

Gather Round and Step Up
September 27, 2015

"Oyez, Oyez, Oyez, gather round and hear the latest news." A town crier (**picture**) is an officer of the court who makes public announcements. Town Criers were common in European countries until modern communication methods were invented. In England, they carry a hand bell to attract people's attention, as they shout the words "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez!". The word "**Oyez**" is an Anglo-Norman word meaning "listen". Now what I want you to get this morning is the idea of calling a group of people together for a special purpose.

This is an old concept. In ancient Greece, in the city of Athens, the city government was actually comprised of all the men of the city. They would be called to assemble together for the transaction of city business. When they were assembled they were referred to as **the *ekklesia* (ehk-lay-sea-ah) = "the ones called out"**. Over time the meaning of this word, *ekklesia*, was stretched to mean any group that gathered for a special purpose, or a group that gathered because they had something in common. In the days of the early church, Christians borrowed this term to refer to themselves when they came together in the name of Jesus. It carried for them the idea that God had called them out of the world to serve Jesus together. So one of the first terms the churches used for themselves was *ekklesia*.

This word appears 110 times in the New Testament part of the Bible for a gathered group of Christians. However, it is almost always translated into English Bibles by the word "church". **So *ekklesia* is a church.** At its root meaning it is a group of Christians who have gathered or assembled together.

I shared this so you would understand how the Bible uses the word church. At its core, a church is simply a group of Christians who gather together in the name of Jesus. They do not own land or a building. They do not have a paid pastor or collect money. But they are a church in the Biblical sense of the word. They might meet under a tree, in a public park, or in someone's house or apartment. Our church, and most of the churches that you are likely familiar with are very different from such a basic church.

So where did the word church come from? I'll give you the short answer to that question. Another Greek word, ***kyriakos*, (keer-ee-ah-kohs) = "belonging to the Lord" appears twice in the New Testament (the Lord's day, Revelation 1:10; the Lord's supper, 1 Corinthians 11:20).** The usage of this word was adopted by early Christians with regard to anything pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ. So the place they started meeting became the Lord's house. This term, over 1,500 years, and through several different languages, became the English word "church". The word church was originally used for both the building and the group meeting in it, as both were considered belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Over the last 500 years word church has expanded in meaning. **Today we use the word church in the following ways:**

- **A group of Christians joined together as a group or community;**
Years ago one of my sons had a friend who lived in Gambrills. His family was part of a house church that met in a home on Sunday. They did not own land or rent a building, nor hire staff. And they had no plans to do so.
- **A building where Christians meet;**
We're going to paint the church Saturday.
- **A worship service;**
Are you going home after Sunday School or staying for church?
- **All Christians through time; This is called the universal church.**
All Christians are Jesus' church.
- **A local church,**
You might tell your friend that you attend Emmanuel Baptist Church of Gambrills. This is a local church, one individual church of many in the community.
- **All religion in America,**
We speak of the separation of Church and State, not meaning the universal church, or even just Christian churches, but meaning all religious groups.
- **An organization;**
Emmanuel Baptist Church is a non-profit corporation in Maryland. As a corporation we have trustees who are the legal representatives of this church. We have a monthly business meeting where the church makes decisions on policies, budgets, purchases and such. Thinking of the church this way we may say things like, "The church decided to purchase an LED sign." We mean that the members of this corporation voted to make this purchase.

When a group of Christians met some 36 years ago to begin Emmanuel Baptist Church, they decided what kind of church they wanted to be. They wanted to be a church that owned land, built a building, hired staff, organized along Southern Baptist polity, and would be a non-profit corporation in the state of Maryland. And they accomplished all of that. That is the kind of church we are.

This is the church you have come to. This is the church most of you here have become members of, choosing to do more than attend. You chose to join, to make a commitment.

We could choose not to own a building or land, not to have staff, and collect no money, but we could not be the same kind of church as we are now if we did those things. We would not be able to do the same kind of things we do now as a church. Let me share with you what kind of church we are, and what kinds of things we do.

This year we are giving away almost 24% of our income to outside mission causes. We support over 10,000 missionaries around the world with some of the money you put in the offering plate. This does not include any of the money you have given to the three special missions offerings in April, September, and December. This is just through your regular giving. We contribute to many needy people with these funds, from poor retired pastors to deaf children attending a Christian summer camp to helping people keep their heat on and get enough to eat.

We will spend just over 42% of our budget on staff costs this year. Why are we spending so much on staff? Because when this church was started it was the goal of the founding group to have a full-time paid pastor. They did not want to rely just on its members, like many house churches do. They did not want to try to find a bi-vocational

pastor, a man who works a secular job full-time and pastors as a volunteer on the side part-time. They did not want to hire a part-time pastor. They wanted to hire a full-time paid pastor.

This year we will spend almost 23% of our budget on things associated with the building and grounds. We have no debt, but utilities, insurance, maintenance, and upkeep expenses keep going up. This too is a big part of the budget, but that is true for any church like us who owns, rents, or leases a building to meet in.

