



The Deed of Trust in the *Church Manual* (see p. 131) provides that the Board of Directors should not allow the church building (referring specifically to The Mother Church) "to be used for any other purpose than for the ordinary and usual uses of a church." In thinking about this requirement, don't weddings and memorial services fall under "the ordinary and usual uses of a church"?

The *Manual* (see p. 74) also provides that "each branch church shall be distinctly democratic." So what is right for one congregation may not be for another. The important thing is that these questions are approached with a deep sense of love and Christian fellowship for one another.

1. **Brad Thurber** - 5/9/2011

I am absolutely delighted with this week's question!! I am glad to see that there has been such a "sea change" in Christian Science thinking on this subject. The time was, not so long ago, that one never heard of weddings or memorial services being held in CS branch churches. In fact, I remember back in the late 1990's, when my niece was married, how disappointed she was that she "could not" be married in her local branch church (Freehold, NJ) which she had attended for Sunday School. It is not hard to imagine how unwelcoming and cold this must have seemed to her. As it turned out, she had a lovely wedding service down the street in the Reformed Church.

I know that in recent years several CS branches have advertised that their churches are open for weddings. Two which come immediately to mind are First Church Berkley, CA and First Church Louisville, KY. I believe that one of the branches in either Arizona or New Mexico also has had weddings in their edifice. There may be others, but these are the only ones I know of for sure.

I also know that several branch churches have had memorial services. My sister's branch in Freehold, NJ had a memorial service for one of the long time CS workers. From what I have heard, it was a beautiful service. How much warmer and comforting to have the memorial in the church rather than at a funeral home.

Over the years, there developed an austere and stiff sense of what was and was not permitted in CS churches (the CS "culture", so to speak). I don't quite understand where this came from or exactly what it was based on, but it seemed to me to engender a very unfriendly and off-putting feeling, especially to those outside of the CS movement.

Fortunately, as I said previously, this seems to be slowly changing. Many churches are now, for example, having fellowship gatherings (with refreshments) after the Sunday service. One such branch which comes to mind is the CS Society in San Juan Capistrano, CA. At the bottom of their Sunday church service bulletin, there is an invitation to gather on the patio for fellowship and refreshments. Even the Mother Church, a few years ago, for a period of time, had what they called an "informal fellowship hour" following the Sunday service. It was held in the Sunday School building. It seemed like a great idea to me and I always wondered why they discontinued it. Probably because of objections of CS "purists".

All of the above will do much to make the CS church seem more approachable to the newcomer. Anything which will further this goal is to be applauded.

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2. **Linda Terry** - 5/10/2011

I completely agree with all comments above. Never have I been able to come to terms with why a wedding or memorial service for a beloved church member would be inappropriate.

A couple of years ago, we had to scramble to find a suitable location for holding loving tribute to a dear church member -- his family all lived out of town and, not being Christian Scientists, they were frankly surprised that our church was not an option for a memorial service.

I got married a year ago and would love to have had the option of holding our ceremony at my church. My husband's uncle, an ordained Baptist minister, performed the marriage and he would have been happy to do it there. (and ps. our church DOES have a center aisle!)

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3. **Les** - 5/10/2011

I've visited a couple of CS churches with refreshments after the service or public talks. I've even listened to the San Juan Capistrano services on the internet. As a non-Christian Scientist who likes the ideas from Christian Science and have been able to demonstrate healings from just reading *Science and Health*, I'm not attracted by these more social ways of expressing friendliness. I do NOT find the traditional Christian Science churches or purist offensive at all! I prefer the quietness and free thinking the purists allow over the gimmicks I see practiced by the non-purists. To each its own. So, I'm really grateful for the shift the Mother Church has made to more of a purist approach. Their Wednesday online testimony meetings are excellent. I hope it can serve as an example for even the gimmicky Christian Science churches to follow.

If a branch church sees Weddings and Memorial Services as a profitable source of income, they should engage in these activities if the membership consents. Churches and funeral homes make a lot of money from these sort of activities.

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4. **Alice** - 5/10/2011

I agree with Les, above, on this question. It seems as if we're losing our (how to say it?) high ideal when we think we want or need to go the wedding-and-funeral route in our churches. (We can call it a memorial service, but to me, it's still a funeral.) And I think if our churches were meant to have refreshments and a social time after the service, Mrs. Eddy might have gone this route, no? Isn't this why most, if not all, C.S. churches have no kitchen?

I was taught in by one of my SS teachers that ideally, each church member, right after every church service, should go home and quietly pray for and cherish the healing power of the Christ expressed during the service that day. I think that would do more to draw folks to our church than any social hour could possibly do.

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5. **Brad Thurber** - 5/10/2011

I am sorry that Les (#3) feels that those CS branches which choose to have weddings, memorial services, and fellowship hours following Sunday service are, at least in his mind, "gimmicky". I can't imagine anyone feeling this way. All that the churches are doing is to meet a very human need for love and compassion.

As the first article, at the beginning of this blog, pointed out, quoting Mrs. Eddy, "As the ages advance in spirituality, Christian Science will be seen to depart from the trend of other Christian denominations in no wise except by increase of spirituality" (Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896, p. 21). How much clearer could this possibly be! Whatever is the norm in Christian churches (i.e. weddings, memorial services, and fellowship hours) should not be prohibited in Christian Science branch churches. If the local branch feels that this is the way to go, then it should not be thought of as "gimmicky."

As I said in my first comment (#1), over the past one hundred years, a very peculiar CS church "culture" grew up which frowned on anything which was not directly connected with the Sunday or Wednesday service. Where this came from, I can't imagine. It, in large part, was responsible for Christian Science churches having the reputation (undeservedly) as cold and uncaring.

I remember, about four years ago, attending a summer Sunday service in First Church, Riverton, NJ. After the service, which used a translation of the Bible other than the King James, there was a fellowship hour with cheese, crackers, fruit cups, and juice. Most people very happily participated, but a few very disapprovingly hung back in the corners of the Sunday School room, where the service had been held. I could not imagine how anyone could possibly object to such an innocent and loving activity, but I guess that there is no accounting for some people's attitudes.

I also very strongly disagree with Alice (#4) when she says that the churches are "losing their high ideal" when they go the "wedding/memorial service route". Her Sunday School teacher, I am sure, had very good intentions in her advice for the church members to go home right after the church service and pray about the ideas expressed in the service, but I very much doubt that this would draw many more people to the church.

