

Discovering Our Church Family

Overview

This study provides an opportunity to learn about the Holgate Street Church of Christ. It is designed for individuals who are interested in becoming members of the congregation. It includes a six-lesson curriculum with a lot of flexibility for you to have your questions addressed.

Section 1 – Introduction; A Brief History of Holgate; Who are Churches of Christ?

Section 2 – An Overview of the Gospel and Other Basic Beliefs

Section 3 – Holgate’s Vision, Mission and Core Values

Section 4 – Leaders and Ministries of Holgate

Section 5 – Benefits and Expectations of Membership

Section 6 – Your Next Steps

Appendix – An Overview of Our Beliefs

Class 1 – Introduction

A. Introduction

The Holgate Street Church of Christ is an independent non-denominational body of believers in Jesus Christ.

B. A Brief History of Holgate Street Church of Christ

The Holgate Street Church of Christ had its beginnings in the late 1960s as discussions began of a merger between two smaller congregations in Central Seattle. The merger occurred and a new building was built and occupied in 1971 on the corner of South Holgate Street and what is now Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The church has been an active and stable element in the community over the years and continues to seek to be *“a healthy church that’s making a difference.”*

C. Who are Churches of Christ?

Churches of Christ are independent worldwide congregations that exist without a denominational structure. There is much diversity of thought and practice among the churches, as in all religious groups. However, these bodies of believers are tied together by our common belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and our view of the authority of the Bible.

We identify with the early church of the first century founded by Jesus, Himself. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “...upon this rock I will build my church...” The church began in the city of Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast 50 days after the Passover). On that day there were about 3,000 people who were baptized into Christ in response to the preaching of the Apostle Peter (See Acts 2:41).

The church continued to grow in numbers. “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Persecution of the early church resulted in the church expanding beyond Jerusalem. “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria” Acts 8:1). The Apostle Paul was a major influence in expanding the church beyond Jerusalem. God’s purpose for him was expressed to Ananias, who communicated God’s message to Paul. “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Jesus, in his prayer recorded in John 17:20-21, referred to those who would believe in him through the message of the apostles. He said, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Our belief in Jesus Christ is the result of the teaching of the early apostles.

We seek to base our doctrine and practice on the Bible alone, and seek to be New Testament congregations as originally established by the authority of Christ. Regarding our recent history, Churches of Christ in the United States were recognized as a distinct movement by the U.S. Religious Census of 1906. Prior to that, we had been reported in the religious census as part of the movement that had its roots in the several independent movements that occurred through the leadership of people such as Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, and Barton W. Stone, all of whom were first associated with the Presbyterian Church. They were active in American frontier settlements and cities. Those leaders had declared their independence from the denominations, seeking a fresh start to restore the New Testament church and abandoning human creeds. Historically, their collective activities gave rise to what is referred to as the Restoration Movement, an effort to “restore” the teachings and practices of the New Testament to the contemporary church.

Because Churches of Christ have no central governing authority, identifying numbers of members and congregations is a bit challenging. It has been estimated that there are over 5 million members of Churches of Christ worldwide in over 40,000 congregations of believers.

Two key values have historically given Churches of Christ their distinctiveness. The first is the belief that the New Testament should be the authoritative basis for the life and practice of the church today. The second is that all who call on the name of the Lord should be united and that there should be no divisions among believers.

There are several practices of many congregations of Churches of Christ that are observed by some to be distinctive.

Church Leadership. The local churches are led by elders, preachers and deacons. The concept of the priesthood of all believers is practiced. Therefore, no distinction is made between clergy and laity.

Worship Assemblies. Worship on the Lord's Day is simple and without a lot of fanfare. It is participative and includes a weekly celebration of the Lords' Supper and congregational singing. Preaching of the Word is emphasized.

Baptism of Believers by Immersion. Churches of Christ immerse individuals who have decided to follow Jesus and who have confessed their faith in him. It is believed that this immersion in water symbolizes and results in the forgiveness of sins and therefore is essential to one's salvation. Baptism will be discussed in more details later in this document.

Class 2 – An Overview of the Gospel and Other Basic Beliefs

A. The Core of the Gospel (Good News)

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is considered to be the core of the good news.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 confirms this core truth.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

The death of Jesus was an expression of God's love. John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The death of Jesus was necessary as a payment for our sins.

Romans 3:21-26

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in ^[b] Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:6-8

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

B. The Response to the Gospel

The Bible describes one's response to Jesus Christ and to the gospel. Overall, one can reject him or accept him.

John 1:10-13

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Overall, the accepting response includes faith, repentance, confession and baptism.

Faith - Believing in and trusting in God; who he is and what he has done.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Mark 16:15-16 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Repentance – A decision to change your mind about how you are living and choosing to follow Christ.

Mark 1:15 *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Luke 15:7 *I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Confession of Christ – Acknowledging your belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Matthew 16:13-16 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

John 4:39-42 *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.*

⁴² They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Acts 8:37 *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized? And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.”*

Romans 10:8-13 *But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Baptism – An immersion in water that marks one’s commitment to Christ

Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15-16 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 6:1-7 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will*

certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Galatians 3:26-27 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Class 3 – Holgate’s Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision: The Holgate Street Church seeks to be a healthy church that is making a difference.

A healthy church is one with empowering leadership, passionate spirituality, need-centered evangelism, holistic small groups, effective structures, inspiring worship, gift-oriented ministry and loving relationships. We seek to make a difference in the lives of our members, our community and in the lives of people throughout the world. We seek to be a multicultural, multigenerational church expressing the goodness of God’s Kingdom and a church that transforms lives and communities.

Our Mission: Our calling to God’s work is to share the Word of God, show the Word, teach the Word and serve the World.

