every effort to work together to accomplish what God wants all of His people to do. In order to build and maintain closeness in our church family, there are regular activities that everybody can be involved in together. You will have every opportunity to take part in the life of our group when you feel comfortable and are ready to do so.

Perhaps you are wondering if you'll be able to find your place in this church family. We encourage you to try, for you truly matter to God and to us. We think you will find Hickory Knoll to be a great place to be and to belong.

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More About the Hickory Knoll Church of Christ



Information for Our Guests

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Worship 9:00 a.m.
Bible Classes 10:15 a.m.
Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes 6:30 p.m.

Spanish services also available