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#### 6. Les - 5/11/2011

Brad let's agree to disagree. That's the point I'm making. Stop saying someone is wrong or stodgy in their views! Everyone has a right to express themselves and you expressed yours in Brad #1. You know very well money is the basic reason that these branch churches have had to resort to profit making ventures like weddings and funerals. I've just heard of a branch church in my local area sponsoring a Church Alive event in which they will be serving food. Here's how they are handling the matter. The branch church decides OK we'll serve food and feed everyone that comes, instead of having a list of restaurants where people can eat. Their Board agrees on this. The committee or group planning the event then decides to send out requests for donations to help pay for all the food to all the branch churches in the area. Their Board agrees. Now each individual branch church has to scramble for funds to help pay for the food even they weren't asked from the start whether they wanted to take part in this. This is archaic and nonsense! Why not charge a fee to come to the Church Alive event and include the cost of the food in the fee! This is what others religious groups do. But not Christian Science. If you're going to entice people with the food gimmick at least make them pay for the food they eat! Even with the after church service get-togethers you've mentioned someone's paying for the food. Most churches still don't bring in enough money from the collection and the reading room sales to afford these sorts of things. I can't wait for the chicken dinners and bingo nights in Christian Science!

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#### 7. IBS - 5/11/2011

There was an interesting discussion about this topic on the TMCYouth forums a couple of years ago that people might be interested in checking out. The link is: <http://tmcyouth.com/forums/showthread.php?t=1966>.

Lee makes a good point that we ought to respect one another, and trust each church to come to their own inspired answers in terms of whether and when its appropriate for them to hold these sorts of events. That's the beauty of democratic branch churches--we don't have to all do the same thing. What's right for my church may not be right for yours, but so long as we're all reading the Manual carefully and praying our way through these questions, we're going to be better for it.

That said, I don't think it's fair to assume that churches are considering holding these events as solely a money making opportunity. I got married in a non-CS church somewhat recently, and have to say, I can't imagine it was a money making event for that church! The fees were minimal, and in that particular church, they did not charge their own parishioners if they wanted to get married in the church.

Instead, like the responses bring out so well, the opportunity to hold a wedding or memorial service in a CS church is more about being able to hold an event that is tremendously meaningful in a space that is personally meaningful, that feels like home, where you've felt supported and spiritually nurtured over the years.

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#### 8. A Friend to All - 5/11/2011

While I cannot speak for other branches, a need for "money" certainly was not the case when our branch church held a memorial service in our edifice for a member -- she had been our Second Reader.

In a rather sudden difficult time she had agreed to medical treatment. Church members visited her regularly (some daily) and lovingly at the hospital to assure her of their sincere love and so she wouldn't feel abandoned by her church family. Some read the Lesson to her at her request.

Her passing in the hospital was rather sudden, just as her family was seeking to make arrangements to have her taken to a CS nursing care facility.

At her passing, her family, friends, and fellow church members needed the comfort of her church home to share their love for her and to hear the Word of God from the Bible and Science and Health that assured us all of her eternal life -- the Word of God that she so dearly loved and strove to practice in her life the best she understood.

Like many others, I had always appreciated that CS churches didn't hold weddings or memorial services in their edifices -- until this circumstance arose. I was the first to recommend it. I saw it in a new light. I saw that in this case it was a blessing to all and not a hindrance whatsoever to the purity of CS.

Each branch has the privilege of praying these issues through. Maybe they don't have to have a hard and fast "policy" as Jim Corbett says in his response. In every instance, it can be the result of earnest prayer -- the desire to reflect divine Love and see the Comforter expressed to our highest sense.

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9. **ElGordo** - 5/11/2011

As a CSer considering which branch to join in a large metro area, I caution that branches wishing to fetishize "proper" use of an edifice are sending strong signals to prospective members. Same thing with branches prohibiting practices Eddy never mentions in the Manual as bars to membership.

This encrustation of "cultural CS" is choking the love and neighborliness most members naturally feel. Does anyone miss the white gloves ushers used to wear in most CS churches? Or the signs in my childhood branch lobby which directed "colored" visitors to sit in the balcony?

Bravo to branches willing to outvote the Purity Police -- if normal hospitality be considered "gimmicky" we're doomed. (The dinosaurs never saw it coming, either.)

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10. **Jayne** - 5/11/2011

I just went to a beautiful wedding in New Orleans...I believe it was 4th church in New Orleans. The groom, my new nephew in law, had grown up in that church and they hosted a beautiful affair that started with readings from the Science and Health and then the actual wedding ceremony was officiated by a local judge.

It was wonderful to have Christ Jesus' and Mary Baker Eddy's words ringing out from the walls for all the attendees to see and contemplate during the musical prelude. A wonderful demonstration and a glorious day for all.

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11. **Jodi B. in Virginia, USA** - 5/11/2011

My branch church lost a dear member last year. And the family of the member asked the Executive Board if they could hold a "Celebration of Life" service for her. The Board voted a joyful, "yes!" The celebration included hymns, readings, time for family and friends to share happy and joy-filled memories. The whole thing was so lovely and love-filled. Afterwards, everyone went to the SS to have food and to talk. This member was one of the most joyful ushers at our church for decades. And it was apparent that she had, once again, filled the church thanks to her love and joy. There were people who attended the service who have not been back in several decades themselves -- not since they graduated Sunday School. To see some - was, frankly, a miracle. Our member had brought them back in the door. It was, indeed, a celebration of life and there were so many healings.

The church did not charge the family for the event; but the family did give a contribution they felt was appropriate and financially sound for their own budget; it was certainly not a "money maker." The church membership was later approached (the whole thing happened very "suddenly") to approve this sort of thing for the future. The motion has been tabled to await further discussion. The prayer and thoughtfulness of the members is still going on this issue.

This is not a "you're wrong & I'm right" issue. This is definitely something that we all can find helps us grow spiritually. We're all growing and learning how to have Fellowship with each other, and love each other in conversation and in our hearts and learn to view others' viewpoints. Ultimately, the decision should be made based on how we can love God and love our neighbor the most. This is not showing how to cast a vote - this way or that way. Prayer's ultimate tests are: "Do I love God better for this asking" and "Do I love my neighbor more?" And we pray along these lines. Love, love, love. And let the conversations be had with love in our own branch churches. This may be right for some branches, and not right for other branches. That's why there aren't "rules" about this sort of thing in The Manual. And that's why we aren't "restricted" from so many things. That's also why there are so many branch churches, societies and informal groups!! There is something for every expression of Soul!

We all express Soul - Soul being another name for God. I love to think of Soul as creativity and different facets being expressed in different ways but always expressing God. All the churches also express God in different ways. And all should just grow in Love with conversations like these.

