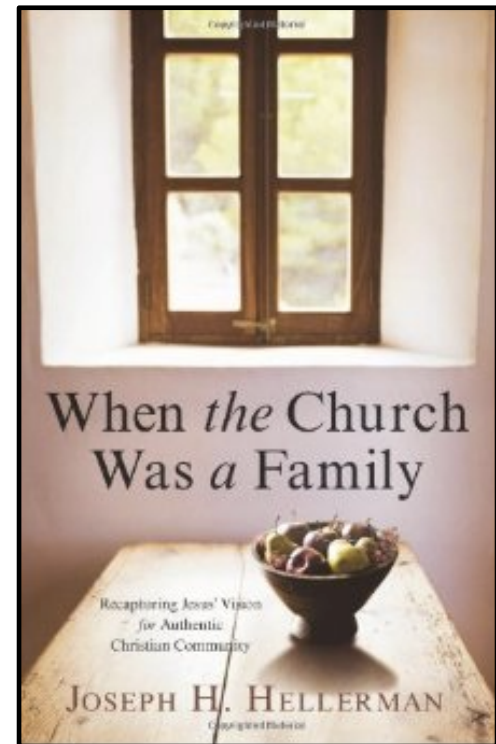


The Titanic

Joseph Hellerman. When the Church was a Family.



Accomplishing the Work in Ames Des Moines

What are our the purposes of our Sunday morning gatherings?

If someone says to you that they go to church, what do they mean? In our culture today, what does it mean to go to church?

If you went to church in the first 300 years of church, what would it mean?

If someone says to you that they go to church, what do they mean? In our culture today, what does it mean to go to church?

In essence, it means they attended an event

- Attended a 45min – 90 min service or mass
- Recited confessions, liturgy, reflected on sin
- Sang songs and hymns
- Attended a Sunday school or similar program
- Listened to sermon or homily

If you went to church in the first 300 years of church, what would it mean?

In essence it would mean Acts 2:42

- Dedicated to the Apostles teachings
- Fellowship - similar to gathering seen in Acts 10 (vs 24, relatives, close friends)
- Breaking of bread – a meal as seen in 1 Cor 11-14
- Prayer

The gathering of Christian believers in private homes continued to be the norm until the early decades of the 4th century when under the tutelage of Constantine, the Christians began erecting the first basilicas.

Acts and the House Church by Bradley Blue, pg 124

And no doubt the small house churches grew by inviting friends, visiting kinsfolk, fellow synagogue attenders, neighbors and colleagues to come to one of their regular meetings or shared meals.

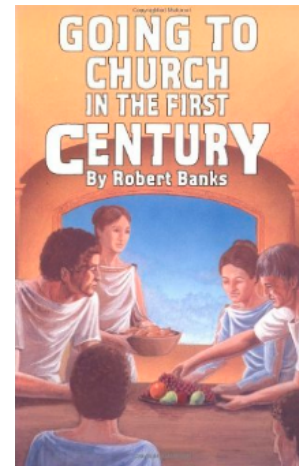
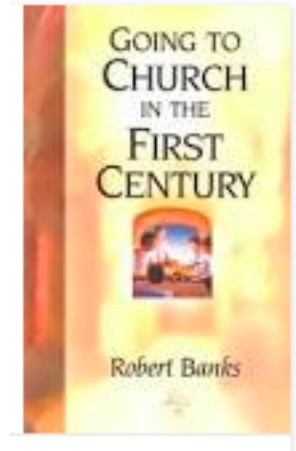
Dunn, James. Beginning From Jerusalem. Pg 641

The book of Acts clearly establishes a connection between this small authentic gathering of believers and their multiplication and spontaneous expansion, as the Lord added to their numbers. Each of the six progress markers in Acts shows the Lord adding to the progress of the gospel through multiplication of these small churches.

From Simple Churches to Complex Networks. Pg 6

Overall elements in a “church” meeting:

- 3-4 hours of meeting and meal
- Had songs and prayer
- Had breaking of the bread
- Meal was central
- A mealtime (deipnon)- meal, bread, cup, discussion
- A symposium time- teaching music, prayer
- Passing of the cup
- More songs and prayer



Robert Banks, *Going to Church in the First Century*

The meeting was divided into two main parts:

1. the *deipnon* (Strong's G1173) - the meal, which included the bread and cup, and fellowship
2. and the *symposium* - which included teaching, music, prayer, prophecy, tongues and interpretation, etc.

