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What is the church?

Meditation by Kat Wagner

I've been reflecting on what it means to be a member of Peace Church. The words that we'll be saying / we've said in the 'reception of new members' liturgy are fantastic. There's so much there about being a part of church, and especially being a part of Peace Church! So I thought it was worth spending a few minutes taking it all in.

You've probably heard it said before that the church is not the building, but the people. We are the church! In the Bible, the first Christians met together in their homes, by riverbanks, in the Temple, in rented rooms. The location or the building wasn't so important. It was the 'being together' that seemed to be important. The Bible contains a lot of metaphors and similes, pictures and parables about church.

I'm going to talk about a few of those now. And I'll be asking for your participation too, so get ready to be involved!

So here are some ways of describing what church is:

Church is a **family**: we're all God's children, sisters and brothers together. Whether we like it or not, we're all spiritually related! Families don't always get along, but in God's family we've got pretty good parents, and pretty awesome brothers and sisters. Why don't we acknowledge that now! Turn to a person sitting near you and say to them, "I'm glad you're my brother" or "I'm glad you're my sister".

So, church is a family. Here's another description of what the church is like:

Church is a **community**. Community is about having something in common. For instance, it could be a group of people who all live in the same neighbourhood, or a group of people who have a similar background, or a group of people who have a similar way of life. What makes the church a community? What makes us a community? What are the things that draw us together, that create a bond? What do you love about Peace Church? Let's take a moment to think about this. And again, I invite you to turn to someone near you and ask each other the question, "What do you love about Peace Church?"

Maybe you discovered some common themes... This is a community where we share a love for God. This is a community where we share life together. As church, we share our sufferings, our burdens, our joys and pain. For the community to function, it requires us to be forgiving, helping, caring. This community is alive and dynamic, adapting and growing.

So, church is family and church is a community. Here's another description of what the church is like:

Church is a **body**. In the Bible, the apostle Paul often described Christians as 'the body of Christ'. This body has many parts. Our physical bodies have many parts: hands, legs, eyes, fingers, kidneys... When all the parts of a human body work together it can do amazing

things, like singing or dancing. A body can only do wonderful things when it has diversity! The church is also formed of many parts. In the body of Christ, each person has different gifts, different needs, different dreams and visions. But together, we're one body. This means that we need each other. And so we've got to look after one another. I wonder what that person who you spoke to earlier needs today? A little word of encouragement? A listening ear? A bit of practical help? We could find out over coffee later...

So, church is family, church is a community and church is a body.

In the Bible, there's loads more ways that the church is described. Maybe you will like some of these too:

The church is described as a bride, who is deeply loved by God.

The church is a lampstand, shining light for all to see.

The church is God's household.

The church is a temple built with living stones.

Paul describes the church in Philippi as shining like "stars in the sky". (Philippians 2: 15)

Jesus describes his disciples as "a little flock". (Luke 12: 32)

And in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a little bit of yeast that is put into a big lump of dough to make bread.

This is who we are, Peace Church. We are family, we're a community, we are one body made of many parts, we're a bride, we're a bright light, we're shining like stars in the sky, we're a little flock, we're God's household, we're living stones built into a temple, we're a bit of yeast that makes a big difference.

What a fantastic way that God has brought us together. What a fantastic way that God is sharing his love with the world, through us.

Amen