

The history of the Church Service



The first hundred years or so. 33AD on.

- The first Christian believers met in homes.
- Initially some Jewish believers went to the synagogue to preach the gospel but were soon persecuted out. e.g. Acts 14:1; 17:1; 18:4.
- During the meetings there was no “worship leader” and everyone shared, as led by the Holy Spirit.
- Sometimes there was disorder but everyone was still encouraged to share their gifts for the common good.
- The meetings included shared meals which included celebration of the Lord’s supper. Acts 2:42-47.
- The *ekklesia* (called out ones) began to be called “Christians”. Acts 11:26.
- There was continual persecution from both Jews and Romans. (Which just helped spread the gospel!).

- “Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers” supported the believers in a town, city or area. Ephesians 4:11-13. This included sorting out of doctrinal errors. Letters were written to clarify doctrine and were copied and read in the house churches.
- “Overseers”, “older people” and “servants” had responsibility for leadership within the groups of believers. 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9.
- The believers functioned with much *philoxenia* (hospitality), *koinonia* (fellowship), and *agape* (love) as they shared their lives and possessions, prayed together, evangelised, and provided support for the persecuted, the poor, widows, and other groups of believers.
- The books of the New Testament were all written by 100AD (along with many other Christian writings).
- The main focus of the *ekklesia* (called out ones) was to share the gospel. Their meetings and support systems were all focused on this.

The next 200 years or so.

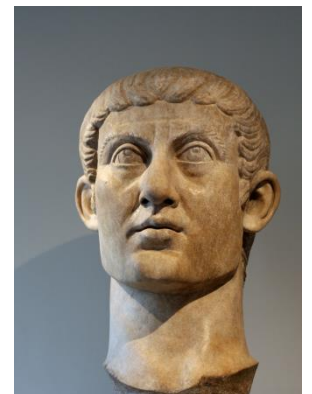
Up till 313AD when Christian worship was decriminalised under Constantine, and 380AD when the Church became the state religion of Rome.

- Christianity was outlawed and persecution became more intense so home meetings of believers became more clandestine. Many Christians were martyred in the “great persecution” and the church went underground.
- Leaders (Bishops) emerged and gradually exerted more and more power.
- Doctrines gradually developed e.g. the trinity; salvation by grace, not law; relationship with Judaism; reaction to gnosticism; Jesus as God and man. Origen wrote “On first principles” in 230AD.
- Councils of Bishops were held to decide correct doctrine.

Christianity became institutionalised as the state religion of Rome.

- Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire till it was decriminalised in the Edict of Milan 313AD, and the “Great persecution” ended.
- The Nicene creed was agreed in 325AD.
- Emperor Constantine the Great embraced Christianity around 348AD. He promoted building of basilicas for Christians to meet in, and influenced doctrines that had to be believed.
- Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380AD. The institutional Church was born: the “Church of Rome”.

Constantine the Great



Important things that happened when Christianity became institutionalised.

- Christian content was added to/replaced the existing Temple rituals.
- Meetings were held in buildings, controlled by powerful Bishops, responsible to the Roman authorities and to the Pope, who was the supreme head of the Church.
- Official doctrine became established during Church councils. e.g. Apostles creed 390AD.
- The canon of the Bible was established in 393 AD at the Council at Hippo. This canon had 73 books in it (compared to 66 in our Bible).
- Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin Vulgate Version around 390AD. This became the official Bible of the Roman Church.

- In the Vulgate the word *ekklēsia* (called out ones) was translated as *ecclesia*, a word that had little meaning and so was gradually replaced by *kyriake doma*, meaning “the house of the Lord”. In time *kyriake* became the German “Kirken”, the Scottish “Kirk”, and the English “Church”.

The Greek word *kyriakos* (church) is never used in the original New Testament. It suited the Roman institution to replace “called out ones” with “Church - the house of the Lord”, because they controlled the institution with all of its buildings and wealth. Later, when the King James Bible was written (1611AD), the 3rd of its foundational decrees was that *ekklēsia* had to be translated as “church”. 3. *The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.*). This suited King James as he was then head of the Church of England!

