



what is the church?

becoming church

ross van niekerk

the church is a whore.
but she is my mother.

- St Augustine

defining “church”

1st: Peter’s confession Caesarea Philippi

matthew 16:16-19

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
Jesus answered, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...”

defining the nature of church

“ekklesia”

- assembly
- called by Jesus/ God
- justified by faith
- partakers of the Spirit
- eschatological witness
- apostolicity (missionary)
- holiness
- unity (universal and local)

the Spirit and the church

the church is the church of the Spirit

- unifying agent [1cor 12:13]
- distributor of gifts for all [1cor 12:7-11]
- empowerment to witness [acts 1:8]
- empowerment of ministers [rom 15:18-19]
- God's abiding presence [1 cor 3:16]

The church is a special people, a people whom the Spirit is forming together into a community... a “pioneer community”... a new humanity... who are seeking to point toward the future God has in store for creation. Under the guidance of the Spirit, this people desires to live out in the present the glorious community for which God created us.

*-Stanley J. Grenz
Created for Community, p207*

As a future-oriented people we are a
fellowshipping people... God saves us
together, not in isolation. And he saves us for
community, not out of it...

Our fellowship is nothing less than our
common participation in divine communion
between Father and the Son, mediated by the
Holy Spirit.

- Stanley J. Grenz

Created for Community, p214, 216

The Church's existence is in the act of being the bearer of salvation to the whole world... Between the Church militant here on earth, longing for the full possession of that which she has in foretaste, and the consummation for which she longs, the marriage supper of the Lamb, there lies the unfinished missionary task. The first answer to her prayer, '*Come, Lord Jesus,*' is His commission – '*Go ye into all the world – and lo, I am with you.*'

Lesslie Newbigin,
Household of God (1953)

metaphors of the church

the household of God

1 timothy 3:14-15

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

contemporary society

the people we live amongst (*and have become*)

- Strongly relational – loyalty to tribe
- Very individualistic – uniqueness
- Hedonistic – pursuit of happiness
- Consumerist – immediate satisfaction
- Very spiritual – personal and private
- Pluralistic – tolerant of all differences
- Highly experiential – multi-sensory
- Anti-institutional – sceptical of leadership

finding fulfilment in church

adjust your eyes

“The key to finding the right church... involved my way of seeing.”

- Philip Yancey,
Church: why bother?

- Looking up: worship.
- Looking around: reconciliation.
- Looking outward: exist for those outside.
- Looking inward: need for grace.

This is a big old ship, Bill. She creaks, she
rocks, she rolls, and at times she makes you
want to throw up.
But she gets where whe're going.
Always has, always will, until the end of time.
With or without you.

- J.F. Powers,
Wheat that Springeth Green

we don't go to church.

we are the church.