



mitchelton presbyterian church
growing followers of Jesus

The Sunday Meeting – a guide to serving

Guidelines for Welcoming, Music, Public Prayer, Teaching and Leading at **mpc**

Introduction

The Sunday Meeting at mpc is a celebration of the life of our church family, the focal point of our bible teaching ministry, and an “open door” to the wider community. It is not “church” – church is much more than the Sunday meeting – but it is a key “reflection” of the life of our church. Likewise, it is not our definitive “worship” – because true worship involves the submission of all of our life to the Lord Jesus.

Our Sunday meetings are shaped by a number of key biblical principles, along with some tried and true bits of practical wisdom. These are outlined in the following pages, and summarized primarily by the following Core Commitment Statement:

We are committed to **church activity which is welcoming and understandable** to newcomers (1 Cor 14:23)

Along with our other core commitments and our vision statement, these words attempt to clarify something of our “theology of church” and our strategy as we do our best to grow as followers of Jesus, and grow new followers of Jesus. The following guidelines are focused on the desired outcome for “guests” at mpc, as they experience a visit to mpc.

During the last few decades, a number of “church models” have developed which place a high value on reaching and incorporating “spiritual seekers.” Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek Community Church pioneered a model of specialised “Seeker Services” with high intensity music and drama which attempted to engage ordinary unchurched people; established Christians attend an entirely separate service. On the other extreme, most Presbyterian churches have no regard for newcomers or seekers at all.

Our strategy is simple. We believe newcomers, seekers, and long-term Christians can all grow in the same soil. If what we do in church is made **understandable and clear**, and if we do our best to be sensitive and open to newcomers each week so that they understand what we’re doing and feel genuinely welcome, their experience of church may well be revolutionary. At the same time, long term Christians benefit by learning to be outward looking, and by hearing the bible taught in a straightforward way.

The mpc model has produced good fruit – with little fanfare , many people can testify that they have come to faith, and grown as followers of Jesus.

Thanks for your willingness to be involved in the public ministries of our church. I hope these guidelines help you understand the goals of each ministry area, so you can play your part in “growing followers of Jesus.” If you think there are ways we can improve, please let me know.

Phil Campbell
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WELCOMING

GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>You won't have to take the first steps on your own. You'll feel welcome, even if you've never been to church before.</p>	<p>We will identify newcomers and offer a clear and warm welcome.</p>
<p>You'll be shown where things are, and told what to expect, and what happens when.</p>	<p>We will identify particular needs, and direct accordingly – crèche, kidzbiz, disabled facilities etc explained; directions given</p>
<p>You'll be left alone if you prefer, but we'll try to link you with someone friendly who'll help you understand the service and meet some other people just like you.</p>	<p>We will introduce newcomers to someone appropriate who can guide them through the rest of the service – and will sense if this is not appropriate due to shyness or preference for anonymity.</p>
<p>You'll feel "looked after" right through your first visit. If you've got any comments or feedback, you'll feel welcome to give it.</p>	<p>We will watch the newcomer's progress right through to the time they leave the car-park. We will give a friendly good bye, and if possible, ask for feedback on the morning.</p>
<p>If you decide to be part of our church family, you might feel it's hard to "break-in" to deeper friendships. You'll realize that we want to help you be part of a small group, and to form lasting, encouraging relationships.</p>	<p>We will be aware of return visits, watch out for the "third week drop-off." We will personally encourage linking with a growth group, try to identify potential friends and encourage them to offer hospitality.</p>

Notes for welcomers

- Be alert. Scan constantly for arriving newcomers. Look around inside to make sure there's nobody you've missed.
- Be sensitive. Some people don't want to be identified and noticed when they come to church for the first time. Read their body language, and be sensitive to cues. Respond to their preferences rather than your "prepared script"
- Don't spend too long with each newcomer. You need to be free and ready to identify the next newcomer. Pass people on to someone else you can trust to continue speaking with them.
- Be a case manager. Take ownership of someone new, and see it through to the point where they are integrated into the church family. This may be a lifetime commitment!
- Have a heart for newcomers. Try to understand how it feels to come to an unfamiliar environment, particularly for someone with no church background, or for someone with a family who has just moved from interstate.

