It's 9:30 on a sunny Sunday morning. As I enter the church -- a huge converted warehouse in the suburbs of Houston -- my head begins to throb. As my eyes adjust to the dimmer light of the entry hall, I realize that the throbbing is the band going through its warm-up routine. The bass player certainly plays in a hard-driving style.

I step into the sanctuary for the full effect. The cavernous room is dark, lit by too-few spotlights moving slowly around the room. I find my seat, a fancy folding chair in the middle of the hall, about 10 rows back from the stage. Glancing around, I realize that there must be more than 300 people here, but the room is only about three-quarters full. I nod a greeting to the people next to me; the guitars are too loud for speech.

The room suddenly goes silent. The stage lights up and a youngish man in jeans and T-shirt bounds into view; apparently, he is the pastor. With a patter belonging more to a rock concert than a church, he introduces the band to the congregation's (crowd's?) loud cheers.

As the players launch into the first number, everyone stands. Four songs later we are still standing. Most of us are swaying or dancing to the music. The lyrics are generally Christian: One song was about Jesus, another the ups and downs of the Christian life, a third about prayer. But this is no namby-pamby music. These Christian rock-and-rollers are hard driving and don't turn down the volume.

After the fifth song, the T-shirted man reappears. He leads cheers and applause for the band, followed by a prayer. The congregation respectfully listens and concludes with a group Amen.

As we sit down, he begins speaking informally about how humans are created in God's image. (After 10 minutes, I realize this is the sermon.) He makes two points. The first explores how Christians should live their lives "in God's image." Since this is the first Sunday after the earthquake in Haiti, the second point discusses how Christians should protect and support the Haitians in their time of need; after all, the Haitians are also created in the image of God.

When he finishes the band fires up again. As they play their final number, lights appear over the heads of the standing crowd; these are not cigarette lighters but the "Candle app" on people's iPhones.

When I leave the building at 10:30 blinking in the morning sunlight, I feel as if I have just spent an evening at a rock concert. Do I feel as if I have been at a worship service? I'm not sure. But the twenty-something and thirty-something people around me certainly act that way. Some chat in small groups, while others visit tables set up to inform congregants about church activities. The kids make a beeline for the cookies and punch. It could easily be the informal "coffee hour" at any church.

This rock-and-roll church, known as the Loft Church, is an outreach of the more staid mega-church around the corner. The idea is to reach out to younger, un-churched families by creating a worship style more familiar to them. The hope is that after staying with the Loft Church for a while, they will transition to the more typical worship style of the main church.

It is clear that the plan's first stage is successful. People are attending the church and the evangelistic activities of the ministerial staff is bringing people in. The alternate form of worship keeps them coming back. But the jury is still out on whether these new members will decide that they would be more comfortable in a more traditional worship service.

The excitement generated by rock-concert worship does not necessarily lead to toward the calmness of sitting in pews and listening to more talking and less music. It certainly does not ready them for placidly singing centuries-old hymns instead of rocking in the aisles.

But can a rock-and-roll church be a long-term commitment? Will people who joined it in their 30s still find it appealing in their 50s and 60s? We will have to wait and see.

For more information about the Loft Church, go to www.loftchurch.com.