That leaves just over 11% of the budget for program and ministry costs like Bible study materials, Vacation Bible School, postage, paper, music, outreach, inreach, children's choir, youth activities, and everything else that we do here.

Let me share with you what it takes to be the kind of church we are. It takes money of course. But it takes more than this.

It takes prayer to be the kind of church we are. All the good that is happening here is due to Jesus. HE is building His church. We have seen that recently in some of the new people He has brought to this church. They did not come in response to what we were doing, but in response to God tugging at their hearts. We need to be praying for God to work that way, to do what only God can do.

The missionary Paul wrote this to the Ephesus church:

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT) Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

We must pray together. We must pray that God will make a difference in the heart of every person who attends on Sunday. We must pray that God will convict of righteousness, sin, and judgment. We must pray that God will do this every Sunday to all who are here. We must pray that God will make His presence known, not with showy miracles, but by convicting people of the truth. It takes prayer to be this kind of church.

It takes leadership. Without leaders this church would not exist. It took leaders to step out of other local churches and form this congregation 36 years ago as a mission church. It took leaders to organize the work, to find a meeting place to rent in the area. It took leadership to decide where to build, what to build, and when. It takes leadership to plan Bible studies. It takes leadership to form budgets, write policies, and oversee the work of the church. Writing of the leaders of the church, it says in...

Hebrews 13:17 (NLT) Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God.

It takes organization. Being organized is not a bad thing. Getting organized is a way to get more done. To be an effective church we need some organization. Our church has organized into programs, committees, ministries, teams, and officers.

Acts 14:23 (NLT) Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church.

It takes workers. The work of the church is done by people, lots of people. I am the only paid staff person. I am charged with working at least 45 hours per week. But I cannot do everything it takes for us to be the kind of church we are. Nor is that the way Jesus wants His church to function. Looking again at Paul's letter to the Ephesus church we read...

Ephesians 4:16 (NLT) He (Christ) makes the whole body (the church) fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body (church) is healthy and growing and full of love.

We need everyone working in some way to be effective as the kind of church we are. You see some people engaged in service on Sunday mornings, but a lot more work goes on behind the scenes. There is a lot of work to do in order to be the kind of church we are and to make a difference with Jesus inside and outside of this church.

It is nice to attend worship on Sunday and not have any responsibilities. I know that. In fact, sometimes I'll take a vacation day and visit another church. It is totally different for me in that setting. I don't have any jobs to do. No one sees me as the pastor. No one has any expectations of me. I can focus fully on worshipping Jesus with nothing to distract me. So I know what some of you want when you come on Sunday mornings. You want the freedom to come and not be expected to do anything. I get that.

But you need to understand what is needed to keep being an effective church. Being an effective church takes everyone doing what Jesus calls us ALL to do. Even if you don't have a designated responsibility in the church, you still have a job. We are all commanded by Jesus to do the following two things at a minimum.

John 13:34 (NIV) "... Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Hebrews 10:24 (NIV) ... spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Loving others and encouraging others to love others is every Christian's job on Sunday, and through the week. So even if you are not doing a special job, there is this responsibility.

In addition, there are lots of special jobs that need doing. We need everyone to step up and help with the work beyond these two responsibilities.

Many have done so. Some of you have taken on major responsibilities. And you do these every week.

We have people here who EVERY WEEK...

... play music.

... plan the service.

... prepare the bulletin on computer.

... come down here and duplicate, collate, and fold the bulletin.

... prepare the music sheets for the praise team.

... make sure we have nursery workers.

... make sure we have tellers.

... make sure we have ushers.

... teach your children and teens and you.

... send out birthday and anniversary cards from the church.

... keep up with the church sign and website
... pay the bills
... record your giving to the church so you can get an annual statement for tax purposes at the end of the year.

We don't have different people doing these jobs once or twice a month. The same people do these same jobs EVERY WEEK.

We need more of you to step up to an every-week job. We need more people to do an every other week job. We need more people to take on an every month job. That is what it takes to be the kind of church that we are, the kind of church God brought you to, the kind of church you have become a part of, the kind of church that is effectively Changing lives with Christ.

Today we are passing out survey sheets from the Nominating Committee as part of filling jobs in the church for next year. We ask you to please prayerfully fill this out.

Now Oyez, Oyez, Oyez. Listen carefully. First, we will not likely ask you to do everything you check. We will not knowingly overload you with jobs.

Secondly, we will not likely ask you to do something you are not capable of. Though we find that most people are capable of being TRAINED to do more than they think they can do.

We need you to step up to a greater level of participation in order to keep being the kind of church we are and be effective at it.

We need everyone working to be an effective servant of Jesus. **Together, we are Changing Lives with Christ.** Working together we will continue to do so.

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Today, your life may need to be changed too. Today, you could choose to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord.