

Churches turning to be beer to get congregants

By John Burnett, NPR

With mainline religious congregations dwindling across America, a scattering of churches is trying to attract new members by creating a different sort of Christian community. They are gathering around craft beer.

Some church groups are brewing it themselves, while others are bring the Holy Mysteries to a taproom. The result is not sloshed congregants; rather, it's an exploratory approach to do church differently.

Leah Stanfield stands at a microphone across the room from the beer taps and reads this evening's gospel message.

She's a 28-year-old leasing agent who's been coming to Church-in-a-Pub here in Fort Worth for a year and occasionally leads worship.

"I find the love, I find the support, I find the non-judgmental eyes when I come here," she says. "And I find friends that love God, love craft beer."

Beer and Hymns is an event at the annual Greenbelt Festival in London. Since 1974, Greenbelt has brought people together to explore faith, arts and justice issues.

Every Sunday evening, 30 to 40 people gather at Zio Carlo brewpub to order pizza and pints of beer, to have fellowship, and have church – including communion.

Leah Stanfield, a leasing agent in Fort Worth and regular attendee of Church-in-a Pub, hands out bread during communion at the tavern.

Pastor Philip Heinze and his Calvary Lutheran Church sponsor Church-in-a-Pub, whose formal name is the Greek word, Kyrie.

Some patrons are understandably confused. They come in for a brew and there's a religious service going on in their bar. They expected Trivia Night and they get the Holy Eucharist.

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