

# Church By Choice

## One More Time

PASTOR KAREN EBERT, FEBRUARY 2011

Once upon a time, it was possible to be a "successful" church (meaning you had lots of members and lots of money), simply by having a really nice building in a really good location.

Not any more.

For one thing, a conveniently located edifice isn't enough - you can't build it and they will come. For another, our definition of success is changing. No longer can we feel successful by getting bigger: now it is more important to get deeper.

It has become too easy to be a member of a church without being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We get our names on a list so we can be counted. But this is not true to the best meaning of Church. It is not true to the model of the early Christian movement, where believers "spent much time together in the temple...broke bread in homes...had all things in common...sold their possession and distributed the proceeds to all who had need." (see Acts 2:44- 47) It is not true to the early Methodist Church, where Wesley organized people into small covenant groups who held each other accountable for their discipleship, asking after each other's attendance and faith with the question, "How is it with your soul?" It is not true to our own membership vows, which we not only take upon joining, but reaffirm every time we welcome others into membership, to participate in the ministries of the church "By our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness." We need to be more than words on a page.

In the best of churches, people are more than members in name only. They are deeply committed followers of Jesus, 24/7/365. We celebrate those of you who are deeply committed Christians. You make this Faith Community run - you also make it dance and serve and beckon. We would like to find ways to bring all of us to the kind of depth of faith that brings about this depth of commitment.

The staff has been working on new ways to emphasize our responsibility to God, our commitment to being the church, and our accountability to one another. We're starting at the beginning, and starting at the top, offering a series of Four Core Classes (see the Faith Formation Page for details). We are starting at the beginning, with new members, and starting at the top, asking our leaders to join in alongside our newest members.

Eventually, we want every single member, current and future, to have been part of these Four Core Classes. Soon, we will begin to invite each of you, a dozen or so at a time, to join

FROM PASTOR KAREN'S DESK

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in these classes, and take these first steps toward being the Church by Choice. And living faithfully ever after.