The mealtime was imperative and paramount to the time together.

- The meal visualized the church as an authentic family
- It allowed for natural fellowship
- It put the Kerygma as the center of the time
- It was simple and universal
- It promoted natural networking

The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering, by Alikin

During the 4th century marked another milestone in the shifting of the paradigm, with Constantine. Since then, we have not returned to the paradigm of these early church days.

- The meal was originally called the Lord's Supper and Love Feasts – it was prohibited by the 4th century. Over time it was reduced to a priestly ritual we watch from a distance, today called the Eucharist. It was reduced to a bite-size cracker or wafer and a thimbleful of grape juice or wine.
- The celebratory aspect was removed, and especially since John Calvin's time, people are told to examine their lives in a serious and somber way. Not a celebration.

Barna and Viola. Pagan Christianity. Pg 193-196

The dialogue and “everyone participate” atmosphere, as seen in Acts 20:7-12, was replaced with a sermon and a passive audience.

It was a *participation* atmosphere. The problem with the sermon isn't the sermon itself. It's the way the sermon silenced everyone else. In our churches, there's a place for speeches--as long as they don't silence everyone else. The participation atmosphere of primitive Christianity is replaced by a unidirectional activity done by only one active participant, aimed at a whole crowd of passive receivers.

The sermon is the bedrock of the Protestant liturgy. For 500 yrs it has functioned like clockwork. Every Sunday the pastor steps up to his pulpit and gives an inspirational sermon to a passive pew warming audience.

Viola and Barna. Pagan Christianity.

Acts 20:7-12

On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking *until midnight*. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a *deep sleep while Paul talked still longer*. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them *until dawn*; then he left. Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted.

Edward Farley said that we need to:

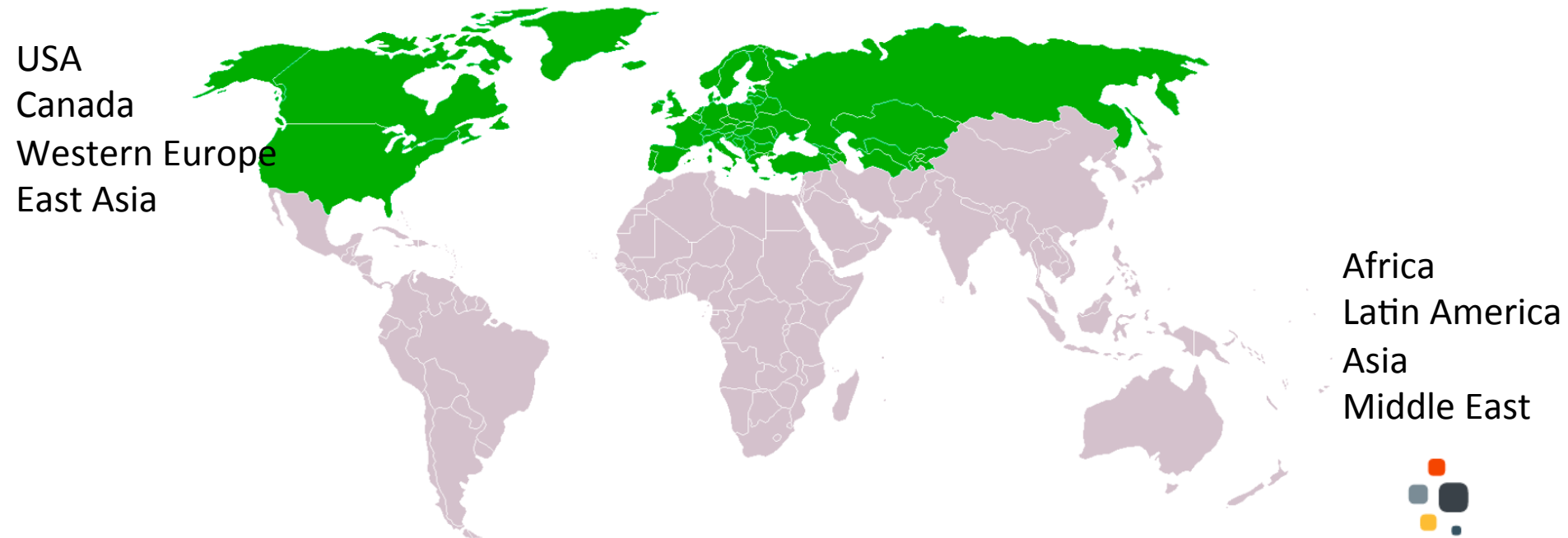
Deconstruct our Sunday morning liturgical event and its written beforehand, delivered to a congregation preaching paradigm, to return to the Early Church, meal-based community event in order to unleash the formula response for growth and worship.