Meetings of the Roman Church

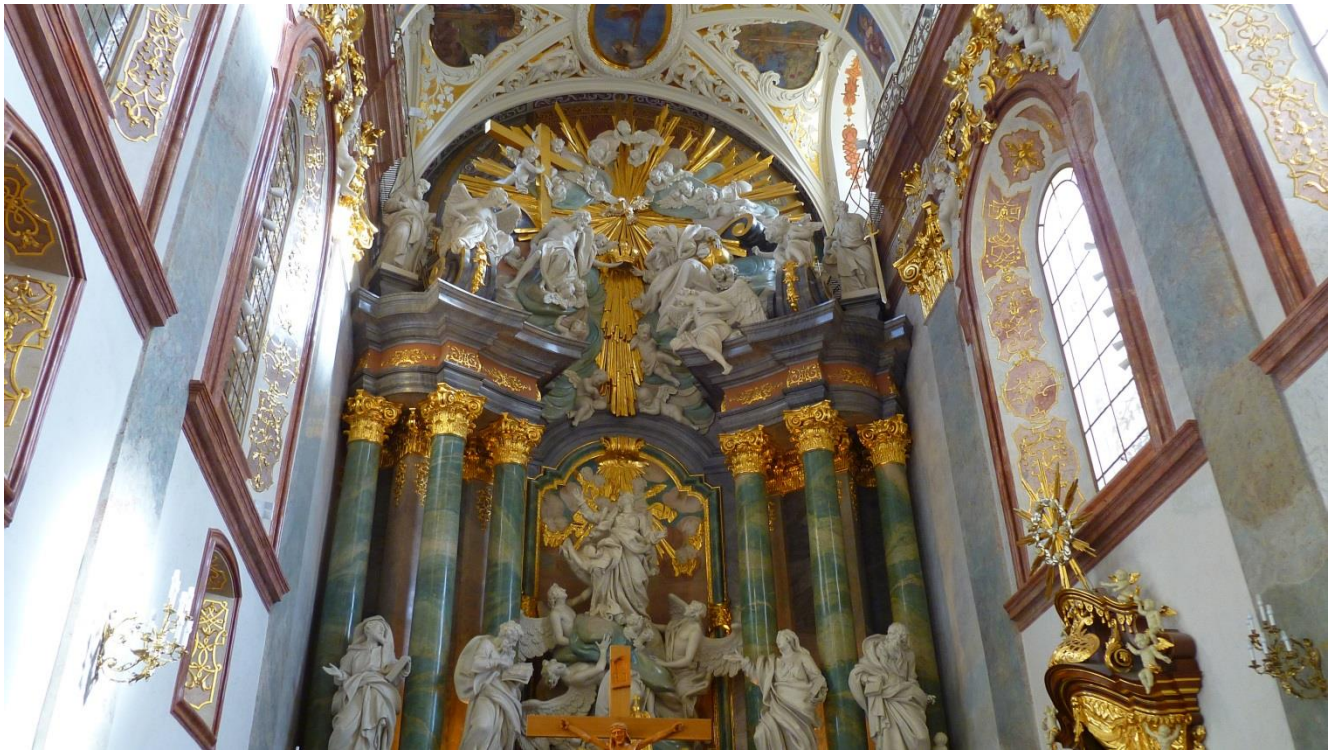
- The meetings in the Roman temples had their “own order of service”, led by pagan priests. The focus was on making sacrifices. When Christianity became the state religion, Christian and Jewish rituals and content were added to the pagan rituals. This order of service became the “Roman Catholic Mass”.
- The man most responsible for shaping the Mass was Pope Gregory the Great (540–604AD), the first monk to be made Pope. He was a very superstitious man strongly influenced by “magic, heathenism and Christianity”. Gregory is sometimes called the “first completely medieval man”.
- The Mass and Canon Law were subject to the Law of Rome.
- The Mass Gregory developed has remained virtually unchanged over the centuries.



Pope Gregory the Great

The Mass contains many pagan practices in its liturgy including:

- the architecture, layout and design of the building. The altar for the sacrifice is central in the service;
- leadership by priests, assisted by servers;
- vestments worn by priests and servers;
- processions;
- use of signs e.g. the sign of the cross and sign of peace; use of icons and sacraments;
- use of candles, incense and holy water;
- liturgy, invocations, readings, antiphons (chants) led by priests;
- a central sacrifice. (In the Eucharist the elements are believed to be transformed into the body and blood of Christ);
- a homily (short talk by the Priest);
- acts and prayers of penitence, absolution and consecration;
- a sending out. (“Mass” is based on the ending of the Mass in Latin: *Ite missa est* which means “be dismissed” or “go and share the mission”).