MUSIC	
GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>Even if you're not familiar with group singing, and may not be musical, you will find our music easy to join in with.</p>	<p>We'll choose songs that are easy and enjoyable to sing. Our musical style will be contemporary in style, and appropriate to the context.</p>
<p>You won't feel pressured to join in singing if you don't want to, but will feel comfortable when you do.</p>	<p>We will lead and sing enthusiastically, but understand that un-churched visitors may not be used to singing.</p>
<p>You won't find our music boring and irrelevant</p>	<p>We will work hard to introduce fresh songs, with memorable and helpful bible based lyrics and engaging, sing-able tunes.</p>
<p>You will recognize that the key thoughts in our songs reflect Biblical truth.</p>	<p>We will choose songs with lyrics that are Biblical and Christ focused and contemporary.</p>
<p>You will find our singing is a corporate experience, rather than a private "one-to-one" encounter with God. Church is gathering "together."</p>	<p>We will consciously choose or modify the majority of our songs to talk about "we" rather than "I". Song leaders engage people actively with eye-contact and body language that invites "connection" and corporate encouragement. We will "sing to one another with thankfulness to God." (Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16)</p>
<p>You may have experienced church music that is either just like a performance, or that is amateurish and embarrassing. You will find our music well rehearsed, well played, and clearly led, because we have worked hard at preparing for everybody's benefit.</p>	<p>We will always avoid self-glorifying performance, but aim for good quality out of an attitude of helpful service. We will try to avoid amateurish music not for the sake of our egos, but to better facilitate group singing.</p>
<p>You may think music is "<i>worship</i>" or that music should create a "spiritual experience" that brings you closer to God.</p>	<p>We will properly value the emotional impact of music, but will not use music to manipulate. We will recognize that an emotional response is not <i>necessarily</i> a sign of God's Spirit at work. We recognize that <i>true spiritual worship</i> is a life of sacrificial service motivated by the Cross of Christ. (Romans 12:1-3)</p>

NOTES FOR MUSIC TEAM MEMBERS

- Engage the congregation with eye contact, inclusive body language, clear instructions before songs, and clear and directive song leading
- Don't "zone out" in your own "personal spiritual experience" as you sing.
- Play and sing in a way that serves the goal of Biblical, Christ focused and corporate singing. Don't overwhelm the singing. It may be necessary to perform more simply to give clear cues and guidance to the congregation.
- Recognise how each song functions in its place in the meeting. For example, opening songs are designed to be energetic, engaging, especially easy to sing, and, importantly, fun for the kids who are still in church. The second song bracket is designed to be more reflective, preparing people to hear from God's word. The final song will ideally reflect on the content of the Bible teaching, re-inforcing central truths, or encouraging appropriate responses to the Word.
- Recognise the value of rehearsal. Even though you are a gifted musician, it's important to iron out glitches, learn arrangements, and rehearse beginnings and endings of songs.

