



A perspective on the Kingdom and the Church
for Cru staff and partnering friends

Church Movements, CITY / GCM US, Cru

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Introductory Thoughts

The paper was created to ...

- provide context and direction as we (Cru) continue to discover ways we can best serve and partner with local churches, church-planting networks, and denominations
- identify the kinds of churches that seem to be at work within our cities
- reflect a theological perspective and a partnering posture, so as to help our staff members understand how we can better serve in present and future partnerships
- reflect a representative dialogue within Cru

The Kingdom of God¹

Jesus began His ministry by declaring the coming of His kingdom. He challenged people to repent and adjust everything in their life in light of the reality of the kingdom, of which He is the universal King ([Matthew 4:17](#)). Christ's kingdom was inaugurated through His first coming, and it continues to advance as the Church lives and proclaims the gospel throughout the world. The kingdom will only be fully realized when Christ returns.

The reality of the kingdom changes:

- our forgiveness – Jesus' death on the cross has atoned for our sin, [John 3:16](#), [Romans 3:20-26](#), [1 John 2:2](#)
- our identity – we are transferred to His kingdom, [Colossians 1:13-14](#), [Colossians 3:1-3](#)
- our citizenship – we are a new people group, [Ephesians 2:11-17](#), [1 Peter 2:9-11](#)
- our allegiance – we submit to His authority, and we worship Him
- our values – kingdom people adopt kingdom values
- our priorities – we seek first the kingdom of God, [Matthew 6:33](#)
- our mission – the King gave a purpose and a mission to His followers, [Matthew 28:18-20](#)

God as King has ordained three institutions through which He exercises His authority on earth: the family (as a biological unity), the state (as a geographical unity) and the church (as a spiritual unity).

¹ "The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and, derivatively, the sphere in which the rule is experienced. In biblical idiom, the Kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it. The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. Jesus' disciples belong to the Kingdom as the Kingdom belongs to them; but they are not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is a society of men." George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* p. 111.

The Kingdom and the Church

The Church is a body of people who belong to Jesus Christ. Those people follow Him, grow to be like Him, reflect His character, and make Him known to the world. The church is comprised of people.

Those who belong to the Lord gather. They naturally come together as a worshipping, learning, and serving community because they want to. We see this in Scripture in many places (23 times the word *ekklesia* is used in Acts, locations are referred to by Paul in his letters, etc.). [Acts 2:42-47](#) is the classic passage – showing why they gather as a church and what they do when they are together.

Followers of Christ are also commanded to gather together ([Hebrews 10:25](#)). Coming together regionally and locally, they organize under servant leadership, pursue the mission of Jesus and meet needs as the Lord leads them forward.

The Church exists to worship the King: to glorify Him and to live for His glory. So, as the Apostle Paul did, *“we proclaim the kingdom of God and teach the Lord Jesus Christ--with all boldness and without hindrance”* ([Acts 28:31](#)), as we go about building the Church.

The Church

Cru’s Statement of Faith includes these statements about the Church:

- *“Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, which is composed of all people, living and dead, who have been joined to Him through saving faith.”*
- *“God admonishes His people to assemble together regularly for worship, for participation in ordinances, for edification through the Scriptures and for mutual encouragement.”*

There are two major expressions of the Church in New Testament:

- **Universal** – every believer in Christ who has ever lived is a part of the body of Christ – the whole number of the redeemed who look to Christ as their life and their Lord ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#); [4:4](#) and [5:23](#)),
- **Local** – every living believer in Christ who is part of a particular community. In the New Testament the local church is manifested and addressed in two ways:
 - **City/Regional** – a group in a particular city, associated because of their geographic togetherness ([Acts 9:31](#), [Romans 16:23](#), [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#))
 - **Particular Assemblies** – meeting in places, houses and homes ([Matthew 18:17](#), [Acts 20:28](#), [1 Corinthians 16:19](#), [Colossians 4:15](#), [1 Timothy 3:15](#))