What should we do if something comes from a pagan source?



We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world , and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”) yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live, and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 1 Corinthians 8:4,5

The order of service in the Mass

- **Introductory rites:** Procession, greeting, blessing, sprinkling of Holy Water; penitential rite. Singing/chanting – Kyrie, Gloria. Opening prayer.
- **Liturgy of the Word:** Old and New Testament readings; homily (short sermon); profession of faith by reciting the Creed. Intercession/prayer of the faithful.
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist (communion):** presentation of the gifts; Eucharistic prayer; Sanctus; Lord's prayer, sign of peace; breaking of bread; prayers of absolution and consecration; songs of praise.
- Collection and announcements,
- **Concluding rite:** blessing, *ite missa est* dismissal and recessional.



The basic components of the service have been the same (with minor adjustments) in all institutionalised churches ever since Roman times.

- Welcome and introduction
- Singing
- Prayers
- Bible reading
- Sermon
- Communion
- Prayers
- Notices and collection
- Singing
- Blessing and dismissal



Up till the Reformation 1520AD

- The prescribed liturgy was led by ordained priests.
- The focus of the service was on the Eucharist (thanksgiving) – a resacrificing of Jesus, only partaken by the priests.
- The service was in Latin (and so not understood by most people who attended).
- “Singing” was chanting by the priests with responses by the people.
- Attendance at the service and participation in the Church’s rites (Mass, confession, penance etc.) was compulsory.
- The Bible was in Latin and ordinary Christians were forbidden to own or read it. Invention of the printing press (Gutenberg 1450AD) enabled printed liturgical materials to be used during the service.
- The Church was exceedingly rich and the Catholic religion had enormous power throughout the western world.

Branches of the Reformation

- Luther (1523) → Lutheran tradition
- Calvin (1541) → Reformed tradition
- Knox (1547) → Presbyterian tradition
- Henry VIII (1534) → Anglican tradition



Catholic



Anglican

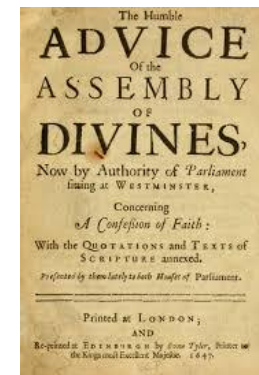
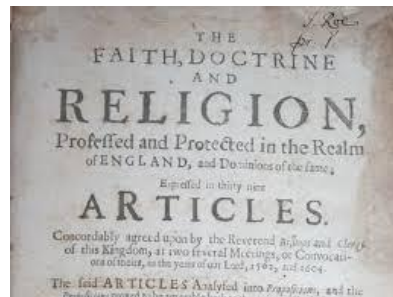


Presbyterian

Statements of faith and Canons of the Bible

The different traditions all articulated their beliefs in Statements of Faith. They also had an accepted Canon of the Bible.

- **Council of Trent** of 1546 for Roman Catholicism. (76 book Vulgate Bible – in Latin)
- **The Thirty-Nine Articles** of 1563 for the Church of England, (66 book Bible – Authorised Version 1611)
- **The Westminster Confession of Faith** of 1647 for Calvinism and Presbyterianism. (66 book Bible).
- **The Synod of Jerusalem** of 1672 for the Greek Orthodox. (76 book Bible).



Luther began the Reformation

- In 1517 Martin Luther published his 95 theses criticising Catholic practice. In 1520 he launched a campaign against the Catholic Mass, saying that it was a “human work” based on an inaccurate understanding of Christ’s sacrifice.
- In 1523 he published a revision of the Mass which made preaching, rather than the Eucharist, the central part of the gathering: *“The preaching and teaching of God’s Word is the most important part of Divine service.”* After this the pulpit became central in many non-catholic churches, not the altar, and church leaders were called “preachers”.
- Luther also changed the Eucharistic prayer to “words of institution” based on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. “The Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed”



Lutheran Divine Service

- **Preparatory service:** processional hymn; invocation and sign of the Cross; confession of sins.
- **Service of the Word:** singing/chanting - Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Dominus; Old and New Testament readings interspersed with singing - Alleluia, hymns; Sermon; Nicene Creed; Collection; Prayers of the faithful.
- **Service of the Sacrament:** singing/chanting - Sanctus; anaphora (preparation for communion); Lord's prayer; Pax domini; Agnus Dei; distribution of elements; singing/chanting- Nunc dimittus.
- Benediction; Recessional hymn; Ite missa est dismissal.