PRAYER	
GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>You will find the language of our prayers is clear and understandable</p>	<p>We will use language that accessible and understandable to the average person. We will make prayers direct and clear, rather than trying to impress with eloquence.</p>
<p>You will find that someone will lead the congregation in prayer, so that you can pray at the same time with everyone else about the same things</p>	<p>One person will <i>lead</i> the whole congregation in prayer. In our language will not pray <i>for</i> them, but <i>with</i> them, using "we" instead of "I", and "us" instead of "me."</p>
<p>You will find that the prayer has a good 'flow', being delivered in a logical fashion</p>	<p>Our prayers will be organized, and well thought-out. We will praise God, pray for our world, our nation and our church in a way that moves naturally from one topic to the next</p>
<p>You will find the prayer is Biblical, being true to what the Bible teaches</p>	<p>Our prayers will be true to the Gospel, and consistent with the overall message of the Bible. We won't focus on hobby-horses like creationism, Calvinism or prosperity.</p>
<p>You will find the prayer is realistic, thankful, and God-dependent</p>	<p>We won't 'claim' God's promises for miraculous healings or material blessings, but will seek God's will for all things as we present our requests</p>
<p>Prayers touch on various aspects of the Christian life, without being too 'preachy'</p>	<p>Our prayers will always cover a number of areas of concern for Christians, like spiritual growth (repentance and a loving approach to others), perseverance and trust in God. We will not try to give people a 'mini sermon', and will get to the point</p>
<p>You will find that the prayer is encouraging, because it includes and involves you and the people around you</p>	<p>We will pray for the good of those who join with us in prayer, especially that we grow as followers of Jesus in love and fellowship with each other</p>
<p>You will hear someone praying seriously but naturally, not using a super-spiritual voice, or using out-dated pious language</p>	<p>We will seek to 'be ourselves' in the way that we deliver our prayers, using a natural tone of voice and understandable words. "Thee, thou, thy, beseech, unto" are not words that most people use.</p>

<p>You will hear someone pray about global, national and local issues, especially for God's people around the world</p> <p>Prayers will be kept to the point and won't try to cover off ALL possible issues - they won't go longer than a few minutes</p>	<p>As Christians, we are not in the business of just taking care of ourselves - our prayers will extend beyond just praying for sick people. We desire that all people would repent and turn to God. As fellow human beings we empathise with and pray for people in difficult circumstances all around the world</p> <p>Most people can't keep focused on a prayer any longer than 3 or 4 minutes. We will keep our prayers to the point - long enough to have content, short enough for everyone to 'stick with it'</p>
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NOTES FOR PUBLIC PRAYER LEADERS

- public prayer uses contemporary language that is delivered in a serious but natural way, avoiding unnatural tone of voice or out-dated language
- when we pray, we do it in such a way that the congregation can pray WITH us, using inclusive language like "please help **us**," "**we** thank you". Similarly, remember you are talking TO God rather than ABOUT God. Eg Don't say "We pray that GOD'S Kingdom will..." - rather, "We pray that YOUR Kingdom will."
- Pray in a way that is true to the Bible and that focuses on the Gospel.
- Prayers should include an element of praise to God, where we recognize his majesty and mercy; we should also include some broader global and national concerns along with our own local ones. Don't just "pray the sick list."
- Humbly and confidently bring our requests before God, desiring, like Jesus, that ultimately "not our will, but his will be done"
- In order that people might join with us in prayer and be encouraged by doing so, please prepare the prayer beforehand, giving adequate time of reflection and consideration so that it will be clear, organized, and not too long. Three to five minutes is a good length.

BIBLE TEACHING	
GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>You will notice the fact that the “bible talk” is given high priority in the church meeting, and that the people around you are keen to listen.</p>	<p>Because we are a bible-centred community, the teaching of God’s word is central to our meeting. This will be reflected in our attention, manner and focus.</p>
<p>You will find that the bible is taught clearly, in words and concepts you can relate to and understand. Even if it’s your first time at church, you’ll understand what’s said.</p>	<p>Theological language and complex terms will always be defined in plain language, though not in a way that’s condescending. We will never expect that people “should know” what the bible says.</p>
<p>You will find that the structure of the talk is easy to follow, and helps you understand and apply the bible passage we’re looking at.</p>	<p>Even complex passages will be taught simply and clearly, not by glossing over important details, but by seeking to clearly understand the text and its implications.</p>
<p>No matter what part of the Bible we’re looking at, you will always hear something about Jesus.</p>	<p>Because we are followers of Jesus, and all scripture “makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3), every part of the bible will be taught with Jesus as the focal point, with a view to encouraging saving faith in Jesus, and faithful service of Jesus.</p>
<p>You will eventually realize that the fact that the bible teaching is clear, doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s shallow.</p>	<p>Simple communication should be backed up with deep preparation and careful selection of the ideas and applications that are crucial. Clearer understanding will always lead to deeper understanding.</p>
<p>You will notice that the things that are taught from the bible are reflected in the life of the bible teacher, and other members of the church family.</p>	<p>Because the bible teacher is committed to applying the bible first to himself, there will be evident signs of progress towards obedience.</p>
<p>You will notice that the Bible talk doesn’t go for so long that you get bored.</p>	<p>The bible teacher will respect the value of the time others give to listening, and the difficulty of paying attention to a prolonged message. The talk will be well disciplined and structured, and ideally no longer than 23 minutes.</p>

You will eventually realize that others who are listening may have gained more insight into the passage by being part of a Growth Group.

