

From The Minister's Pen



“I’m Looking For a Church That’s Not So...”

Thousands of people search for a church each year. They often research congregations in their area, ask around, and then personally visit. Below are some of the common criteria they use.

“I’m looking for a church that is NOT SO DOGMATIC.”

A caustic, callous, censorious approach does not draw men to Jesus—it repels them. A Savior lifted up on the cross is heaven’s magnet (John 12:32). The church must present its message in love (Eph. 4:15). It has no permission from a loving God to be hateful to the people He created (1 Peter 1:22; 2:17). No one wants to sit in a cold church—but warm and cozy is hard to leave.

Does this mean that a church should not stand strong for truth? **No.** Doctrine is important (John 8:24; 2 John 1:9–11). The church must teach all the counsel of God (Acts 20:27) whether it is popular or unpopular (2 Tim. 4:1–5). It is to defend the gospel (Phil. 1:17; Jude 1:3), not compromise it (Gal. 1:8).

Paul was both tolerant and dogmatic, loving and convicted. On one hand, he refused to cave to Jewish teachers who wanted to bind outdated laws. He “gave place, no, not for an hour” (Gal. 2:5). He also was gentle (1 Thess. 2:7), tearful (Acts 20:31), loving (Philemon 1:9), and willing to “spend and be spent” for others (2 Cor. 12:15).

God desires His church to “comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” but also to “warn them that are un-

ruly” (1 Thess. 5:14). So look for a church that speaks the truth—all of it—in love (Eph. 4:15).

“I’m looking for a church that is NOT SO JUDGMENTAL.”

Some people are in dysfunctional, abusive relationships. Some have been judged unfairly by peers or society for so long that they long for a place where they can just be themselves. The last thing they are looking for is more of the same at church. Most just long to be loved—and none of us like to be criticized.

The church consists of humble, kind people who know their imperfections. Like John (Rev. 21:1–3), all faithful Christians have a hopeful future, but many, like Paul, also have a regrettable past (Phil. 3:13). They have made their share of mistakes, commit more sins than they care to remember, and battled addictions that haven’t gone down easily. Since “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23), Christians understand, accept, encourage, and help each other.

Christians know that pointing a finger at others leaves three fingers pointing back at themselves. They long ago memorized Jesus’ admonition, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1).

However, all of us should make judgments. The same Lord who said, “Judge not,” also said, “Judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). This isn’t a contradiction. He doesn’t forbid judging, but He does forbid unfair, hypocritical judging (Matt. 7:2–5).

The church announces the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:22–25; Heb. 1:8). It trumpets holiness, values purity, and endorses clear ethical standards. It urges sowing to the Spirit, and discourages sowing to the flesh (Gal. 6:7–8). Therefore, some sermons will encourage us; others will convict us (Acts 2:36–38). We benefit from both. So look for a church where you feel welcomed and loved—and challenged to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:21–22; 2 Peter 3:18).

‘I’m looking for a church that DOES NOT HAVE TOO MANY RULES.’

Surely a church has missed the mark if it does not teach and practice that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). None bothered Jesus more than the Pharisees who made up rules for God and bound them on His people (Matt. 23:4, 13). Paul wrote of them: “Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God”. (Rom. 10:3). Salvation is not of works of merit that men should boast (Eph. 2:9). More than lip service must be given to the “spirit” of the law (2 Cor. 3:6–11).

On the other hand, while rules are not an end in themselves, they are necessary. Commands give structure; rules lead to freedom. Anarchy is the child of lawlessness. No one wants to be part of an institution or society without rules.

God gave His Word to be loved, learned, understood, and obeyed—not ignored (James 1:21–25). The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13).

Obedience isn’t legalism. Rather, obedience shows that we understand the spirit of the law (Psa. 111:10; 1 John 5:1–3). Christians are set free in Christ (Rom. 14:1, 4). The way God gives liberty is through obeying the truth (John 8:24; 12:48–50; Rom. 6:13–17). Submission is key to accessing God’s spiritual treasures (Heb. 5:8–9; Eph. 2:8–9). The result (liberty) follows the cause (obedience). John wrote, “Hereby we do know

that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 John 2:3–5). So look for a church that practices both the spirit and the letter.

‘I’m looking for a church that is NOT SO OLD FASHIONED.’