Our Values: The values that continue to identify Holgate are:

- Love
- Family
- Children
- Intergenerational Relationships
- Missions
- Diversity

Class 4 – Leaders and Ministries of Holgate

Head of the Church – Jesus Christ serves as the Head of the church

Elders - Men who are chosen by the church and appointed by the preacher/minister serve as shepherds (also referred to as elders or bishops) of the congregation.

Preacher/Minister - Consists of one person who preaches, teachers and who works together with the elders to lead the church.

Deacons – Men who are formally appointed and work as special servants of the church

Ministries and Ministry Leaders – Volunteers who lead and coordinate various ministries

Class 5 - Benefits and Expectations of Membership

A. Benefits of Being a Member of Holgate

There are a number of practical benefits of being a member of Holgate. Two of them include being a part of a loving community and being in an environment in which you can worship, serve and grow.

1. A loving community
2. An environment in which to worship and serve and grow

B. Expectations as a Member of Holgate

1. Supporting Our Vision, Mission, and Values
2. Three Key Commitments

Being a part of Holgate means living by three key commitments.

a. Your Commitment to God

The Christian life involves agreeing to love, obey, follow and know God. We put Him first in our lives and seek to live for His glory.

- 1) Fellowshiping with God regularly through prayer and the reading of the Word
- 2) Worshiping God personally and with the church community

b. Your Commitment to Your Own Spiritual Growth

As Christians who are seeking to follow Christ, we are expected to grow and mature. Our commitment to our own spiritual growth means that we are seeking to develop in three areas.

- 1) In our knowledge and understanding of the Bible (as reflected in our understanding of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, Salvation, the Church and Last Things.)
- 2) In our character (as reflected by the fruit of the Spirit –love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control).
- 3) In our personal behavior and actions. We are to cooperate with God in his plan to mold us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. With this goal in mind, we will seek to have our lives consisting of regular times of prayer and Bible reading, personal

and community worship, developing close relationships with other Christians, being active in at least one ministry of the church, sharing Christ with others and working with new Christians to develop their faith.

c. Your Commitment to the Church Community

Becoming a part of Holgate means being committed to a body of believers. Christians in the early church were, “devoted to the fellowship” (Acts 2:42). That is, they were committed to others who had made the same spiritual decision to follow Jesus Christ. As a committed community, we join together in worship, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, giving and service.

Class 6 – Your Next Steps

The next steps in becoming a member of Holgate depends on where you are in your spiritual progress. For some, the next step may be confessing Jesus as Lord and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins. For others, your next step may simply be reaffirming your faith in Christ and choosing to formally identify with the church.

Once you have made your final decision, and the elders and minister affirm your membership, you will be introduced as a new member of Holgate. As a first step, we would like for you to complete the self-study course entitled, “Welcome to Our Church Family.” This study will review in detail, the three key commitments: Commitment to God, Commitment to your spiritual growth and Commitment to the Church Community.

Thank you, again, for your interest in our fellowship.

Jimmy Hurd, Minister

APPENDIX - AN OVERVIEW OF OUR BELIEFS

GOD (Theology) The eternal, self-existent, personal Spirit who in holy love, creates, sustains and orders all. As our perfect heavenly Father, he loves us, guides us, protects us and comforts us. He is all powerful, all knowing and present everywhere at the same time. Gen. 1:1 Psalm 147:5 Psalm 90:2 Lev. 11:44 Matt. 5:48 John 3:16 John 4:23-24 1 John 4:7-8

JESUS CHRIST (Christology) The eternal, divine, uniquely born Son of God, who was with God in the beginning, became a man, died for the sins of the world, was raised from the dead and is now ruling His kingdom at the right hand of the Father. John 1:1-14 Phil. 2:5-11 Luke 1:26-37 John 8:24 1 Cor. 15:3-4 1 Peter 3:18 Col. 2:9

HOLY SPIRIT (Pneumatology) The personal eternal Spirit of God who is active in the world and who indwells, fills and strengthens the believer. Heb. 9:14 1 Cor. 2:10-11 Acts 5:3-4 Rom. 8:9-14 1 Cor. 6:19 Eph. 3:16 Eph. 5:18-20

HOLY SCRIPTURE – THE BIBLE (Bibliology) The complete written, inspired revelation of God. The sacred Scriptures containing God's truths that govern the universe, the church and the life of the believer. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 2 Pet. 1:20-21 John 16:12-15 1 Thess. 2:13 John 17:17 Psalm 19:7-11 Luke 24:44-45

SALVATION (Soteriology) The past, present and future state of being rescued from the penalty, power and presence of sin by a merciful God of grace. The state of every believer who has responded to the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus by faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Matt. 1:21 Eph. 2:5-8 Titus 3:3-8 John 8:24 Rom. 10:9-10 Acts 2:37-38 Mark 16:15-16

THE CHURCH (Ecclesiology) The one body of Christ, established by Jesus, made up of believers in Him, called out of the world by God, unto Himself to be the family He loves, the kingdom He rules and the temple in which He dwells. Daniel 2:44 Matt. 16:18 Col. 1:18 Eph. 2:21 Eph. 5:23 Col. 1:13 1 Peter 2:9

LAST THINGS (Eschatology) In the near future, on an unknown day, Jesus will come again in glory with His holy angels. Every eye will see Him. Every person will give account to Him. He will reward the righteous with everlasting life with God in heaven and will punish the wicked with everlasting condemnation in hell. Acts 1:9-11 Rev. 1:7 Heb. 9:27 Rom. 2:5-11 Matt. 25:31-46 1 Thess. 4:13-18

Rev. 19:1-22:21