

### **Question**

I was raised and confirmed in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. My husband was raised in the Catholic Church, but is now confirmed as a Lutheran as well. We are currently looking to find a new church home, as we both felt church politics were overwhelming at our last church, and the desire that the Missouri Synod seems to have to do contemporary services rather than the traditional. My husband and I both believe that we are to fit ourselves to God, not Him to us, and I have been charged with finding us a new church home. I have always been under the impression that the WELS churches kept to traditional services and follow the Bible to its word, without twisting verses. I suppose my question then is: What is your order of service on a typical Sunday morning? What is expected attire of congregants, and are children welcomed or preferred to be in the nursery? My children are 3, 4, and 11, what sort of opportunities are offered for them? Finally, how do I transfer into the WELS church family? Would my husband and I have to take confirmation again? Thank you for your time.

### **Answer**

We pray for the Lord's blessings on your search for a church home, and we wish to commend you for taking your church membership so seriously. We hope that your question and your concern to have a church that teaches and follows God's Word purely will be an example to all who read this.

You are certainly right that we are to fit ourselves to God and not him to us. We are the ones that are sinful, the Lord God is completely holy and without sin. What an amazing message God has for us in his Word, that he has cleansed us of our sin through the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ! Jesus has "fit" us to God, for he has earned forgiveness for all our sin.

We can't comment on church politics at your former church, since we know no details about the situation there. We can say that church should not be a power struggle between factions and that church should be about sharing the truths of God's Word and his Sacraments and about thanking the Lord with our time and praise and offerings. The Lord God wants unity and love to be the primary forces in his church. It is a very sad result of the work of our own sin and Satan himself when disunity and quarrelling occur.

It is also hard for us to comment on the "worship wars" that have been raging through many Christian churches during the last twenty years or so, i.e., traditional vs. contemporary worship, again because we don't know the details in your specific situation. As far as the WELS is concerned, I believe you would find both traditional and contemporary services if you looked around enough (although what people define as "traditional" and "contemporary" varies to a great degree, so I suppose it would be possible that someone could disagree). For anyone who is having doubts about what constitutes a God-pleasing worship service, our advice would be to study the principles of worship that the Lord gives to us in his holy Word.

In general we do follow a liturgy here at Faith in Sussex. Usually we follow "the Service of the Word" or "the Service of Word and Sacrament" in our hymnal, although we have

tried to incorporate variety within these liturgies, and at times our pastors write up their own “liturgies” for special occasions, and occasionally we use the liturgies in our hymnal called “Morning Praise” and “Evening Vespers,” too. I have a feeling from what you write that you would find our worship services much more traditional than you have experienced at your former church, but the way to find out for yourself would be to come and see if you would like to (Thursday, 7:00 pm, Saturday, 5:30 pm, Sunday, 8:00 or 10:30 am). We also on occasion have had a “contemporary” worship service here at Faith, contemporary in the sense that a more modern musical style and instruments were used, but those services were still liturgical, at least in the sense that the main elements of Christian worship were still all a part of the service.

We are glad to hear that the WELS has earned a good reputation with you as far as teaching and following God’s Word purely, without twisting his words in the Bible. We do believe and teach that this is what God demands of us and all people, that we guard his pure Word, that we teach no more and no less than what he says, that no one has the right to twist or distort his words in the Bible, and that when we share his Word with others, we do so without compromise. It remains our prayer that the Lord bless our efforts to be faithful with the great treasure he has given us in the teachings of the Bible.

As far as clothing is concerned at our worship services, we have not made any rules about it at our church. At the same time, we have had very little problem with it. In general our members have noticed that clothing styles have become much less formal over the last 50 years. The only principle the New Testament gives to us about clothing in the worship service is that it be modest, decent, and proper (1 Timothy 2:9). If you visit our worship service, I think you would see a great variety of clothing styles, and that each age group has its own idea of what is proper for a worship service. The Lord is much more concerned about the hearts of his people than about the style of clothing we wear when we come to him.

Children are certainly welcome in our worship services. We do not have a nursery but encourage parents to bring their children to worship. We believe it is good training for children to worship with their parents and that they often get much more out of the worship service than their parents might imagine. We encourage parents to talk about the worship service with their children after church and help them to learn what was being taught (and you might be surprised, sometimes the children help their parents to learn what was taught, too). We recognize that children whose attention spans are not real long yet may have trouble sitting for an hour in church, and we do have a family room where parents can take their children if they get out of hand, where there is a TV monitor and a speaker that will still bring in the sound from church. But we hope that parents can train their children, with a combination of patience and firmness, to sit in church and worship as a family. We are confident that the Lord’s blessings will come to families through their efforts in this respect.

In addition to the worship services, we offer Sunday School for children from 9:15 to 10:15 on Sunday mornings (and parents are welcome during that hour to come to adult Bible class). We have a pre-school here at Faith for 3 and 4-year-olds, 9-11:30 am

Monday-Friday during the school year (3-year-olds come Tuesday's and Thursday's, and 4-year-olds come Monday's, Wednesday's, and Friday's). You don't have to be a member of our church to enroll kids in our pre-school. Our church shares in the operating costs of St. John's Lutheran School in Lannon, so that full-time grade school is available to our members' children as well. We also support two Lutheran high schools, one in Milwaukee and one in Jackson, where many of our teenagers attend.

To become a member of our church, you would need to ask for a release from your former church (if you haven't done so already). If you had a good instruction class, we would not require you to take confirmation classes again. But we would want you to know about the differences in doctrine between the WELS and the Missouri Synod, so that you could truly feel at home at our church if you joined here.

Again, the Lord's richest blessings to you as you search for a church home. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).