

RBCC Questions

How should someone behave in church?

There are different ways to act at different times during church. When people arrive, some talk to one another, and others sit in silence. Either is okay. When worship begins, there is a specific time to share announcements, joys and concerns, and life updates with the congregation. The rest of the service includes times to speak and sing, listen and be silent, stand and sit. Often the leader gives instructions, but the overall flow of worship is learned by practicing, so don't be discouraged if everything doesn't make sense at first.

Some worship services are happy or funny and some are somber or sad. This depends on the scripture, music and theme for that day. It's okay to experience many feelings in worship and to express them. It's also okay to leave if you'd like to have some privacy - or if you need to use the restroom.

Sometimes there are special services with different-than-usual activities. For example on Maundy Thursday we have a soup supper in the sanctuary. On animal blessing Sunday people are invited to bring their pets to church. Several times a year we have interactive activities during worship too. We try to give instructions about the special days, but if the instructions aren't clear or you have a question, it's okay to ask!

What does "Come as you are, grow as you serve" mean?

Come as you are means that you can bring your whole self to worship. We believe that faith and life are not separate, so questions, doubts, fears, joys are all welcome. It also means you can dress in a way that you are comfortable, and you can share your personality traits and mannerisms even when they are different from the way other people express themselves. If you have a question about being yourself, it's okay to ask.

Grow as you serve means that we grow by helping our church and our community. Church is about more than just coming and watching; it involves participating and sharing. The sharing can be our time, our ideas, our volunteering. This may mean trying something you've never done before. It may mean finding something you really like to do and doing it regularly, like cleaning or bringing snacks or providing music. It may mean joining a team (committee) and helping with the tasks of that ministry.

What kind of relationship can you have with the pastor?

We are a small church, so our pastor knows everyone in the congregation. She enjoys meeting with people to get to know them when they first start coming, and then is available for conversation and ongoing support for people within the congregation and also those outside of the congregation.

Some people share their questions about faith/Bible or life challenges with the pastor as someone who can listen and provide support. Some look to our pastor as a mentor or share social time as a friend. Others ask the pastor for help in times of need, during an illness, hospital stay, a financial crisis, etc. The pastor sometimes reaches out to check on people or ask if they need support or prayer, but often it's up to the congregation members to ask for support. Don't worry that you are bothering the pastor by asking questions or reaching out. Pastor Sarah enjoys responding to people and spending time with all kinds of people.

What can someone talk to the pastor about?

Anything! Spirituality touches all parts of our lives, so a pastor can be a caring conversation partner on a wide variety of topics: fear and grief, hopes and dreams, life transitions and questions, family challenges, mental and emotional health concerns, sexuality, gender, social and political issues and so on.

Can people ask questions at church?

Yes! Questions are an important part of faith and are welcomed at RBCC. Our tradition, the Disciples of Christ, does not make rules about what you have to believe or not believe. In our church people believe different things about God, the Bible, etc. It's okay to disagree with others - including the pastor.

When can I ask questions?

The fellowship hour after worship is a good time for questions. The pastor and elders are good people to ask about spiritual questions. The pastor and church board members are good people to ask about questions related to how the church works. If you have big questions that might need a longer conversation you can set up an appointment. But you can also talk about your questions with anyone. Many (but not all) members of the congregation would respond well if asked to talk about church and faith.

What does the church leadership do?

The **Church Board** cares for the overall ministry of the church, the big picture of church as an organization. They also are responsible for legal matters that affect our church, and they sign off on big financial decisions.

The **Elders** are the "spiritual care team" of our congregation and are people who have strong grounding in their own faith. They may or may not be "older" in age. When the pastor is away, they are on call in her place, but anyone can reach out to them with questions or to ask for care at any time. They also give the "Joy of Giving" message in worship and assist and pray at the communion table.

The **Deacons** provide a "ministry of service" by preparing communion every Sunday and passing the offering baskets.

We also have **ministry teams** that plan for Worship, Worship & Wonder (children's ministry), Social Justice & Hospitality, Property and Finance. Each of these teams meets with varying frequency throughout the year and plans and carries out activities of the church.

What is the expectation for giving to the church?

There is no set expectation for financial giving. In scripture, a "tithe" is 10%, so some people use that as a guideline for what they give to the church, but there are many other ways of giving. Some people try to give 10% across multiple organizations with a portion of that giving coming to church. Others do not give that much either because they choose not to or because their financial situation does not allow it.

In a small church like ours, we hope that everyone will give in some way. Often we talk about giving of "time, talent and treasure." Serving on a team or helping with other church tasks is also giving, and there are ways for people of every ability and life situation to contribute to the community in some way.

If something that is said in church doesn't apply to me, what does that mean?

We are a diverse congregation, and so sometimes the pastor or others make a statement that doesn't include everyone. For example, we might talk about white privilege in a way that doesn't apply to the people of color among us. Or we might talk about economic privilege in a way that doesn't include those who have lower incomes. That is true of ability, educational level, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, etc. We all are part of many identity groups, and we have diverse beliefs and backgrounds. A particular message may not connect with your personhood or life situation, and if that happens, think about how it may be relevant someone else, and remember, the reverse may be true with another message.

How do I begin to serve the church in some way?

All of our teams (committees) welcome new members. You can start by talking to the team leader(s), asking them for more information about what the team does and asking about coming to the next meeting. The meetings are on the calendar in the bulletin and the email newsletter and are sometimes announced in church as well.

There are additional steps for volunteering with our children, including being trained in our Worship & Wonder program and having a background check. The pastor or the Worship & Wonder coordinator can help you start that process.

We have a book study group and an anti-racism working group that meet regularly and also welcome new people to join in the same way: talking to the leaders and watching the church calendar for the next meeting date so you can come.

Team leaders and church board members, elders and deacons are chosen by a nominating committee. These are usually people who have been involved at the church a year or more.

Other ways to serve include providing music, managing technology and sound on Sundays, greeting people on Sundays, providing snacks after worship, watering plants and cleaning during the week. There are sign-up sheets and/or point people to coordinate these efforts. If you're not sure who the leaders are or what you might be interested in, talking to the pastor is a good next step. She can help match your interests and abilities with some way to help.