We would say:

God is doing something in our day. A new (old) paradigm is emerging and our stewardship is to shape it around The Way of Christ and His Apostles.

In the last 60-70 years, the Global South, Christianity has grown at a pace previously not seen before in history.

Global North and Global South



USA
Canada
Western Europe
East Asia

Africa
Latin America
Asia
Middle East

Accomplishing the Work in Ames Des Moines

So what? What does all of this have to do with the purposes of our Sunday mornings?

First – Our local network of churches meet in private homes because we believe there is a connection between the gathering in our homes, around an evening meal, celebrating our new life in Christ, and the expansion of the church.

- The meal visualized the church as an authentic family
- It allowed for natural fellowship
- It put the Kerygma as the center of the time
- It was simple and universal
- It promoted natural networking
- And no doubt the small house churches grew by inviting friends, visiting kinsfolk, fellow synagogue attenders, neighbors and colleagues to come to one of their regular meetings or shared meals.

I say all of this to say...Therefore, the purpose of our Sunday morning gathering is:

- Platform for apostolic equipping – teaching on important issues to equip the saints for the work of ministry
- Platform for Music and Arts Guild – presenting artistic contributions and equipping the church in using the arts in the churches
- Provide network identity – building identity with the Ames DSM CityChurch, the CityChurch Network, and the BILD Network, to grow in one mindedness
- Resource development – developing the resources for the worldwide movement of churches

General expectations for shepherding your people around the Sunday morning gathering

First stage of Development

- Involvement with neighborhood church in the evening, involvement in FP or Lifeⁿ

Second stage of Development

- Involvement in cluster meetings, attend network love feasts

Third stage of Development

- Involvement in the Sunday morning gathering, being equipped by the apostolic team

Provide network identity – building identity with the Ames DSM CityChurch, the CityChurch Network, and the BILD Network, to grow in one mindedness

The USA CityChurch

- other churches coming to share their stories and their work
- 30 City Initiatives updates from city leaders and Jeff, Michael

BILD Network

- the Summit, updates from Jeff, Michael, Steve, Bill

June	5		Michael			
	12		Michael	The Purpose of the Sunday Morning Gathering: Network Identity		
	19		Caleb	The Purpose of the Sunday Morning Gathering: Equipping		
	26	Corinth 1	Jeff			
July	3	Guild: Artistic Presentation	Sean, Caleb			
	10	Off	Off		Sam, Caleb	Kerygmic Community encyclical/evangelism
	17	Off	Off		Sam, Caleb	Kerygmic Community encyclical/evangelism
	24	Off	Off			
	31					
August	7		Sean	"Life-altering community in Christ"		
	14		Michael	City Initiative		
	21					
	28					
September	4		Caleb	Bringing contributions		
	11		Sean, Caleb	Art Guild: Training/equipping		
	18		Verlyn Swanson	CityChurch Rockford		
	25					
October	2		Sam	Panel discussion: civic leaders		
	9		Sam	Panel discussion: business leaders		
	16		Sean:	Art Guild: Artistic Presentation		
	23					
	30					
November	6		James	What's going well? (Based on church reports)		
	13		James	What's not going so well? (Based on church reports)		
	20					
	27					
December	4		Randy, Steve, Sean, Caleb	Antioch School cohort panel (Blando, Ben Law?)		
	11		Sean	Children in the meeting		
	18					
	25	Christmas Day				

Teaching schedule is available in the Leaders' "shared Google Drive"

Understand the schedule so that you can shepherd people into the appropriate equipping Sunday for their development.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.