

How to Handle Those Empty Pews

Dub McClish

I thought I had heard of every possible solution for dealing with the problem of empty pews. A recent issue of *Your Church* magazine carried an article titled, "Coping with Scant Numbers," by Dr. John R. Scotford, which proposes some new ones. Basically, his solution is to remove the empty pews. He starts at the front and says these pews were never very popular or much sat on, so why not remove them? (Sounds like he's been watching our seating habits.) Then he moves to the back and says, "Rear pews are prized by those who wish to maintain a safe distance between themselves and the Christian Gospel and by those who do not want others to observe how they conduct themselves during the church service" (an opinion I have held for several years). Because the back pews are so popular and so much sat on, he recommends removing two, three, or even more rows of back seats.

Now he goes to the middle, suggesting that the pews be shortened and the creation of a center aisle if there is none. The remainder of the article gives hints on how to make a small number of people appear to be a large crowd, such as scattering them out and having them stand up a lot. Additionally, he proposes some focal point, such as a large cross, colorful drape, bright carpet on the aisle, or some other device to detract from the sparse number present. If all else fails, the author recommends moving, into smaller quarters.

This would all be amusing, but for two things:

1. The author was not writing a satire, but in all seriousness.
2. I think some of the brethren I know have about the same concepts of dealing with empty pews.

Is removal the solution to the problem of empty pews? I don't know about you, my brother or sister, but I don't believe this is the Lord's solution. He still urges that we "go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). Don't "tear them out," but "fill them up." Such requires the work of visiting, inviting, teaching, encouraging others to come, a work which far too few saints are willing to do anymore. But it's still the Lord's way.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the December 4, 1974, edition of Granbury Gospel, weekly bulletin of the Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.]

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