Major differences between the Lutheran liturgy and the Catholic Mass

- The service was in the language of the people rather than in Latin.
- The sermon was the central act of the meeting.
- The congregation could sing, not just the priests.
- The Eucharist was a memorial of the body and blood of Christ, not a resacrifice.
- The congregation could partake of the bread and cup, not just the priest.

Otherwise the Lutheran (and Anglican) liturgy is still led by ordained clergy and its form is much the same as it is in the Catholic Mass.



The Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) made significant changes to the Eucharist

- Zwingli replaced the altar with a communion table from which the bread and wine were distributed. The two candles on the table are remnants from Roman times.
- He introduced trays so the bread and wine could be taken to the people.
- He said that communion is a “memorial” of the death of Christ. “This do in remembrance of Me”.
- He said communion should be taken quarterly; a view not shared by all reformers.



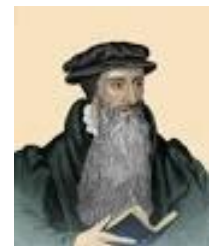
Influence of John Calvin and John Knox (Reformed tradition)

Calvin and Knox developed orders of service between 1537 and 1562. While similar to Luther's, the order of service in Calvin's Geneva Church became the model for all Reformed Churches, and has influenced all Protestant churches ever since.

- The service was led from the front by the Minister, who processed in during the first hymn. The Minister (like the ancient priests) became the MC for the service.
- Organs, choirs and instruments were banned because they are not mentioned in the New Testament. (They re-appeared in the mid 19th Century in some reformed churches)
- Theological, academic preaching was central in the service.
- The offering was collected after the sermon.



Calvin



Knox

- The people had to maintain a sombre attitude because they were in “the house of the Lord”. Sometimes people were fined for smiling in church! If people fell asleep they were poked with a knobbed staff by the ‘tithingman’ – “a parish officer elected annually to maintain order during divine service”.



THIS PERSON HAS BEEN RATED

R

REFORMED



The form of doctrine and practice set forth by Jesus Christ in the Bible and taught by such leading Protestants as John Calvin, John Knox, Martin Luther, Francis Turretin and all good Puritans.

“Order of worship” in Calvin’s Geneva Church

- Processional during first hymn
- Prayer of confession
- Singing (Psalm)
- Prayer for enlightenment of the Spirit in the preaching
- Sermon
- Collection of the offering
- General prayers
- Communion (at the appointed times) while a Psalm is sung
- Benediction
- Final hymn and recessional



Protests against the Church of England's liturgy

- In the 1660s “the Dissenters” left the Church of England in the “great ejection” because they disagreed with aspects of the “Book of Common prayer”. They included Presbyterians, Unitarians, Baptists and Congregationalists.
- The “Act of Toleration” 1689 allowed “non-conformists” or “protestants” to worship as long as they pledged allegiance to the King, and rejected transubstantiation.
- The Protestants built chapels as places of worship.



The influence of the Puritans

One group of dissenters were the Puritans. They wanted to create a new world and established a colony in New England, America in the 1640s. The Puritans were Calvinistic, but felt Calvin's order of worship wasn't biblical enough. They became very legalistic about what should happen in the service.

- They removed vestments, icons and ornaments.
- They encouraged spontaneous prayer (which opened the way for the prayer before the sermon to last an hour or more!).
- Their clergy wrote their own sermons rather than reading official homilies. They saw the sermon as the way by which God spoke and punished those who missed it.



- The Puritans occasionally allowed lay people to speak. e.g. ask questions after the sermon, and give testimonies. (This died out later and is now rare).
- They introduced exorcism, and millennialism.

The “Free Church” movement was an offshoot of the Puritans. They created the “hymn sandwich” order of worship that became popular in most Protestant churches:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Call to worship | • Pre-sermon prayer |
| • Hymn | • Sermon |
| • Prayer | • Collection |
| • Reading | • Communion |
| • Hymn | • Hymn |
| • Prayer | • Benediction |
| • Reading | |



The 18th and 19th centuries

- During the 18th and 19th centuries there was a great emphasis on evangelism, revival and overseas mission.
- The Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican and Presbyterian services/liturgies stayed much the same (right through until the 1960s).
- John Wesley (1703 – 1791) was an Anglican minister who, with his brother Charles Wesley and fellow cleric George Whitefield, founded the evangelical movement known as Methodism. Wesley's rules (methods), work and writings played a leading role in the development of the Holiness Movement, Revivalism and Pentecostalism.



