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STUDENT DESIGNED CONGREGATION OBSERVATION TOOL

Congregation Name:
Address:

Day and Time:
Date:

(If available) Year congregation was founded:

PHYSICAL SETTING

Describe the surrounding neighborhood.

Describe the worship area. Include information on the interior design, shape and furnishings, as well as the physical symbolism and artifacts.

List and describe the congregational facilities beyond the worship area (e.g., school, parsonage, gymnasium, kitchen or classrooms).

Describe the outward appearance of the buildings and setting (e.g., artwork, architecture, sign, landscaping, symbolism, etc.). Was the building designed for religious worship or is/was it used for other purposes?

Describe any new forms of technology used for worship or religious education.



PARTICIPANTS

How many people attended the service? What percentage arrived late?
Offer a demographic profile of those attending.

Offer more description of the participants. For example, how are they dressed and what kind (year, model, etc.) of cars do they drive?

Describe the responses of the participants during the worship service and sermon (e.g., engaged, bored, emotional, spontaneous, meditative, etc.).

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Describe the social interaction between participants before, during and after the service (e.g., how many were engaged in conversations and appeared to know and care for each other).

List and describe any social or religious activities they support during the week. Did these activities support the congregation, the larger community, or both?

Did they notice you were a visitor? If yes, what was their response?

LEADERSHIP

Offer a demographic profile of those involved in leading the worship. What did the worship leaders wear?

Describe the interaction between the worship leader(s) and the congregation. How formal or casual is the relationship?

How long was the message (e.g., sermon, homily, etc.)? Describe the content (e.g., topics covered) and appeal of the message (e.g., intellectual, emotional, etc.).

RELIGIOUS SERVICE

How long was the service?

Did they have music? If yes, offer a brief description of the type and amount of music used.

Did they take an offering?

Do children attend the entire worship service? Do they have a separate service for children?

Did they use a sacred text, (e.g., *Bible*)? How often? Did members bring their own sacred text?

Was the service highly structured with a clearly defined order? Did they use a hymnal or a preprinted publication for congregational responses? Explain.

Describe the content and style of prayers (e.g., formal, spontaneous, personal, emotional, etc.).

Describe the mood of the religious service (e.g., somber, bored, upbeat, meditative, etc.).

Optional questions that might be of interest:

What percentage of the total membership attends worship on a given weekend? (Keep in mind how many worship services they have)

Do they place a strong emphasis on the recruitment of new members? If so, how do they recruit new members?

Did they have a special religious ritual or sacrament, such as Holy Communion? If yes, describe how the ritual was conducted.

Considering all of your observations, the congregation's website and other sources, what are the core religious beliefs of this group?

Did they mention other religions? If so, what did they say?