

We of the Peninsula church on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia, have been working at radical restoration and while we have not completed the task – and don't believe that it will ever be totally completed – our congregational meetings do not resemble anything like the “worship services” of our Church of Christ heritage.

We gather together to break bread understanding that the term refers to a meal and not the Lord's Snack, as I call it. That is the reason for our gathering.

Being a small congregation – and I believe most of the congregations, or house churches, of the first century were relatively small groups – we sit around tables set up in a square with everyone looking at each other. Currently this is in the recreation room next to the swimming pool in one of our member's back yard. We typically start out with some singing and talking about what has been happening in our lives. And everyone participates – male, female, members, visitors, young and old. Songs are not all pre-selected. Often someone will share a discovery in scripture with the group or another will start a discussion which the group will follow for the rest of the evening.

At some point – sometimes early in the evening, at other times later – we give thanks for the food. Frequently during our preceding conversation we raise/include comments about the Lord's Supper, why we are there, why it is so important, what makes it more than just a meal, the significance, etc. Sometimes someone will share a related thought, a scripture. Sometimes we will have more than one prayer of thanks for the meal, the bread, the drink, or a combination of all of the above.

We then serve ourselves – although our younger folk, who number about two thirds of the congregation, will either allow the older folk to go first or will actually get food for those who are not able – and return to the table.

The conversation is usually mixed. A lot of everyday chatter goes on, but there is also meaningful discussion. Sometime this is between two, three or four people, sometimes the entire group is involved, sometimes we have three or four such discussions going on simultaneously. While it can sometimes get noisy, it is not disorderly. And since there is a lot of movement of people, the very young move around, not restricted to sitting in one spot in silence for hours on end.

Intensive Bible study is conducted in homes during the week. Our Sunday gatherings are to encourage and spur one another on to love and good works. Our midweek Bible studies are for delving into the deeper things of the Word and are on the level of the participants. Every now and then I will actually deliver a more formal lesson on a Sunday, but I resist such urges as much as possible!

Since we number around 40 at the moment, we are actually looking at breaking our group up into two or three smaller groups, since one large group becomes difficult to house and real intimate fellowship is sometimes lost. And therein, I believe, lies the real power of the Lord's Supper – small, intimate groups of people sitting around a table being motivated by each other and lead by the Spirit.

I must say that radical restoration is a lot harder than it sounds.

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