John Wesley

The Methodists

The Methodists brought new dimensions to the non liturgical Protestant services:

- Emotion. Hymn singing was emotional, fervent and loud! Many great hymns were written by John's brother Charles Wesley.
- Old fashioned language. The different kinds of prayers were combined into one long prayer by the minister. The prayer was in Elizabethan English with Thee's and Thou's.
- An Evening Service (once gas lighting was invented).



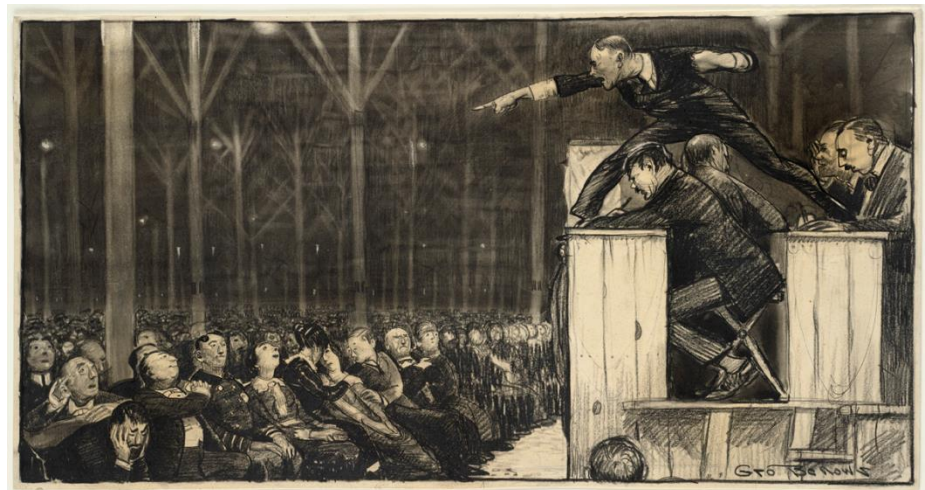
The Revivalists

Popular Revivalist preachers like George Whitefield, Charles Finney, DL Moody and Charles Spurgeon strongly influenced Protestant churches, including the Methodists.



- Many new denominations were born including the Salvation Army (William Booth), Plymouth Brethren (John Nelson Darby).
- The goal of preaching became to save lost souls. Every sermon was a gospel message. “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”.
- The revivals were held in churches, tents or in big “open airs”.
- Music and hymns (especially after the sermon) were designed to bring about an emotional response to the gospel message. e.g. Power in the blood; Have Thine own way, Lord; Just as I am.
- People were invited to come forward to a “mourning bench” to repent of their sins. This soon changed to an “anxious bench” and then coming forward to the altar in an “altar call”.

- Using techniques to manipulate people's emotions was not seen to be an issue because pragmatically they worked, and people "got saved". The end justified the means. It was acceptable to use choral music to soften people up; emotional pressure (hellfire and damnation!) in the preaching so they would "make a decision", and post-sermon "invitational hymns" to reinforce the emotion. These techniques soon translated over into the order of service in "evangelical" churches.



The influence of DL Moody

(1837-1899)



Moody travelled throughout the world and preached to more than 100 million people. (Before airplanes and microphones!). He preached an individualised gospel: the three Rs: ruined by sin, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Spirit.

Moody introduced:

- A soloist singing the invitational hymn (later made popular by George Beverley Shea).
- A choir singing songs like “Just as I am” during the invitation.
- People who wanted to be saved standing up and reciting a “sinners prayer”. (50 years later Billy Graham added “everyone close your eyes” and “raise your hand if you want to accept Christ”).

- Decision cards.
- Evangelistic campaign advertising.
- The Brethren idea of pretribulation dispensationalism. *Christ could come tonight. Are you ready?*

For Moody, the church was “a voluntary association of the saved.” His influence was so great that by 1874 the church was not seen as a corporate body but as a gathering of individuals. This emphasis was picked up by the revivalists who followed him and eventually became central to evangelical Christianity: quite different to *ekklesia* – called out ones.



