



RETHINKCHURCH

going to RETHINK CHURCH.

Last week Pr. Kristen started a new sermon series: RETHINK. On Easter Sunday, she asked us to RETHINK what we are searching for and suggested that joy, happiness, satisfaction and peace that are ultimately what we search for in life can be found in the Peace that passes all understanding which comes through God, His Word and the community of believers – His church.

So, if church might hold an answer to what we are searching for, then what really IS church? Or more importantly is our perception of Church what church actually IS? Is our understanding of church what church is meant to be, what it was intended to be? Today, we are

Pretend, for a minute that I just texted you this question...how would you answer?



Do any of these resonate with you? Would you have answered this way?



Would anyone have said this?

Church as a movement. I bet this is not the first thing that comes to mind for most people. Should it be? What was the intent of church? To answer that, we have to look back to the very beginning. The first time the word church appears in the New Testament is in Matthew , when Jesus had this conversation with his disciples:

Matthew 16:13-18

Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human One is? They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." He said, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Then Jesus replied, "Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. I tell you that you are Peter. **And I'll build my church on this rock.** The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it.

So, Jesus tells his followers that he will start his church on the “rock” of the statement Simon Peter has just made. The statement that Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God. But there is an interesting fact about the translation of this passage into the English. Something that was literally “lost in translation”. That is, in the original Greek the word translated to “church” is Ekklesia, which means a group of people organized together for a common purpose.

Ekklesia:

An assembly of people organized together for a common purpose.

Ekklesia does not imply a specific place or location or event -- it is not even a religious term, but is more akin to a movement. So, Jesus is saying in effect, I am starting a movement, I will build an assembly of people and the foundation for this assembly is ME.

Soon after this conversation, came the events we remembered and celebrated last week. Jesus’ arrest, death and resurrection. And after that, a small group of followers took his message forward – fueled not by what they believed, but by what they had witnessed firsthand - and the church began. So what did the early church look like? If we skip ahead to the book of Acts we have the story

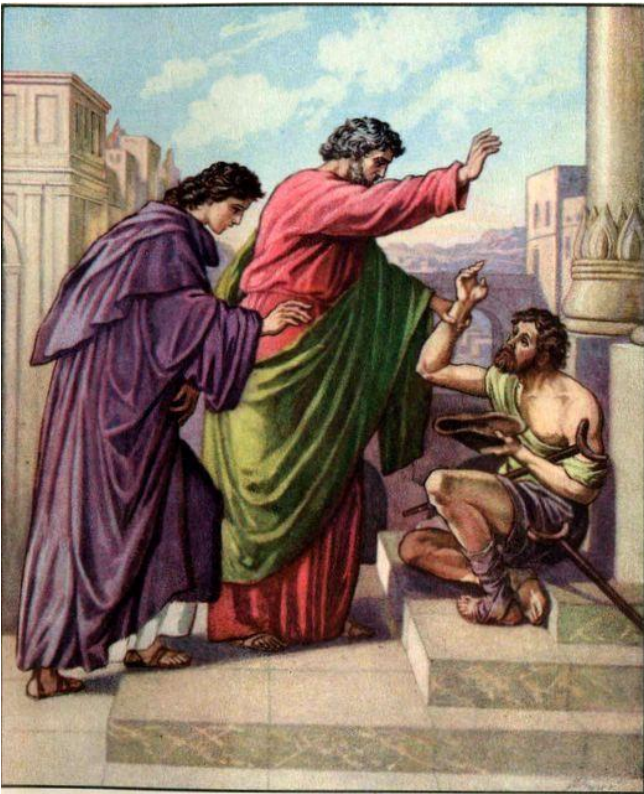
of the early church. This passage refers to a time just after Jesus’ death and resurrection:

Acts 2:42-47

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything.

They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

In a sense, we too are witnesses. Many of us were here last week to attend a Good Friday service remembering the last days of Jesus' life. Then we packed this building on Easter Sunday and sang hymns of praise and joy over his resurrection. And, then we went home. And maybe "church" didn't happen again for us until now...until we walked again into this building this morning to attend this service.



was a movement.

But "Church" for the early followers was not about a building or an hour long service or a program. It was a way of life. These early followers lived and worked among the Roman Empire, but they organized their lives around the implications of a changed world, a new reality where God had sent his Son and raised him from the dead. And they did this because they had followed this carpenter from Nazareth, listened to his parables, say him offend religious leaders, watched him die on the cross, then ate with him, touched him, walked with him raised from the dead

They knew they had witnessed God doing something amazing in their midst and that mankind would be changed forever. When they shared property and meals and met in temples and ate and prayed together, it was not because they had signed up for a program or event or because it was Sunday at 9:30. This is how they lived because this is what a community grasped by the gospel does. Church didn't just happen on Sunday mornings, or at a program or event. Church happened anytime and everywhere that two or three were gathered in Jesus' name. It happened whenever they were praising God and demonstrating God's goodness. It

And it was messy, and they struggled with how to make it work, and they were persecuted, and they were imprisoned and sometimes killed. And yet, they continued and the movement grew: the "gates of the underworld could not stand against it."