As Americans, we love gadgets; none of us want to return to rotary telephones or typewriters. We are “connected”. Why, then, would we want to go to a church that feels like we are stepping back in time? Why read from a Book that our grandmothers read, sing a hundred-year-old song, or take up a religion that’s been around for two thousand years?

We might point out that songs are still being written and that technology has arrived in most congregations. Members follow sermons on their tablets, view Powerpoints in Bible classes and find scriptures on smartphones.

Some things, however, are always in fashion. Fulfilling man’s basic needs does not go out of style. Every generation seeks out healthy vegetables, comfortable clothing, affordable lodging, and pure drinking water. Laughter, working, friends, learning, and relationships never go out of style.

So it is with the church. It meets the perennial human needs of the soul and salvation. It addresses the inner man that longs to understand the big picture and find meaning in life (Eccl. 1; John 10:10). It builds character, helps with relationships, and prepares one for the afterlife (2 Peter 1:5–8; Eph. 5:25–33; Matt. 25:31–46).

The original church—**church of Christ** (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47)—has no successor; it needs none. Some things are more valuable with age. Antiques that originally sold for a few dollars may get thousands now. Land an ancestor purchased for a few thousand may bring six figures.

If this is the kind of church you are looking for, may we invite you to come forward when the invitation is extended?

Church News and Views

**WELCOME TO OUR
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



**AND
GOSPEL MEETING**



Guest Evangelist
*71st Anniversary
Gospel Meeting*

This week, we are so blessed to have **Dr. Harvey Jackson** as the guest evangelist for our 71st Anniversary gospel meeting. Dr. Jackson is the minister of Lampton Street Church of Christ in Mound Bayou, MS, where he has been the dedicated minister since 1967. He holds a Doctor of Theology degree from United Bible College and Seminary and a Doctorate degree in Behavioral Psychology from California Coast University. Dr. Jackson has an extensive resume in religious, civic and academic arenas. He is a board member for the Cleveland School District. He holds a seat on the MS Valley State Foundation Board. Among his many other accomplishments, he is the National Director of the Ministers' Institute Conference, founded by Dr. W. F. Washington, which convenes annually in Fort Lauderdale and he is the President/Founder of the Mississippi State Lectureship/Conference for the Churches of Christ. Most significant, however, he is a scripturally sound gospel preacher who preaches and teaches with power, passion and a spiritual purpose. The church's Leadership invites all members and visitors to COME and HEAR the gospel message to be delivered by him on today and on tomorrow and Tuesday evenings!

THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

TODAY

HOME COMING

Worship @ 10:00AM / Coed Class @ 5:00PM

Worship @ 6:00PM

MONDAY-TUESDAY

Gospel Meeting @ 7:30PM

Welcome!!

Today also is "BRING A VISITOR SUNDAY". Members have made an earnest effort to make an IMPACT connection with friends, community and family by extending invitations to attend our worship service. We also invite you to attend our gospel meeting each night. It is our desire that every man and woman be saved; for that reason we will share the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

LaKendra Williams
(Baptized: July 8, 2015)

Verlande Petit-Jean
Venna Irvin

Shemar Saintfort
Shemani Saintfort

Dontabious Crutchfield
(Baptized: July 12, 2015)

Thank You! to VBS Staff!

The Education Department extends a very sincere “Thank You” to the members below who had a major roll in making this year’s Vacation Bible School the tremendous success that it was.

Planning Committee

Deloris Washington	Kayla Riettie
Frances Smoot	Rachel Trompe
Shonner Gainer	

Teachers

Samuell Pounds	Jhonna Lanier
Ethel Bess	Malajia Parrish
Mae Lois Byrd	DeShannon Sherman
Davonte Gray	Frances Smoot
Bria Johnson	Saquoya Stokes
Jazmin Jones	Shandee Williams
	Catherine Wilson

Refreshment Committee

Ethel Peterson Linda Berrian Tiffany Colquitt

Youth Activity Hour Staff

Jasmine Brown	Angela Jenkins
Cameron Burgess	Amanda McKeon
Tia Byrd	Nerica McLeod
Brandon Davis	Shavon McMillian
Dianne Frazier	Kaisha Moxie
Bernadette Giles	Patrick Riettie
Micah Giles	Chandra Roland
Danielle Gray	Alexandria Sherman
Davonte Gray	Aniria Sherman
Tony Hugley	Valerie Wilson

Additional Workers

Media Ministry Hospitality Committee
Custodial Staff

VBS ATTENDANCE

	2014	2015
Monday	160	161
Tuesday	180	167
Wednesday	238	231
Thursday	175	158



T-SHIRT NIGHT —Tuesday Evening—

Attend the gospel meeting and wear your 71st anniversary t-shirt!!