As we (Church Movements, Cru City USA) surveyed about 70 scholars, pastors, leaders, and church-planters from over 34 cities between the summer of 2017 and spring of 2018, and over 50 more in personal dialogue

since then, we have chosen to identify churches in the following way - to help us understand the kinds of local churches in U.S. cities that we serve and partner with:

- **Existing churches** –
 - mega, satellite, traditional, multi-site (one location, one pastor, many sites)
 - multi-congregational (with their own governance with shared functions regionally) – that desire to grow and multiply missional communities
 - **Multi-ethnic churches** – these deal with ethnic boundary issues among the diverse crowd in the church, recognize racialization (that there are benefits, needs and challenges that run along racial lines) and serve with intentionality all who gather in the community
 - **Multi-cultural churches** – where no one race makes up 70-80% of the congregation and where multi-cultural leadership and membership are fostered
- **Church plants** – simple / micro / rapid-house and traditional denominational movement-models

Below, you'll find two different ways to define the church. The reason for this is due to the fact that those with whom we spoke, expressed themselves in these ways. We honor and embrace the spectrum represented by: **(a.)** the comprehensive definition, honoring a deeper theological expression and **(b.)** the simple, house-group church perspective, which is also a Bible-honoring expression. Each of these two, also, have different lists of identifying the marks of a good New Testament church.

(a.) What is the church? — a theologically rich, comprehensive definition

The church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him - [Ephesians 1:22-23](#). The church is God's called-out community – now saved from sin and bought by the grace of God through faith in Christ because of his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. We are chosen to be holy and blameless before Him ([Ephesians 1:4](#); [5:26](#), [1 Pet 2:24-25](#); [1 Cor 15:12-20](#)). We are called to obey, worship and be conformed to Christ – we are alive to please Christ ([1 John 2:3-6](#); [Ps 117](#); [2 Cor 3:16-18](#)). He builds the church as a separate eschatological community, meaning we live in the present in light of the future promised to us. We are the bride of Christ whom He cherishes, loves, protects and prepares for the last day. This reality shapes everything about us. We have turned from idolatry “to serve the true and living God” and “take His Word forth” while “waiting” for His return ([1 Thessalonians 1:4-10](#)). His grace appeared so that we would live differently in this world. We know we are a people of His own possession and are redeemed to live faithfully before Him while looking for His appearing ([Titus 2:11-14](#)). The church is Christ's body through whom He is present, active and leads in this world. And by faith in Him, the church has received all the benefits freely offered through Christ. The church is the foundation of truth and revealer of God's wisdom ([1 Timothy 3:15](#), [Ephesians 3:10](#)). It is a group in covenant with each other as Christ's people, “a colony of

the coming global reign of Christ ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)), a preview of what His kingdom will look like in the end ([1 Corinthians 6:1-8](#)).”²

Key Marks of a Historical or Traditional Church

- Commissioned, qualified, united elders/leaders who lead with the Word, vision, focus and humility
- Spiritually dependent people who engage in the Word of God, God-centered worship and the ordinances
- A transformational multi-generational community-filled with those who live a gospel-lifestyle
- Cradle-to-grave care of its members
- Disciple-making that leads to reproduction
- Externally-focused mission: conversational evangelism where we live, work, learn and play; moving to the broken with compassion; making the world a better place to live (turning around injustice, distress, poverty, etc.); having a faith that serves and the church sees conversions
- All the spiritual gifts are manifested and used for the edification of the whole body
- Membership and church discipline are part of the culture
- Generous living among followers of Christ that generate resources to build the kingdom

(b.) What is the church? – a simple, micro, or house-group church definition

The church is a body of followers of Jesus Christ, with recognized spiritual leadership, who regularly gather for worship, fellowship and instruction. They practice the ordinances and fulfill the Great Commission by loving and serving one another and their neighbors, and intentionally multiply themselves.