20th century Pentecostalism

The “order of service” in Pentecostal meetings (1906 on) was much the same as in other evangelical churches but it had extra dimensions:

- “Worship” became something that was done rather than something that was attended. It had a strongly emotional expression; repetitive songs; lifting of hands; dancing; clapping; exercise of spiritual gifts especially speaking in tongues; use of guitars, drums and tambourines; singing in the Spirit; and a desire to flow in the Spirit.
- Choruses of hymns were sung over and over. e.g. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus*. Many similar short songs were written and became known as “choruses”. These became the main songs sung in Pentecostal worship.
- The preachers were “teachers” whose long sermons were filled with deep and very spiritual Bible teaching.
- Church leaders were called Pastors, and had great power based on their spiritual authority (as compared to organisational authority in liturgical or more traditional churches).



The Charismatic renewal (late 1960's on)

The Charismatic renewal affected the order of service in most churches including Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and evangelical. Reformed churches were least affected. Initially there was much resistance and division, but, over time, most churches opened up and incorporated aspects of the renewal.

- Church meetings had a clear order of service led by the Pastor and delegated “worship leaders” and a “worship team”. People were able to be involved in the meeting in a wide range of ways.
- Worship was accompanied by guitars and/or a band. It was mostly choruses and occasionally a hymn. Major contributions came from “Scripture in Song”; “Gaither gospel music” and Anglican folk music.
- Teaching was long and in depth (carrying on from the Pentecostal tradition).
- There was much openness to “flowing in the Spirit” and exercising of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially in home meetings. These home meetings were very much like the original meetings of the *ekklesia* with everyone encouraged to contribute, and much love.

The rise of mega-churches (1990s on)

Mega churches follow the typical order of service but have developed their own flavour (strongly influenced by Hillsong).

- Pastors (and church staff) have much authority and control.
- Worship is led by a band with words projected on big screens.
- The “tithing message” influences people to give “tithes and offerings”.
- The Pastor’s sermon tends to be lightweight with many jokes and stories.
- The meetings are used to promote and encourage involvement in church programmes and outreaches (which are ‘awesome’!).



The last 20 years

- The Catholic Mass is now in the local language and more involving of the people. (Following Vatican 2, 1965).
- There are wide variations in church liturgies depending on how traditional or conservative the churches are. South America, Africa and many parts of Asia are conservatively Catholic or Protestant. Christianity in Europe is in major decline; America is declining rapidly but has strong Protestant conservative areas. NZ and Australia are at the forefront of the secularisation. At the same time Islam is increasing dramatically through planned population growth, “evangelism” and radical extremism.
- The Charismatic renewal has died down but aspects of it have become mainstream in most churches. e.g. choruses and more involvement of the people. Exercise of spiritual gifts is rare.
- In NZ liberal churches e.g. Methodist, have nearly died out. Catholic, Reformed and most older denominations have no or few young people and are going the same way. Young people tend to go to the mega-churches, perhaps attracted by their concert approach, rather than a formal liturgy.

The Church today is very different from the early *ekklesia* (called out ones)

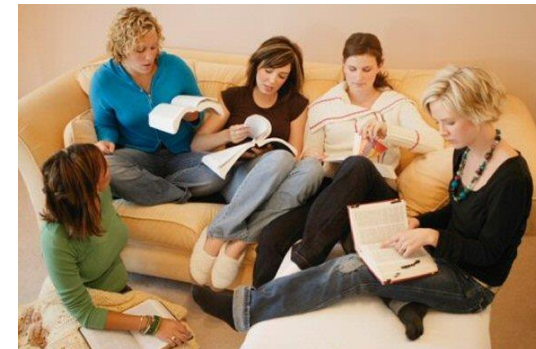
- The institutional church has become a sub-culture within society that is increasingly seen as being irrelevant. In NZ there is a strong rejection of anything to do with church and its members are often isolated by their beliefs. (But great differences exist in this in various parts of the world). Mega-churches are flourishing within their sub-cultures (but vulnerable when Pastors are discredited for moral failings). Traditional churches are rapidly losing members (and funding). Leaders of most institutional churches are concerned about the future and are reviewing the way they do things.
- Countless Christians have left the institutional church. Some meet in homes and try to function as *ekklesia*. Some seek to have an individualised outworking of their Christianity, and some have given up on God.