“Lord, He Whom Thou Lovest Is Sick”
(John 11:3)

Shut-In:

Charles Davis, Camille Ewers, Paul Facyson, Paul Frances, Ermine Mullins, Joyce Parrish, Marion Williams, Lillie Jackson

Prayer Requests:

Bobby Ace, Ethel Bess, Laura Blidge, Louise Bowman, Richard Brazil, Raf Campbell, Arnetta Cross, Ron Cullingford, Sydnee Crow, Aletha Denmark, Felisha Downer, Donna Eacho, Sharon Eason, Nelzene Edwards, Loerine Ellis, Shirley Evans, Bessie Everitt, Hanley Freeman, Dudley Hill, Arbie Humphrey, Lois Hutchison, Jacquelyn Irvin, Veanna Irvin, Becky Johnson, Gloria Johnson, Annie Lee, Kevin Larkins, Nancy Logan, Suzanna Middleton, George & Sharon Monroe, Willie Mae Morrip0, Jennifer Neita, James Newson, Rosie Newson, Johnny Richardson, Shay Roache, Akiko Robinson, Shirley Seays, Richard & Jean Sherman, Arnold Smalls, Maxine Smith, Yvonne Stokes, Linda Stokes, Brandi Stroman, Alexander (Joe) Sutton, Ernest & Mae Thomas, Samantha Tobias, Rolinne Trompe, Roosevelt Tukes, Lewis & Jean Truttling, Johnnie P. Walker, Johnny Walker, Lillie Walker, Lucille Walker, Joshua Webb, Marie Webb, Annie Williams, Betty Williams, Charles Williams, Jackie Williams, Rosa Williams

“We Come Into This House To Worship Him”

(John 4:24)

MONTH OF JULY

MORNING

EVENING

<i>Announcements</i>	Reginald Johnson	Reginald Johnson
<i>Song Leaders</i>	Joey Snell	Joey Snell
<i>Prayer</i>	Willie Hamilton	Henry Brown, Sr.
<i>Scripture (Reading)</i>	Raymond Thompson	Raymond Thompson
<i>Song</i>		
<i>Sermons</i>	Dr. W. F. Washington	Dr. W. F. Washington
<i>Call To Obedience</i>	<u>Counselors:</u> K. Hutchison / J. West C. Jean / W. Hamilton	
<i>Confessions /Prayer Petitions</i>	Keith Hutchison (Officiating)	Keith Hutchison (Officiating)
<i>Offering (1 Cor. 16:1,2)</i>	AM —Officiating: Keith Hutchison / Raymond Thompson	
<i>Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7)</i>	(1) Left, J. Franklin	(2) Left, B. Thomas
	(3) Left, G. Barbee	(4) Left, E. Holcombe
	(1) Right, B. Byrd	(2) Right, L. Frazier
	(3) Right, C. Jean	(4) Right, D. Edwards
	<i>Alternate: T. Evans</i>	
	PM —Officiating: Keith Hutchison / Raymond Thompson	
	E. Thompson	M. Hughes J. Franklin
	E. Holcombe	C. Jean D. Stokes
	<i>Alternates: B. Thomas, M. Strong</i>	
<i>Ministerial Announcements</i>		
<i>Doxology</i>	Dr. W. F. Washington	Dr. W. F. Washington
<i>Dismissal</i>	Davonte Gray	Terry Evans
<i>Worship and Praise Leaders</i>	Keith Hutchison, Reginald Johnson	
<i>Ushers</i>	Head Ushers: Tony Hugley, Booker Bess	
	Auditorium: Bros. T. Hugley, B. Bess, F. Williams, D. Adams, E. Thompson, R. Johnson, J. Chance, J. Outler, M. Jeanty, D. Gray, S. Wilson, D. Freeman, R. Rouse, C. Rouse	
	Lobby: I. Johnson, H. Penn	Back Hall: D. Brooks, J. West
<i>Hospitality Desk / Concierge</i>	Alice George, Sharon Evans	