

# The Call Is To Community

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April 2000



We Christians are an interesting collection of pioneers and future minded people. We find ourselves standing on the heritage of the past but looking to the future that God is establishing — using His people in the present to do His work. We are part of an eternal community and both the past and the future should define how we live in the present.

What did God have in mind for the church and what should the church in the year 2000 look and act like?

The word for church is EKKLESIA, which was a common word in first century Rome. It meant “to tend to the affairs of the gathered.” The word comes from the verb “to call” (KALEO), plus the preposition “out of” (EK). Ekklesia simple means an assembly of citizens to tend to the affairs of the assembled. The early Christians found in this term a helpful way of expressing their own sense of identity to their world. They were a called-together, called-out-of people. They had been called out of the world by the gospel—or Good News—of Jesus Christ for the purpose of belonging to God.

The early church described themselves through a variety of metaphors. For example, God’s nation, Christ’s body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 2:9, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5). They saw themselves as a group united together, called out of the world, serving each other and drawing others to God. What attracted

those who did not know what Christianity was, was how the early church lived it out in front of them. They worshipped God together, they loved one another, they cared for and supported one another.

## THE GOD SPACE

God calls us individually and as we respond to Him using our own spiritual disciplines, we discover a place in our lives—in our innermost part—for God. He then asks us to come together with others He’s called and discover a place for God in our lives together. We learn to live in obedience as a community. And as a community, we demonstrate to the world that the space within each of us and the space among us is the same space—the God space. We live the mystery of lives lived in obedient trust within us, among us, and beyond us for His glory and His purpose.

This God space is visible when we come together to worship, love, care, grow and serve. John 13:35 says, “...see how they love and care for one another.” We confirm to the world that God is present, in control, and very real. We move from divided lives to united lives. Our diversity is our strength,

and that makes His life visible to the world around us. We are to be different from the society around us—a collection of individuals indirectly related to one another by law. A Christian community is a collection of people directly related by love who are to be rooted in His wisdom and guided by His grace, to be formed into His people who make Him visible to the world.

We share a bond with Christ which in turn bonds us together in a greater way than other humans bond to each other. We are to be His community, grounded in His word, listening to Him together and making Him visible to the world around us. We desire to proclaim God and the good news so others will be reconciled to Him. Biblical truth internalized, results in transformed lives lived for His glory. That is true wisdom. How we love is how we can know we are wise.

God is in community: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God’s purpose is to establish a reconciled creation in which we humans reflect the very character of the Creator. We not only reflect Him and His love, we participate in God’s very nature, which is love. We look up to God and out to others and walk in a manner worthy of the calling of our Lord.

## WORSHIP, NURTURE, WITNESS

There are three important elements in the life of a church — worship, nurture and witness. We need to examine each of these to discover the community elements involved.

# PBC VISION

## s t a t e m e n t

As a local church, operating under the direction of Jesus as Lord and Head,

Peninsula Bible Church is called

to serve God in three ways:

- to serve Him directly in **WORSHIP**;
- to serve His redeemed people in **NURTURE**;
- to serve His lost world in **WITNESS**.

Worship = attributing worth to the One who is worthy.

The central part of every healthy church is worship of God. Sunday morning worship services are our weekly opportunity to come together and worship our Creator, our King, our Lord, our God. We set time aside to be with each other for Him and to celebrate God together as His gathered ones. It is for Him, not for us.

Nurture = building each other up.

We must take seriously mutual edification and how it is achieved. We need to be serious about being called to participate in a local body. We have to learn how to live in harmony with each other — especially intergenerationally. We must learn to share burdens and needs, to encourage and admonish each other, and to help nurture those new or younger in the faith.

Life occurs in activities, in preaching and teaching small groups, in serving together in worship and outreach activities with the church, and in PRAYER.

Another aspect of edification is that we must remind each other of our common story and history. We are a community of memory and hope – sharing in the life of the early church saints and martyrs the great legacy of faith that has been entrusted to us. And challenging us today is to ask where Jesus wants to write us into His story. We are a part of something huge—a grand drama that connects us

with God's purposes in the universe (1 Corinthians 15:58). Christianity is not an individual struggle for perfection. It is to be a community project.

Witness = outreach/proclamation

Our presence as His gathered body announces to the world that God is alive and well and very much in charge. We call others to be reconciled with God, as we love and serve in His name (Luke 4:18-19). We seek to be used by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of human life. Outreach happens as we are fashioned into a community of faith living in the world and serving those around us. What plans does God have for the family of Peninsula Bible Church in the year 2000 and beyond?

### BRAIDED MINISTRY IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

Today our culture is more fast-paced and informed than never. At the same time people are more isolated and age-segregated than ever. I am convinced that as a body of believers we must help our people become participators in their faith.

We have lived with a tremendous amount of media influence in our lives and that has trained us to be watchers instead of participators. There is no ownership if you are watching. It is easy to criticize and easier still to leave and go watch somewhere else. Like flipping channels on a remote, people today flip churches or pick and choose what part of church they want to watch. We are called to be a community of participators for God and the church is a gathered community for the common good, using the gifts and talents God has put in place for the body to use. We have to help with this process and move from "where is my place?" to "what is my part?" Christianity stretches us out of our comfort zones to learn, and to love others in ways we never dreamed possible.

To help achieve balance in our walk of faith, I want to challenge people to consider the idea of braided ministry. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "... A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." I would like to encourage people to weave these three strands into

their lives.

Have someone. . .

- from whom you are learning,
- you are learning with, and
- to whom you are passing along your faith.

This is a solid way of ensuring balanced growth as a Christian. We can constantly learn, we can be accountable to others, and we can pass on what we know to those behind us on the journey of faith. Having these strands present in each of our lives will not only help us to grow, but make us vital members of any local body into which the Lord calls us.

### FAITH JOURNEY

In the journey of faith as a community of believers, we worship, serve and show the world our amazing God. There may be other ways to live, but I am convinced there is no greater way to live. Together we reflect light and love in a way that only His gathered ones can. We must come together to preserve the heritage of the past while gazing at the future God is establishing using His people in the present.

The call is to community – in the year 2000 just as it has been before. The spread of Christianity still happens person-to-person, life-upon-life. We are a part of a huge plan that God put into place when time began. Together in His name and with His Spirit, we send a message of love to the world. Just as God intended. What is your part?