Some groups representing this movement: We Are the Church, Simple Church Alliance, MetaCamp, No Place Left, Global Alliance for Church Multiplication, Cru Global Church Movements, and more.

Key Marks of a Mature, Simple Churchⁱ

- One head of the church: Jesus Christ
- Two authorities: The Word of God and the Spirit of God
- Three servants: teaching elder/pastor ([Ephesians 4:11](#)), ruling elders ([Titus 1:5](#)), deacons ([1 Timothy/Acts 6](#))
- Four marks: self-governing, self-supporting, self-reproducing, self-correcting
- Five functions: worship, fellowship, ministry, mission, discipleship

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-you-need-church-not-just-campus-ministry/>

Cru and the Church

Steve Douglass said, *“Cru is called to help fulfill the Great Commission, working in partnership with the rest of the Body of Christ -- especially in the areas of evangelism and discipleship.”*

Our staff are members, like all followers of Christ, of the Universal Church. We are committed to local churches all over the world. All staff are ordained as missionaries. Cru staff have been called and raised up in two primary ways:

1. As missionaries, to help further God’s purposes.

We are an evangelistic movement of the Church. As a mission agency with “sent ones,” we help ensure that the gospel and the Christian faith are transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next.

We are compelled to:

- Think about the scope of the mission, where the gospel is not yet flourishing
- Help fulfill the Great Commission
- Build bridges to the gospel
- Partner to establish the church in new contexts
- Develop leaders, and
- Network trans-locally

The word *“apostle”* ἀπόστολος means *“one who is sent”* in New Testament Greek — literally meaning *“sent one”* or *“messenger”* with a commission – a missionary.

The word apostle can have a very general meaning of some persons sent by others on a special mission, as being sent with orders as a delegate of someone. We see this specifically applied to the twelve apostles of Christ. They hold a unique status. Yet, in a broader sense, the word apostle was applied to other Christian leaders and teachers in the church (Barnabas, Timothy, Silvanus and more), as used below:

- 2 Corinthians 8:23: *“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers (literally, apostle) of the churches, a glory to Christ.”*
- Philippians 2:25: *“But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger (literally, apostle) and minister to my need.”*

These messenger-missionaries were part of the church’s normal life.

The second primary way that Cru staff have been called and raised up within the Church is:

2. *As evangelists, to take the Word to new territories, effectively communicating the gospel to unbelievers, so that they would respond in faith and move toward discipleship.*

We seek to:

- See people place their faith in Christ as we call for a personal response to the gospel
- Inspire followers of Jesus as we help provide pathways to engage in His mission through partnership
- Contribute to the growth of the church as we help make disciples

Cru's historic policies for all staff include the following:

- *"Campus Crusade for Christ is organized and operated within, and as a part of, the world-wide community of believers, the Church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23, independent of any other recognized denomination, organized local congregations and any other part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *"Because Campus Crusade for Christ is a missionary movement, it shall regularly partner with other denominations and organized congregations and other parts of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to fulfill its mission.*
- *"All Missionary Staff are to partner with, and actively participate in, a church whose doctrine and ministry are in agreement, in belief and practice, with the Cru Statement of Faith and ministry objectives. Missionary Staff should have met these requirements within 6 months after arrival at a new assignment."*

As an organization and movement, we exist to honor Christ as we help fulfill the Great Commission in partnership with the Body of Christ. We seek to advance the mission of Jesus everywhere with a specialized focus on evangelism, disciple-making and leadership development. We participate in these endeavors as the Church pursues the spectrum of her total mandate.

Our partnering posture

As part of the body of Christ, Cru wants to serve and contribute alongside the local church. We are a partnering movement. We hold the following values as essential for effective partnership:

1. Trusting relationships
2. Unselfish humility—each partner has something to give and something to learn
3. Common vision and compelling goals
4. Complementary contribution
5. Commitment to action

¹ No Place Left