Respectfully,  
Jodi Crump Beatty

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12. **Marilyn** - 5/11/2011

I wholeheartedly agree that each and every branch church should seriously consider allowing proper marriages to be held in their buildings. I am a Justice of the Peace and, as such, I do not officiate weddings in any one place. I sometimes offer my home if the couple doesn't have a location. I've performed in farm fields, summer camps, at beach shores, back yards, top of Mt. Greylock in Mass., top of ski areas with everyone on skis, the local museum, town hall, etc., etc. When a couple once asked whether I knew of any church that would allow them to hold their wedding, I inquired of my own branch and they said, yes, I could marry them there. What a wonderful experience for me. I remember how sad it was long ago that I couldn't get married in my own church, but had to prevail upon a Universalist minister to use his church. As a CS Reader, I recently held a memorial service for a former CS member at a local funeral home, which had been arranged by the family because they never even thought it could have been held in our/her branch church. It is not for the money factor that I believe we should open our doors, but to give more exposure of our edifice to others and let them see a little of what we have to offer. I did not charge the couple for use of our building when I did perform a wedding there (although I easily could have) There are so very many "FREE" places a low income couple could choose that a fee may prohibit the event being held in a CS church that charged one. It should/could depend on the circumstances.

When the first question I am asked as a JP is "How much is your fee?" I know finances are tight. As for memorial services, they are usually held without a casket or urn, and could be anywhere. Fees could be set or waived depending upon the circumstances or direction of each specific Board. Funeral parlors, hotel rooms, etc. charge, so I should deem it proper that we could as well.

PS Just remembered - a one time permit to perform a marriage in Mass. may be obtained by anyone for any reason, which means a Reader or other member of our churches in Mass could apply for that opportunity in case there is no JP available or otherwise. This should then give CS couples the opportunity (if permitted by their branch church) to be married in their OWN church!!!

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13. **L.R.** - 5/11/2011

Think of this: What if, in a time of disaster, a Christian Science Church shared its building with another denomination whose church home had been destroyed. (Christian Science congregations have done this, and also have been recipients of shared buildings when their own church was destroyed.) What if that guest church needed to hold a wedding or memorial service and wanted it in their current host church? Would we say no? Would we consider our church "tainted?" I sure hope not. So why not similar services offered to fellow Christian Scientists?

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14. **James Early** - 5/11/2011

8 nailed it. The answer is to pray for the right answer. There is no formula. And that what has been happening to a large degree. Each church must PRAY about the individual situation and the needs of the particular people involved, the community, etc. What is the most loving, supportive thing to do? And one time prayer may lead a church to have a memorial service or marriage and another time prayer may lead to the opposite choice.

Are we following policy or prayer?

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15. **Wanda Hill** - 5/11/2011

What a wonderful discussion ! - haven't we all come a million miles to be able to freely talk about these things and exchange such diverse views .I do remember , years ago , that the use of "refreshments " were considered inappropriate in the church buildings , but surely all that has now changed and I can't think of a CS church that I have been to in England , that would frown on this sort of fellowship . I think the question of holding weddings/memorial services should be entirely up to the individual church membership - however , it would be necessary to have modern appropriate facilities , and a fair amount of organisation would be required. In my small church, we are overjoyed if a local group asks us if they can use our building for something like a charity fund raiser - we feel this is one way in which we can show our love for our neighbours - not everyone is ready to attend church services , but we can still be seen as belonging to the community.Finally , don't we want to fill our churches with love, rejoicing,happiness, expectancy of good (weddings) and comfort, compassion, support and solace (memorials)

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16. **Big Mike from California** - 5/11/2011

Our branch church has had several social gatherings, usually centered around the greeting of a new member, the graduating of a Sunday School student. We even had hot cider and sweets after a Christmas Eve Wednesday Testimony Meeting. Most members enjoy the fellowship, some don't and do not attend. We all have free choice and there should be no judgment on any of us for whatever view we take.

It is so refreshing to see these questions being raised with healthy and lively discussion to follow. Since the Manual does not specifically prohibit activities such as weddings, memorial services, etc., each church has the latitude to steer their ship as they see fit.

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17. **Brad Thurber** - 5/11/2011

Les, until you brought it up (#6), I had never even considered that the primary reason for the churches to hold weddings or funerals might be to raise money. I very strongly disagree (you said that it was OK to disagree) that the raising of money has anything to do with it. While a modest fee might be charged, I would imagine that it would only be to cover the cost of making the sanctuary available (heating, lights, etc.). Two very large CS churches, First in Louisville, KY and First in Berkley, CA, actually advertise their edifices for use for weddings on their websites. I have no idea what their policy is on the payment of fees.

As for the Church Alive local area meeting where you indicate that there will be food served, I don't think this is at all unusual. As far as I know, food was served during the Southern California regional Church Alive meeting held back in January in First Church Pasadena. This meeting was organized by the Mother Church. I believe that at the Boston Church Alive meeting to be held in June in the Mother Church there will be a lunch provided. I read through the Agenda, and it indicated that some kind of lunch would be provided. I have no idea at all how this would be paid for. Or for that matter in the Pasadena meeting. I guess that this sort of thing is for the individual branches to work out.

The TMC YOUTH Northwest regional meeting held recently in 6th Church Portland, OR also had food served. In fact, at all of the Mother Church sponsored TMC YOUTH meetings there has been food served. I believe the registration fee covers the cost of the food.

I really don't think that the way the food is paid for is the important thing. The really important thing is that people are getting together in fellowship and love.

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18. **richard** - 5/12/2011

If we believe Spirit is the real and eternal and matter is the unreal and temporal, how do funeral and marriage ceremonies fit in with the eternal nature of Church services, or Christian Science practice?

If being a purist is too transcendental and impractical for some that simply points out the weakness of the movement. I'am weary of the tea and refreshment solution to dwindling church services. The second church of Minneapolis at it's dedicatory services had 5000 people attending. It had nothing to do with weddings, funerals, or tea and crumpets. These churches were built on the backbone of healing. Some of these early practitioners were seeing 70 patients a day, which is 24,000 on a yearly basis. This is what's needed.

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19. **Suzanna Penn** - 5/12/2011

Mis. 125:27 In the Message to the Annual Meeting of The Mother Church, Boston, 1896 by Mary Baker Eddy, she wrote. . .(caps my emphasis)

". . . Mother [speaking of herself], thought-tired, turns to-day to you; turns to her dear church, to tell the towers thereof the remarkable achievements that have been ours within the past few years: the rapid transit FROM halls TO churches, from unsettled questions to permanence, from danger to escape, from fragmentary discourses to one eternal sermon; yea, from darkness to daylight, in physics and metaphysics."

Under this guidance, why would a branch church convert itself to, or allow itself to be used as, a "hall" of secular activities?

Christian Science churches aren't generally physically designed for social events, and certainly there is not a provision for such events in the Church Manual. Do Christian Scientists who have enlisted to heal the world of sin, disease and death have time to also be in the event planning business?

