

Church – where, when how, why.

What do we add to church?

We have discovered that church is not a building or an event or a computer programme but is the people being and doing God's will.

From that perspective, what we do when we gather is the expression of church.

Some people have questioned some of the thought processes within the series – good.

Some people have disagreed – Good. I don't have to be right all the time yet thank you to those who disagreed then went back to their bible.

Thank you too for struggling with the perspectives of the bible – the bible can be confronting.

So what have we come to?

Firstly, I need to say that church is contextual. How we do church is different from how an African or Asian church does church. Why?

Because God gives us freedom to express our love of him as ourselves. (Thus the use of music, photography, pottery painting etc is valid)

By the statement church is contextual I mean that the expression of church or God's gathered people is going to fit with the context that those people live in.

Look at this

Psalm 29:1-2 (NIV2011)

¹ Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

This passage doesn't give us a format – just says do it.

Psalm 95:6-7 (NIV2011)

⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

⁷ for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if only you would hear his voice,

MM bow down – we don't do that.

Psalm 100:1-2 (NIV2011)

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Yep we sing.

But **there is no format notice.** It doesn't give us a run sheet or a program nor does it give us a list of tasks to do such as church cleaning, pastoral care, mowing the lawn etc.

Let me put it a different way.

HOW WE DO CHURCH< HOW WE ARE CHURCH HOW WE BE CHURCH IS DEPENDANT ON WHAT GOD CALLS US TO.

There is no generic format style or way to do church!

We can't say that the way we do church is any better than anyone else's. They have to decide how to gather and express worship for themselves.

So here's the thing –

What have we added to church that really isn't necessarily prescriptive from the bible?

Buildings are one

Sitting in rows,

Certain styles of songs or hymns

Liturgy

Piano's organs and musical instruments

Mission spots

Kids spots But hang on they are good – are yes but contextual. They suit us

Announcements (oh we don't have those)

What is the bare bones of church?

To gather (Ecclesia – to gather)

To worship

And

To serve

Remember these two verses from a few weeks ago.

Luke 4:8 (NIV2011)

⁸ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV2011)

³⁷ Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

It’s about loving God with everything you’ve got and loving other people the same way.

That’s what church is.

That is why we gather –

to express that, to celebrate that, to experience that.

And most importantly to do that.

Yes there are peripherals to do. Other things being church achieves.

Peripherals

Decision making – IN our Baptist format of church governance)

Acts 15:22 (NIV2011)

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers.

To send (Or helping others to do church on the move)

Acts 15:2-3 (NIV2011)

² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.

Teaching (While this is not only a church function but also a discipleship process function) We can do church without learning anything -jeut expressing it.

1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV2011)

¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Activity Doing stuff!

1 Corinthians 12:27-28 (NIV2011)

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

Now all this is very nice – but what does it mean to us and how we perceive church?

A couple of things here: Firstly, **How we do church depends on our concept of church.** What is church for is a question we need to ask so we know what to expect as we come to church.

If we expect church to primarily be a time of personal edification then what church is for us is different from someone who thinks church is about doing the great commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV2011)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Notice everything the underlined aspects here. All things we do.

SO:

Secondly, church MUST be seen as a verb. (Gathering is a verb – we gather together – It’s what we do) This will change our perspective radically. If Bathurst Baptist Church is to be firstly biblical and then effective in our calling from God we must do God’s stuff. Church is about serving each other, and our wider community and our local, national and global communities.

A question: If I asked you to demonstrate Church now – how would you do it???

Shall we try that. Ok you have three minutes – demonstrate to the people around you your idea of church.

(Usually by DOING something with someone)

Notice how you enacted that. (And those who didn’t do anything enacted church by doing nothing!) How much of it is a verb?

So what have we added to church! A lot But mostly we have added our own desires. Our own style and our own perspectives

Now I am not saying that is necessarily wrong, what I am saying is we need to be careful in what we make prescriptive about church.

We need to be careful about what WE add to church. WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT WE ADD TO OUR CHURCH SERVICES BOTH THE GATHERED TIMES OF WORSHIP AND LEARNING AS WELL AS OUR SERVICE TO EACH OTHER, OUR COMMUNITY AND TO MISSION.

We need to be careful how we DO church and what we CALL church.

You know, I think one of the greatest opportunities for church to be church is Christmas. We can be what Jesus expects of us and demonstrate Jesus love and care

BUT

We need to be careful what we add to Christmas too. (Arr thtah’s for next week)