The bible teacher will recognize that not everything can be said in the short talk, and that useful supporting material and other detail is best taught through small group studies.

NOTES FOR BIBLE TEACHERS

- Be Christ Centred. Our task is to lead people to life in Christ, rather than life under law. Make sure you have a firm grasp of the principles of Biblical Theology as explained in Graeme Goldsworthy's book "*Gospel and Kingdom*".
- Be clear. Work hard at communication skills. Be trained in the MPC Clear Communication Workshop.
- Preparation is absolutely crucial. The text must be understood in detail; the logic of the text should drive the logic of the talk. The "big idea" behind the passage should be mastered before the next stage of preparation begins. Leaving out tangential ideas is just as important as leaving in the key ideas. Comprehensively prepare what you're going to say, and work from full notes, in plain, conversational language.
- Be gracious. Our theology of grace should be reflected in the language and attitude of our bible teaching. Even hard words should be delivered sensitively, with awareness of the implications for the people who hear you.
- Be listener sensitive. Realise that listening is hard work. Be focused and as brief as possible.

LEADING THE MEETING	
GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>The person leading the meeting is friendly, engaging and captures my interest in what he has to say. He seems to be normal.</p>	<p>We will be genuinely warm and friendly in the way the meeting is led. We will communicate with a natural voice and eye contact, in a way that conveys enthusiasm and confidence</p>
<p>The start of the meeting is unhurried because people are enjoying their time chatting together. But when the meeting begins, the tone is crisp and energetic.</p>	<p>We will encourage mixing and chatting in the first five minutes after the formal starting time. We will ensure that the meeting starts no more than 7 minutes after the advertised start time.</p>
<p>The person leading is professional in his approach, but is not too serious about himself. Sometimes, there is well placed humour.</p>	<p>We are serious about the task of leading our church service, but will (at times) convey a light-heartedness that springs from the joy of being together as followers of Jesus. Joy is reflected in "enjoyment" of our time together.</p>
<p>The person leading the meeting seems to know what he is talking about – he speaks clearly and authoritatively, knows what to say and when. He explains what's happening and why, and introduces what's happening next so I know what to do.</p>	<p>We will prepare adequately, familiarizing ourselves with the order of service, the notices and other relevant information. We make sure we speak clearly at a good pace, and that the PA volume is set correctly before we start.</p>
<p>Because I feel as if I know just as much about what's happening as everybody else, I sense my presence is valued.</p>	<p>We will be alert to the presence of newcomers, and provide additional cues and explanations where necessary so that they understand everything that is said.</p>

NOTES FOR MEETING LEADERS

- A knowledge of the order of service is essential. Making mention of the various stages of the service will help newcomers to feel more in touch with what's happening
- Observation of the congregation is essential. You will do things differently if there are newcomers, or recent additions.

- Be aware of “in-group” knowledge and references. Explain who people are, and why they are being referred to if there are visitors or relative newcomers. Don’t take anything as a “given”.
- Watch the time. Be alert to the appropriate starting time.
- Begin the meeting with warmth and energy. Make sure you have peoples’ attention. Opening comments should be brief, or may be delegated to a song leader.
- Check with the PA operator before you begin – make sure the microphone is on when you start.
- Reflect your commitment to a professional approach in the way you dress. A clean, professional appearance (smart casual) – long pants and a nice shirt (tie optional) is perhaps the most effective and inoffensive. Overdressing may give unhelpful signals. Under-dressing could potentially reflect that we are blasé and uncaring