A large festive wedding is a social event and someone who is married quietly by a clergyman in a minister's study is just as married as someone who has a large party. If someone wants to celebrate their wedding with a large social event (which can be a lovely thing to do), then it can be done somewhere designed for such events. . . but not in a Christian Science Church. Do we worship our buildings so much that we feel we have to be married in the building where we went to Sunday School? Ahhh and later on I can just hear it. . . "we can't sell this church. . . it's where I got married!"

Do we really believe that someone who seems to pass on is dead? Christian Science teaches the unreality of death. By emphasizing someone's passing with a so-called "celebration of their life" is just as much a confirmation of a belief in the reality of death as to have a mournful funeral, simply because if we didn't believe they had died, we would not be having an event called "a celebration of life". . . would we? Is it really that helpful to those closest to the belief that they have lost a dear one? The belief of grief still has to be healed individually. And friends and fellow church members can show compassion and love that will bring healing in so many individual ways -- and on-going until those dear ones are again on joyful path. . .After a memorial event people generally go on with their lives thinking they have shown their "respect" by attending a celebration of life. . . and the dear ones closest to the belief of loss are still usually left alone to work out of that belief.

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20. **RS** - 5/12/2011

Dear Fellow Commenters,

Please step back from the desire to persuade others to one's own opinion -- let's remember that MBE says (S & H 341:11), "In Christian Science mere opinion is valueless." The important thing is the motive. If a church takes a particular action after earnest prayer, grounded firmly on Principle and faithfulness to our Manual, and out of a sincere desire to express Christly love to others, then that prayer, faithfulness and love will shine through and bear fruit. If another church takes exactly the same action but out of a belief that such human action is necessary in order to appeal humanly to more humans, then that church is, indeed, just being "gimmicky."

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21. **David Ogden** - 5/12/2011

It is so good to have this discussion, and I am most pleased by the general reliance on prayer for each individual congregation to make its own decision, democratically. I have attended state and regional meetings, as well as annual Association meetings in branch churches where lunch was available, eaten in the Sunday School room or other available space, paid for through individual donations or registration fees, or on a per lunch basis. The world as we know it did not end.

We are serving our communities and congregations in many ways. Weddings and Memorial Services are held daily in every imaginable situation. I suspect that most if not all Branches could adapt and adjust for any situation. Weddings, Celebrations of Life, Memorial services etc. seem somehow more meaningful in a church setting. The Venice, California Church held such a service for a long-time member who was a tireless worker in the Reading Room, which was highly attended, spiritual in nature, and provided a fitting tribute to the member as well as an opportunity to show Christian Science and Scientists as the caring people we are. It is encouraging and refreshing to see how many of us are in agreement. Prayerful decisions, Christian activities and support for all, democratic Branch activities, and obedience to the Manual can all be consistent and accomplished.

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22. **Suzanna Penn** - 5/12/2011

Certainly, through prayer decisions are made in the branch church and in the individual. And there are times when the Christian Science churches should and would open doors to meet a vital community need. For example the C.S. church I belonged to in NYC opened its doors every day for quite some time after the 9/11 attack, with people on duty to comfort and pray for/with anyone who came in. But things of this nature are very different from the distractions of becoming a hall for social/secular activities. I've seen first hand what happens to C.S. churches that go down that road and in no instance did it lead to bigger congregations in the long run, but instead to an eventual falling away, and lack of healing, and greater lack in general. And eventually NO Sunday School in every case.

I love our branch churches, and I would have them faithful and focused on the greatest joy --- the healing mission. . .No other denomination has what we have to offer and have enjoined to do. We all have many opportunities in other arenas for happy social and secular activities.

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23. **Mike Brady** - 5/12/2011

I think a church grows or dies according to the sincerity, purity and love expressed by its membership. Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees.

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24. **EIGordo** - 5/12/2011

@ #22 So "there are times when CS churches would open doors"? When 3000 people are slaughtered -- that's a pretty high bar, but I realize it's only an example. Maybe you could give other examples when your branch has been neighborly in this way (doors opening), for balance.

So often we're blind to how the world interprets our behavior. Eddy was not. But we can step back and ask, "What does a visitor see when a church is open 180 minutes a week out of 1080?" That's a 2% utilization, and if the figure were adjusted for % occupancy, it almost vanishes. (Al Gore must be spinning in his mansion over the carbon footprint alone!) And yet we do hardly anything that churches ordinarily, visibly do: soup kitchens, revivals, Christmas Eve services, missions to 3rd-World poor, etc.

Yes I know about the Monitor, institutional work, Eddy's gifts to a hospital, etc. But to a Martian visiting us after years of observation from afar, s/he sees slow organ music, flowers, somberly read antique text, ushers -- hey this is a funeral!

But the under-utilization of our buildings is, to a modern observer, a bit obscene, when there is so much homelessness and energy and land costs have climbed so high. So many of our congregations look like some petite heir who has inherited a large mink coat and wears it every day of the year. Obviously church buildings need to be re-purposed in many cases, and TMC has encouraged this. Eddy wrote that even TMC edifice could be replaced by one "more convenient".

When I hear what a "distraction" a wedding or other public event is, I wonder if the carrier of this canard has heard of agency? Have a pro handle the details, for a fee, and enjoy the increased traffic of neighbors through our branches. Gee, maybe some will join! This possibility is right under our noses and has been for decades. This debate (above & below) is worthwhile, but let's have the practical perspective to see that it is like bald men arguing over a comb.

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25. **Les** - 5/12/2011

As I recall in the early part of the 20th Century the worst fire of that century occurred at a theatre right next to a Christian Science church. The Christian Science church was used as a temporary morgue.

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26. **Jantina Barker** - 5/12/2011

Jantina says

Our Society's edifice is a large house with several rooms. The largest, a double room, is our auditorium. There are two evenings a week when two local choirs hold their rehearsals there on a regular basis: a Ladies choir and a Chamber choir. One choir offers a prayer before every rehearsal, on a rota basis. One member is a Christian Scientist and when her turn comes her prayers are always deeply appreciated. Of the other choir three members contribute to the music in our services. Both choirs contribute a substantial income as well as creating genuine respect for our religion, dispelling misconceptions.

Also, three times a year the London College of Music and the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music conduct their regional exams there. These are not held in the auditorium but in a room adjacent to it which holds their piano. The exams last for many days and are a welcome financial asset. The people in charge always comment on the lovely peaceful atmosphere which transfers to the candidates in their performing. Some hundred parents bring their children to each of these three sessions. We have a spare Sunday School room where they wait.