So...what happened. If church today is the result of the movement Christ started 2000 years ago, why do so many perceive it as a building, an event or a set of programs? Who took the "move" out of "movement"?

Well, there is 2000 years of history between then and now, and I don't pretend to know all of it. But, I do know that 300 years after Christ's death Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. No longer persecuted, Christians were now in fashion! Worship turned formal and ritualistic and the church's identity was reinvented. The Romans built buildings for worship and the Germanic cultures called these buildings kirche - "church" in English.



Ekklesia: A group of people organized together for a common purpose.

OR

Kirche: A gathering place

And, this Germanic term kirche replaced the ekklesia of Jesus, and was even substituted for ekklesia in the English translation of the bible. The church was no longer a movement built upon the understanding of who Jesus was, but was now a location. A building. A place to go. An event to attend.

So here we are in 2016 in Waunakee WI at Crossroads UMC. And we are RETHINKING CHURCH today. Are we ekklesia or are we Kirche? Are we moving or just meeting? Are we making a difference in our community, or just holding services? Are we allocating our resources as though Jesus is the hope of the world, or are we allocating

based on our church's culture and our traditions? Are we outward living witnesses to the risen Christ, or holding tight to our private comfort zones?

Church is still messy. We don't have all the answers. We struggle with how to make it work. We're not sure what church as a movement looks like in 2016. Are we supposed to be selling our pieces of property and distributing them to others? If so, I have an elk head hanging in my entryway that I would contribute to the cause..:) But we are learning, and growing, and questioning together. Because we are part of the ekklesia of Jesus. We are the assembly of people Jesus is building today. And we invite you to join us.



April 17th:

- Ministry fair
- Porchlight meal
- Plug into ministries

April 30 – May 1

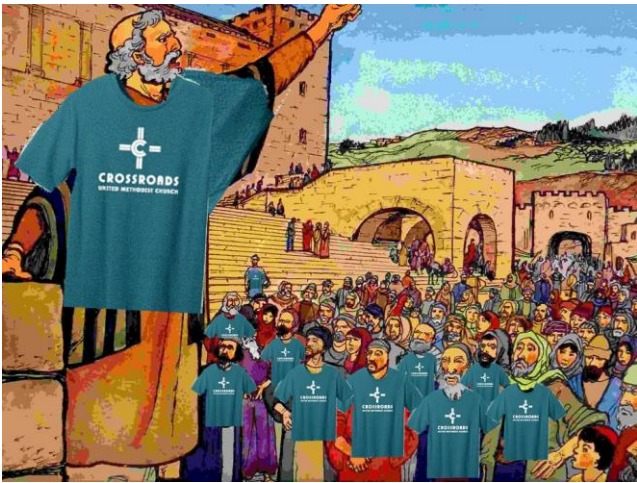
- Community Service Opportunities
- NO May 1 Service

Over the next week we will take visible steps to be moving and not just meeting. Some of these are noted in your program under "next steps". First, On April 17th, plan to stay after service for a ministry fair. Leaders from growth groups, Silver Care, Porchlight and other ministries will have information about how these programs are making a difference and how you can get involved. And, Margo and Bill will organize and serve the Porchlight meal we provide to homeless people in Madison. If you can donate items for the ministry fair Porchlight meal, please mark the back of your connection card.

Then, on May 1st we will truly put these words into action. Rather than spending an hour in worship that week, we will

spend that hour serving in our community. We have volunteer opportunities arranged at WNC, the Food Pantry, etc, during that week. Stop at the information counter in the lobby after service to see the dates and times of for opportunities you can sign up for, or spend your hour serving at a location on your own. Again, there will be NO worship service on May 1. We will spend that hour "being" the church, not just "going" to church.

Now, Of course, no self-respecting 21st century movement is complete without t-shirts. So, for the next three weeks you can order tshirts and polo shirts with our new logo on them that you might wear as you go into the community to serve, or as you volunteer here in the church building. Information and order forms are in your program and you can get more details and see clothing samples in the lobby after worship. You don't have to buy a shirt to be part of the movement - probably the early church didn't have them, although I wonder what the early church might have been able to accomplish had they looked like this:



Now there is an assembly that others would have listened to!

We have spent our time this morning rethinking what church means. But just having a sense of what the church is doesn't lead necessarily lead people to become active in church. Many of us here today have reasons and barriers that keep us from being engaged in the church.



We are all busy. Maybe we don't believe everything the church believes. Maybe the idea of church intruding in our life makes us uncomfortable. And really, isn't the church full of hypocrites and only interested in money? Maybe I don't have the right knowledge, background, skills to belong. If you have had these thoughts, you are not alone....come back next week when Pr. Kristen will challenge us to RETHINK the barriers that keep us from fully engaging in church.

VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzlylOk8idw>