

top ten reasons why church shouldn't be what you thought church was

1. Church should be a place you love to go *for the community, warmth and friendship* you find there, not because you're "supposed to go to church."
2. Church should be a place where women and gay people -- *including* their partners and children -- are valued as members and leaders, not just tolerated.
3. Church should be a place where you can explore and discuss values for living, not where you will be told what to do or not do.
4. Church should be a place where the Bible is valued as a collection of great spiritual literature reflecting the Jewish and Christian communities' search for the meaning of God through the ages, not trivialized as an "owner's manual" or "rule book."
5. Church should be a place where members understand that Jesus came to be the human image and model of God's love *to be followed*, not to be packaged as an idol for worshiping in exchange for financial success or getting into heaven.
6. Church should be a place where people know that Jesus said, "Love God and love your neighbor -- that's the whole law." And where people know that any interpretation of the Bible that is in conflict with that is a *misinterpretation*.
7. Church should be a place where those who have struggled with bigotry, addiction, divorce, illness, abuse, loss or grief are valued for the wisdom that can come from these experiences.
8. Church should be a place where members recognize and respect the followers of the other great religious traditions, because all these traditions acknowledge that God is about truth, compassion, justice, forgiveness and peace.
9. Church is a place where people know that the Old Testament is epitomized in the words of the Prophet Micah: "God has told you what he wants: act justly, love kindness, walk humbly with God."
10. And that the New Testament is summed up in the words of the First Epistle of John: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them."

If you've never experienced this kind of church, then you haven't experienced Christianity as we understand it. And you haven't experienced the benefits of belonging to a church community of people who believe in the essential goodness of the world and the people in it, and the overriding importance of simple kindness as the guiding principal for living. So don't judge religion only by your negative experiences or by what you see in the media. There are church communities where you can find a loving home. St. John's-Grace Episcopal Church in Buffalo, New York, is one such place. Visit our web site at www.stjohnsgrace.com, or call 885-1112. Or try our Sunday morning services at 8:30 (spoken) and 10:30 (with music), or service at 9:30 on Thursday mornings. We look forward to seeing you!