In addition to this we let some of the other rooms in various capacities. One is let to a musician, organist at a local Anglican church, who practices there with all the modern amenities such as speakers, amplifiers, recording equipment, etc. He also rehearses with his pupils. This obviously takes place during designated times!! Some of the other rooms have been used by an amateur dramatic group, and the town chess club. We do not advertise our premises. All have arrived by word of mouth. All applicants are duly vetted before we accept them as we need to feel comfortable with their activities. I so welcome the broader and loving spirit expressed toward our communities when we share our abundance with others. Thank you for including this issue in your "Church Alive" programme

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27. **George Strong** - 5/12/2011

The question was, "Is there any reason we should or should not rent our branch church building to members or others wanting to hold a wedding or memorial service there?" My thought is that no, there is no reason, beyond the wishes of the church membership, for either choice. Let's help each other get on with the Christian command to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons," and leave other questions to Love's inspiration for each day.

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28. **Judith from Reno NV** - 5/12/2011

In Science & Health Mrs. Eddy defines church as "The structure of Truth and Love..." That's not the same thing as our physical buildings, which seems to be what most are discussing. We DON'T "worship our building so much that we feel we have to be married in the building where we went to Sunday School" (Suzanna #19) when we would like to be married or remembered there. If we say that these events "can be done somewhere designed for such events ...but not in a Christian Science Church," then isn't that worshiping the building just as much? Not wanting to have it "tainted" by secular activities? (By the way, I do think wedding and funerals can be very Spirit-filled. I can think of one remembrance service for a dear church member that I attended, and left feeling so full of happiness in reflecting on her life. Our First Reader, who conducted the service, spoke of Life, not death, and it was just as spiritually meaningful to me as a Wednesday service. This service was held at a funeral home, by the way, but it didn't affect how I felt about this individual one way or another)

My son received his Eagle Scout award in our church, and I was very grateful to our fellow members to agree to this use. He would be just as much an Eagle Scout if the ceremony had been held in the basement of the church where his Scout Troop met every week, and I would have been just as happy and proud. The place made no difference to me. I was, however, glad that I could invite our friends and fellow Scouts to our church so that they had a better idea what our church was like, and know it was for all people, not just Christian Scientists!

I agree that it's up to the individual churches, and what may be right for some is not for others. But I'm very happy we were able to celebrate this event in our church. By the way, we also held a celebration of marriage here as well a couple of years later. These are the only 2 events that I know of (we've since moved out of state and attend a church where we now live) held in our former church, but it certainly didn't open a floodgate to other activities in the church, nor was there any fee charged for the events.

Love these conversations!

Judith from Reno NV

PS Thanks for your insights #13 L.R., - love your books!

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29. **Linda** - 5/12/2011

So glad this discussion is going on. I LOVE my branch church and I love it even more after reading many of the comments.

We are having weddings at our church as a way of showing our Sunday School students – current and former – that their church loves them and wants to embrace and celebrate this special day in their lives. What message are we sending when we say no? It's not surprising that our kids leave SS and never come back. They are in a separate place, usually go in and out of a separate door, and when they turn 20 we don't even know they have left. By welcoming them "home" for their marriage celebration we are telling them that they are a loved part of their church even after SS graduation. It's all about expressing and extending genuine love.

The fruitage from this has been immense. And we are welcoming many from other CS churches that do not allow weddings to come and begin their marriage in the church of their faith. It's just seems cold and strange to turn our congregation and others away at this important time.

Fellowship and family and finding time to enjoy each other and planning opportunities to include the many, many visitors and newcomers at our church has brought flood tides of love through the door. Visitors and those who have not attended our church in many years are completely blown away by the love they feel.

And when do our members and attendees need love and support from their church, in their church home, more than when they have lost a loved one. And we would tell them they are not welcome?

I totally agree that this is a church by church decision, but those who have not tried this have no idea what they are missing and how these two simple activities send a message of warm welcome to the community. Lots of Science and Healths and periodicals walk out the door after a wedding or memorial service. And it's not unusual to have guests at these services come back on a Sunday or Wednesday. We love this!!!

The weddings and memorial services are just two activities of MANY that our church supports. They are the evidence of the love and desire to respond to the needs of our members and attendees and our community. It's the genuine love, not the human act of hosting a wedding or memorial service, that is making all the difference.

Jesus fed and washed and comforted as part of his healing mission. We have decided to embrace our congregation with acts of love and support as we joyfully hug and lift each other up on our spiritual journey together. I DO LOVE my branch church!!

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30. **Les** - 5/12/2011

Jantina #26, thank you for bottom lining us on the financial profit your branch church is making from these activities. Your church is truly being blessed! I'm not a Christian Scientist, so as an outsider I'm more sensitive than most of the others who've responded to this initial question about these types of financial matters. I understand Mary Baker Eddy made sure her healers charged for prayers for others. From where I come from, prayer is not something you charge for. After all Jesus never charged to pray and heal anybody. So, I appreciate your balanced response on how your branch church was able to bless other very worthy groups and be blessed in return financially. Good work!

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31. **Bob Hodges** - 5/12/2011

In early days of our church there were a number of clergymen who had become Christian Scientists and were being called upon to perform marriages. Mrs. Eddy's view was that since they were no longer ordained they were not legally authorized to do this . . . hence the bylaw heading . . . A LEGAL CEREMONY. . . not that a clergyman must perform the wedding, but that there must be a legal ceremony.

In many countries the marriage is legal when the documents have been, submitted and approved. In those countries, church ceremonies that may follow are just that . . . a ceremony. In this context there is no reason why marriage ceremonies cannot be conducted in our churches . . . if the marriage has first been legalized by a magistrate, justice of the peace, etc. and the members consent.

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32. **Linda B., St. Louis** - 5/13/2011

Hey, #24, you left out a zero! There are 10,080 minutes in a week - that gets to your 2%...

We had an amazing, wonderful wedding in our branch church last summer with two young adults who were both members. I'd been reading about CS churches having weddings and memorial services for the past couple of years, so it was nice to experience one.

As for the comments about Mrs. Eddy's day, it is helpful to know that both weddings and funerals were held in homes at the time. Also, there were no kitchens in ANY churches at that time, so that argument doesn't fly. Mrs. Eddy talked about the members of the CS church as being cold as the marble floors - I hope she would feel different if she met us all today.

And, by the way, Mrs. Eddy had an open casket funeral - something we would never consider but that was normal in her day, and everything that woman did was normal, loving and with a ton of common sense and a great sense of humor!

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33. **Teresa , CO** - 5/13/2011

It is nice reading the differing opinions each one stated. It reminds me of the Bible story where Jesus turned the water into wine. At one point I wondered, why have more wine at the wedding? Then it came to me that Jesus, the Master Christian needn't have to support drunkenness? But the Bible says, it was sweet. So it could be that the wine didn't make the people drunk or more confused in their thinking and argued on differing opinions, but the act of turning the water into wine was a manifestation of brotherly love and showed or proved that Divine Love is powerful or his "suffer it to be so now" response was in unity to good; in observance or obedience to one Mind. In one Mind all Christians couldn't have differing opinions, otherwise each one has still to understand how to be in one Mind.