Ekklesia	Institutional Church
In homes, often including eating together.	In a church building.
Informal meetings, seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit. No plan for what will happen.	Follow a pre-prepared liturgy or order of service.
Everyone contributes freely. Leaders encourage everyone to share.	Led from the front by a Priest, Pastor, or worship leader. People are an audience and can only be involved in limited ways.
Free to sing, pray, explore, do, flow	Constrained by the order of service.
Sharing Bible study.	Sermon. (Poor way of learning).
Focus on supporting each other for task of evangelism.	Focus on church programmes (which may include evangelism).
Does not need any funding.	Requires much funding to run the institution. Extra funds can be used for outreach.
Based on the Lord's way of Jesus being the head of a body of people – His called out ones. (<i>ekklesia</i>)	Based on the pagan way of a “service” led by a powerful priest. Set rituals must be followed (sacraments and components of the service).
Is being explored by a rapidly increasing number of Christians.	Is still important as part of the religion of many Christians but being rejected and mocked by wider NZ society.

What do you think will happen in the future?



*I will build
my ekklesia.*
Matthew
16:18



Some thoughts on the Church of the future

Young people only know a post-modern world.

This affects their attitudes to organisations, authority, fashion, technology, tolerance, truth, loyalty, experience, learning, self, travel, security, God, sex, environment, spirituality, discipline, structure, respect etc. Generation X/Y have no background of, commitment to, or respect for Church the way it is traditionally done. (That's why Christian young people go to the mega-churches where there is a particular style of Church that is currently fashionable).

The institutional Church (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Pentecostal etc.) is being led and funded by older people.

The institutional church of the future will be very different to the way it is now.

NZ society is now almost completely intolerant of Biblical Christianity

As a result most Christians are fearful or wary about acknowledging they are Christians, and tend to form a sub-culture in their Churches. “Church” becomes a way of life which is very important for them and which protects them from persecution in the ‘world’, but which is irrelevant for most people in society.



Most people in NZ don't know anything about the gospel

This means they are lost! Christ died for them; God wants them to be saved. They have great needs in their lives and try all sorts of avenues to have these needs met and find meaning in life. Most have a warped view of Christianity (fed by the media and by Christians who are poor/unwise examples) so seeking for life in Christ is not an option.



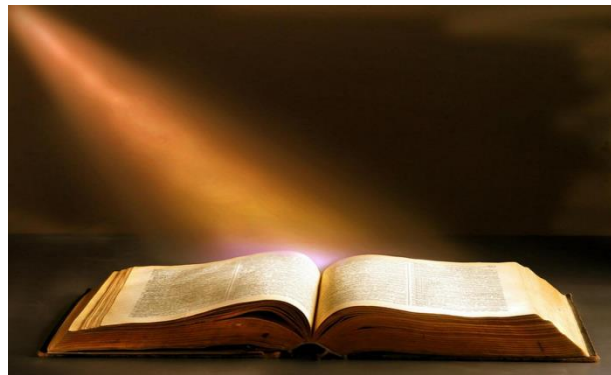
Jesus is the only one who can meet people's needs.

Only He can give meaning in life. Only He can heal people's hearts. Only He can save lost people so they can have eternal life.



Big issues Christians must face in the future

- A rejection of the power, influence and culture of the institutional church and, ultimately, its death.
- A return to *ekklesia* in our meetings, relationships and focus.
- A supportive, loving, accepting, non-judgmental and inclusive community.
- Valid interpretation and use of the Bible.
- A focus on sharing the gospel.



We must proclaim Christ to people where they are.

The focus must not be on us; it must be on sharing Christ to those who don't know Him. Christianity is not for Christians; it is for non-Christians! We must go; not seek to have them come to us. This will require lots of 'equipping the saints for the work of ministry'.



We will only be effective in the power of the Holy Spirit.



Change comes through organisation, planning, choices, decisions etc. but transformation comes by the Holy Spirit. We will only make a difference if what we do comes from the Holy Spirit; is led by Him and is empowered by Him. We'll know that this is so when we see people being saved and healed and restored: when we see Jesus being glorified in the world.

The *ekklesia* will be focused on doing God's will and will be His agent for changing lives and changing society.

Ekklesia won't be about what we want or like. It will be about finding God's will; doing what He wants; proclaiming the gospel, changing society, glorifying Jesus. i.e. bringing in the Kingdom of God.

Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