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34. **Jane Hickson** - 5/13/2011

As I think about this question it seems to me one has to go back to the life of Christ Jesus and also to the Manual of The Mother Church and the Christian Science textbook, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures. We are instructed in the rule for Motives and Acts on page 40 of the Manual that "Neither animosity nor mere personal attachment should impel the motives or acts of the members of the Mother Church". And in the definition of Church we are told that the Church is that institution affords proof of its utility, rouses the dormant understanding, demonstrates divine Science, casts out devils or error and heals the sick. We are told in the Bible that Jesus attended a wedding and turned the water into wine . When the suggestion of death presented itself he raised the dead, including himself as related in the case of the Centurion's child, Lazarus, when confronted with the funeral procession, in the resurrection and ascension. We read in the Manual that the Christian Science Church is designed to "commemorate the word and works of our Master which should reinstate Christianity and its lost element of healing". There is no personal commemoration only the commemoration of the word and works of our Master to be found in the Christian Science church. Every thing about the Christian Science church is designed to unite and to prove God's tender care for His children - the church services, the Lesson Sermon, the periodicals, the lectures, etc. And Our Leader tells us we can" unite with this church only as we are newborn of Spirit , as we reach the Life which is Truth and the Truth which is Life by bring forth the fruits of Love - casting out error and healing the sick". We go a step beyond the wedding and the memorial service. We see and prove man as the expression of God and not a personal entity who lives and dies. As we do we bring comfort and genuine healing to the suffering heart without the tradition of the human institution and through reliance on the everpresent touch of the Christ. So our church is complete as it is without any activities added.

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35. **Brad Thurber** - 5/13/2011

This has been a really great discussion! I have been so thrilled to read the responses from so many "progressive" Christian Scientists. I simply had no idea that so much good creativity was out there in our branch churches. It really makes me think that there can be a strong and positive future for the Christian Science movement.

Linda (#29), I think, put it very well. "It's just seems cold and strange to turn our congregation and others away at this important time." How true that is. How "cold and strange" it must seem to those outside the CS church to be told that a wedding or memorial service cannot be held in the individual's own church. I can't imagine too many people would find that very welcoming or inviting!

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36. **Amy Althans** - 5/14/2011

My sister did indeed organize and host a most beautiful, warm and lovingly accepted memorial service for my mother at Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist in New Orleans in 2010.

Holding the service at 4th church was so appropriate since my parents were charter members of 4th Church in New Orleans and church was a second

home for all of us.

We were all involved in church services and activities and the members, many of whom were my Sunday School teachers over the years, were like family.

Everyone who attended the memorial service said it was so appropriate for my mother and so beautifully presented and handled.

Following up that wonderful experience, my son, who is the 4th generation of this family to have attended Fourth Church in New Orleans, and his betrothed, decided they wanted to get married in that church. The outcome was a destination wedding where the bride's family spent a week enjoying the New Orleans culture and learning more about the groom's family.

The members of Fourth Church lovingly embraced the wedding idea and the member who read citations from the Bible and Science and Health at my mother's service also officiated at the wedding. She brought into the wedding such a loving grace and used so many wonderful citations with which we were all familiar.

I thought it was most significant that she used citations from the Chapter on Marriage in the Science and Health by Mary Baker Eddy. They were so appropriate for the moment.

The couple also hired a New Orleans judge who officiates at so many weddings that she is called the "Love" judge. The judge took care of the civil formalities.

The bride hired the church organist who also plays harp and all of the music was played on the harp. It was exquisite. He was also hired to play piano at the reception.

Members of Fourth Church were invited to the wedding and it was so incredibly lovely sharing that moment with them - with people I grew up with and now we all have these wonderful memories.

The outside of the church was lovingly decorated to a small degree and I was choked up seeing my home church look like that. Everything was done in white and even the flowers in the garden were blooming in white.

When I married quite a few decades ago I wanted to get married in that church but it was not the right time. I had to get married in an unfamiliar church with an unfamiliar hired pastor.

Having attended this church growing up and over the years as a teenager and adult, my son and his new bride will treasure their special day at a very special church and with family and friends who felt the warmth and love of the fellowship.

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**37. Katie - OH - 5/15/2011**

Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding and fed the multitudes when they needed to eat on the hillside. These were seemingly normal human events/needs but the spirit with which he created these refreshments was - Spirit's holy work (nobody would classify them as "gimmicks"). Some people are worrying too much about what happens or does not happen, within a church edifice. Does God really see the church edifice - does He care what our bylaws say? Are we in essence deifying the building and the rules that go along with it, in restricting the use of it to only the "official" services? Jesus obviously wasn't a "purist" in that sense - he went ahead and made a holy event out of each occasion. I don't read of a single healing or demonstration, taking place in a CS church!! Having lemonade on the patio is neither here nor there. Weddings and memorial services are normal. These things should be happening wherever they make the most sense - for me, it would have made sense to have my wedding in my church. Instead, I had to hunt for another that would graciously allow "outsiders". This was very unnatural. Church is not about the edifice; let's not try to bury it there! Let the Spirit lead; the rest will follow.

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**38. Julia Reuter - 5/15/2011**

I love the idea of weddings and memorial services being held in CS churches. I have quickly read the wonderful comments here, but not scrutinized them. I love our little Maine church's informality and love.

My "cold, stodgy" concerns are that we be careful to maintain our "differentness" as far as our services are concerned. We serve the truth and nothing but the truth (ha ha), instead of cookies. We don't have a choir, partially to avoid the competition. (Don't get me started about my experience at a friend's church where I joined the choir for rehearsal and one service!) I LOVE OUR SERVICE -- read well and lovingly. I hang on every word.

I for one prepare for church with what can I share w/ SS students, visitors, fellow members with needs -- how can I let my light shine or listen best for what I need. I don't want me or members having to make cookies before a church service.

I am usually the last to leave church -- church is where my best friends are -- I'm all for chatting after church, but prefer to kinda continue the conversation started during the service. We often do "add-ons" to the Wed. testimony meeting.

All that said, I would welcome weddings and memorial services in my church -- being SURE that they do not become the focus. (Can't imagine they would.) Our services heal the world; that's the focus.

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**39. LG from Florida - 5/16/2011**

What a wonderful concept to open the doors of the branch churches for weddings and memorial services.

When we extend the love of our church into the community, more healing shall take place.

Thank you all for all the views and comments.

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40. **J.S. in Ky.** - 5/16/2011

A few things I wish to comment on, and say I appreciate this topic and discussion it generated. Certainly, all seem to agree, this is a subject each Branch should prayerfully decide for its own. I agree with Response #2, Joy Carr, weddings and memorial services now belong to Churches everywhere, at least, I know it so in the US. However, there can still be problems in small communities, where fewer clergy perform weddings not in a Church, and friends & family don't want to travel to distant cities for this. # 12 Marilyn's "PS" remarks are worth looking into or work to get legalized in other states. The definition of "clergy" in my dictionary, is: "that body of men ordained to the service of God." "Ordained" means: "To establish by appointment, decree, or law; to enact; esp., of the Diety..." and it gets stronger, if chased further. Our readers are elected/appointed to the service of God, and are dedicated to it.

My daughter married a Catholic years ago. They had a difficult time finding a clergyman to conduct the service. We had no problem finding a Church. My parents were active in a Church into which I was baptized. My husband's mother and many aunts were medical nurses, and they knew of the Hospital chaplain, who was used to accommodating varied religious affiliations of patients and families of them. He did a beautiful, loving job! I later learned one in my Branch, married longer than that, almost couldn't get a place or minister to perform the marriage, because both were Christian Scientists. I've heard other sad stories from couples. It seems to go against the Golden Rule to not respect other Churches, but consider ours "too good" for that. We want what they have, but won't give to them, or even to our own what we can of what we have? One special consideration, is Mrs. Eddy said, "May Christ, Truth, be present at every bridal altar to turn the water into wine and to give to human life an inspiration by which man's spiritual and eternal existence may be discerned." (S&H 65). If held in our Churches, even if not an invited guest, but there to open, clean, close after, we can make certain that thought is consciously embraced during the ceremony. Any wedding I attend, I think of that.

Re: "food and "social" time: If such predominates, it's as wrong as "coldness". Why such provisions are made is important. #4 Alice, and others with similar opinions, Bible stories mentioned five paragraphs below, show Jesus combined eating and "social" time, with teaching & healing. He fed, washed, comforted, and healed where he was, and what other place could be more holy and dedicated to pure work for God, his Father? Visitors often don't feel comfortable asking questions after service "hello & goodbyes". Having a little time to get to know members better, opens up dialog. Which is best, going home to pray for visitors & members that were at Church. Or staying awhile and sharing visible love with them, welcoming them into the Church family circle? (We should still pray for Church later)

As #29, Linda, pointed out, often SS kids don't get to know the members, because they don't share common space or entrances after services (I almost thought a daughter wrote what you said). Togetherness lets them get to know each other and they grow up expecting to be with and among them. Members don't know who comes, who needs prayer due to absence, nor have a good opportunity to show love, for those parked out back, don't cross paths with those coming out the Church front. Families drive away before members rightfully chatting out front welcoming adult visitors who didn't rush to get a child, later get time to walk around to the parking lot. This isn't criticizing them, it just clouds an opportunity, and is somewhat difficult to correct in timely fashion. Jesus fed disciples and "visitors". He was what we could call the original "living Christian Church". He blessed food and beverage, and asked us to always do so in memory of him. Do we say, "Not now! Not appropriate?" Serving food, even the last breakfast meal on the shore never belittled his mission, but enhanced it.

18 Richard, if refreshment doesn't, how does money collection truly contribute to the "eternal nature of Church services and Christian Science Practice"? Money, too, is essential, but not of "eternal nature". I would hope love as well as practicality are part of the eternal nature Branch Churches preserve. Our Churches should be dedicated to commemorate not only Jesus' words, but also his acts, and he fed, dined, and conversed in the middle of his work. Yes, we should heal, but if no one knows about us, or understands when they do check us out, we can't heal them. In Mrs. Eddy's day, news services carried the healings and movement, but that is seldom done today. We can make use of other modern activities to get word out, along with outside info at the Church, Reading Rooms, individual members, and now, the Internet. Bible verses mentioned three paragraphs below also apply to this topic.

19 Suzanna, "Hall" in my dictionary, is a large building used for public or semi-public purposes. It also says it is usually devoted to certain uses. Weddings, and memorials may invite the public, but are private arrangements made, and CS edifices aren't devoted to these uses. They are devoted to Church and it's uses and needs, especially and primarily worship services. A wedding now & then, doesn't change that. Our worship services are open to the public, but that doesn't make them "halls". And I'd like to add, that after a memorial service, no matter where it's held, I hope Christian Scientists don't "go on with their lives" with such shallow thoughts. I assume they embrace the concept of eternal life, including the one passed, and give prayerful support and continue to show love to the survivor(s).

Again# 29 Linda said it well with "And when do our members and attendees need love and support from their church, in their church home, more than when they have lost a loved one." We do not believe anyone has died, and having a service in a place where this concept is supported is better than having funeral parlor staff holding strong thoughts of death. We felt whenever we entered our Branch from day one, what I described and others agreed (even our guests later) "love you felt so thick you could slice it"! Death beliefs permeate rooms usually used for funerals and memorials. Also, when another funeral visitation is in a nearby room, visitors to it may overhear when people stand in the hallway or restrooms, our remarks that someone is not dead, and later publicly ridicule us. Being where our beliefs are "built in" so to speak, helps keep our thought elevated. If we ever can demonstrate raising such a one from seeming dead it would be easier in a place where this is accepted and anticipated. Visitors outside our beliefs may hold strong thoughts, but if in our Church, we'd be hosting the event, so the whole structure, metaphysically our Church is built on, predominates.

One point I wish to address, is # 30, Les' remark, "From where I come from, prayer is not something you charge for." No minister or priest that I'm aware of would last in his/her position if prayer were not included in services or in any dealings with the congregation or visitors. Prayer is expected as part of their duties, and constitutes an important part of the whole of a salaried minister's mission. "Salary" wasn't a formal business thing, but in Jesus' time, it is assumed much of his provisions from the Father were manifested as coming from disciples and the public. Pharisees had him in their homes for meals (Luke, chapters 7,11 and 14), during which they could glean info from him, and observe him, and he was observed healing others. A woman at one of these used precious ointment for his feet, and for her sincerity and sacrifice, he forgave her sins. Jesus invited himself (presumably with disciples) to abide in Zacchaeus' home, (Luke 19) which included Jesus' teachings, and he received healing. (In Luke 10) He sent disciples ahead, telling them not to take purse or scrip, to stay in and dine in homes with food & lodging provided for them, and to bless peace to come on houses that received him thus. They were instructed to heal at these places where they were provided for. If not welcomed and provided for, they were to leave for they were worthy of their hire. Until checking Bible for these references, I'd not realized how much Luke tells about business arrangement relating to Jesus! All these verses also apply to the "social hour" and eternal nature (purpose) I addressed above. His, and his disciples' needs were met. Before my time, school teachers in the US were paid with meals and a place to stay. Pastors were given chickens to cook and eat, or kept & fed in homes. Today, we let these people live with their own families and meet the normal expenses of daily life. A practitioner is available 24/7 for those who need their prayerful help, but isn't employed or paid by the Church. They aren't allowed to be employed in another occupation. Prayerful healing doesn't come close to what medical healing costs! Payment is gratitude, not ugly dollars and cents. If I had to travel to where a practitioner lived, I could not afford time or money to get healed by one. Many do not charge someone who can't afford it.

Growing up, even after marriage, and still later after finding Christian Science, I've heard, "Doctors and medicine are God's method (provision) for our

healing." Doctors have even said this to me. So why do people only object to high medical costs, but not to "paying for healing", given they believe it is a God sent system? I've let my legislators know there is no difference in funding CS treatment than to fund Dr.s who claim this, and for care given in Church sponsored hospitals, open to the public, some even advertised and/or named with that religious connection, and whose patients receive prayer from someone designated for that service.

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41. **Mary Julia** - 5/16/2011

Thanks for this interesting discussion.

Mary Baker Eddy wisely left these kinds of decisions to the Branch Church Members' democratic process. Each of us in all situations pray for the highest sense of right and vote accordingly. No one individual and no other church can interfere with what the members of that church have decided.

Some years ago when my husband passed on, I asked the Board of the church where he was serving as First Reader whether in this exceptional case a "celebration of life" could be held there. It was disappointing to have this request turned down. But as I worked through this with other family members, we found the nearby Presbyterian Church most accommodating. They had a larger auditorium and the kitchen facilities which enabled us to provide for the larger than expected crowd that showed up. Not only that, it strengthened our friendship with the Pastor of that church, and everything worked out in a most harmonious way. A Christian Science Practitioner conducted the celebration, and everyone who attended--whether they were Christian Scientist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, or of no religious affiliation, left feeling uplifted by the Christ, Truth, expressed not only in the readings, but the warmth, comments and love that followed during and afterwards.

Whatever is done, let it be done with love, and deep conviction of the highest sense of right.

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42. **Bruce K. Fredericks** - 5/16/2011

As a Christian Scientist and member of a branch church and The Mother Church in Boston since 1943, I would say that we would have to ask ourselves two questions in line with this issue: 1) Is it loving, and 2) Is it in accordance with Principle.

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43. **Alexandra** - 5/18/2011

Mrs. Eddy said of her Church Manual: Of this I am sure, that each Rule and By-law in this Manual will

increase the spirituality of him who obeys it, invigorate his capacity to heal the sick, to comfort such as mourn, and to awaken the sinner.

If the motive for holding weddings and funerals in the Christian Science edifice conforms to this standards then perhaps it deserves consideration. Our Leader bravely abolished ceremony and sacraments from her church services. This was a radical step which shifted the focus of her church towards the spiritual and away from ritualism and creed. Let us work out our own salvation through increased spirituality, humility and those greater works promised by the Master.

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44. **Barbara Gnas** - 5/19/2011

I wonder if all this discussion is not just a distraction from the real work we should be doing as Christian Scientists and praying to heal ourselves and the world.

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45. **Diane from Melbourne** - 5/23/2011

On the subject of CS churches allowing marriages and funerals I can only think one thing...IT'S ABOUT TIME ! It is natural and normal for any person of any religion to expect that his/her own church would have the marriages of its members in their own churches. Why should it ever have been otherwise? I have asked this question so many times all my life. I am now married to my third husband and I would have LOVED to be able to be married in a Christian Science church as I have been brought up in CS. Unfortunately when I asked on 2 occasions, I was so upset to be told "No sorry" and "No we don't allow weddings in the Church" . My fiance's (both non Scientists) said "How strange... does that mean they would rather we just live together? Don't they want us to get married?" I was quite embarrassed when asked to explain to their families why we weren't marrying in my church as I had absolutely no sensible answer to give.

The fact that our churches have not allowed these important celebrations in its edifices is one way that alienates non Christian Scientists because in such a joyful and normal situation as a marriage, our Church has not supported its members. It has been assumed by some people that have spoken to me about this that the Christian Science church "doesn't really want to encourage marriage".

It is important that our church be seen to care about its members AND the wider community.

I think we should also make some effort to reach out to others in the community in a more normal way such as donations to disaster relief ....my mother always brought us up to ask ourselves "What would Jesus have done in this situation?" when we asked her a difficult decision. The answer of course is always "Whatever is most loving" Mrs Eddy always said that all we ever need to do is just love. A marriage is a declaration of love and so is a funeral .

The only important thing in life is Love and us expressing it.

Time to stop talking about it...

BRING ON THOSE WEDDINGS !...and let us now celebrate the lives of those we loved in our own churches as well.

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46. **janet** - 5/31/2011

I enjoyed reading all the comments. I am enlightened, inspired and grateful. Thank you very much for this topic. I just love it very much.

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47. **Sue in Chicago** - 6/5/2011

Just a quick note to let you all know I'm to be married in my branch church this Saturday - and the members couldn't have been more welcoming, loving, and supportive!! What an outpouring of love! We are so grateful for this loving-kindness.

Also, when I was on the board of another CS church, we were approached by a non-CS couple to use our edifice for their wedding. It was a full-dress military wedding, but other churches in the area would not allow them to be married in their buildings because the uniforms included swords - they had a

"no weapons" policy and they were sticking to it. At the end of the day, our board stood firmly on the side of right motive - of the couple wanting to do the right thing by marrying - and we simply refused to dishonor our military by prohibiting a full dress uniform. It was exactly the right thing to do - and this was about seven years ago. Such love we have for one another! Thank you, Father!

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48. **Christine** - 8/13/2011

Kudos to Les and Alice. Christian Science is not just another church. We are set apart by nature of the fact that we DENY sin, sickness and death. We also are WED to the WORD of CHRIST. The Christian Science church is founded on Principle and its idea, and this is ONE.

The spiritual message of Christian Science is not about duality but Oneness. Weddings and funerals have no place in a Christian Science branch church. If you are marrying Mary and John, then what about Tim and Tom?

They want to get married too. These symbolic activities are not for the Christian Science churches, if they were, there would have been weddings galore when Mrs. Eddy was with us. And after. Diluting the Spirit of Christian Science proves to me that there is no real understanding of our Science and Health. But this is okay, it has taken me over half a century.

Christine

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49. **watchful** - 10/16/2011

Be always watchful not to make decisions based on feeling but rather based on facts and knowledge of what Ms. Eddie wanted for the movement. It is best not to make moves based off of the material, sensational or drama, but rather from spiritual reflection. The other can be a slippery slope leading to traps and snares slowing progress. Getting "I" out of the equation ensures self motivated direction stays out of the final answer.

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50. **Geoff** - 4/11/2012

Its like you read my mind! You appear to understand so much about this, like you wrote the ebook in it or something. I feel that you simply can do with some percent to pressure the message home a little bit, but instead of that, this is excellent blog. A great read. I'll definitely be back.

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