

What is the Church and How Cru Relates to it?

A Perspective on the Kingdom and the Church
for Cru Church Movements Staff and Our Partnering Friends

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	2
Purpose Statement	4
The Kingdom of God	4
The Kingdom and The Church	5
The Church	5
1. What is the church? — a comprehensive definition	7
2. What is the church? — a simple definition	8
Organizational and Missional Expressions Of the Church	9
The Church and Cru	10
1. As missionaries, to help further God’s purposes.	11
2. As evangelists, we are to take the Word to new territories, effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers, and equip others for a pray-care-share lifestyle.	12
Cru and Church Partners	13

Dave Robinson and Gabor Gresz
Church Movements, CITY / GCM US, Cru
churchmovements.com
2018, 2024

Preface

An Introduction from the Church Movements' Executive Directors

In 2011, under the leadership of Dr. Bekele Shanko, Campus Crusade for Christ International (CCCI) formed [Global Church Movements](#) (GCM), which seeks to plant a vital church for every 1,000 people worldwide through training and church multiplication. By the power of the Holy Spirit, GCM has launched national-level ministries that have partnered with denominations, networks, associations, and individuals to see the over two million churches planted worldwide. For those whose only experience of Cru, CCCI in the USA, has been our collegiate ministry, it is perhaps surprising to learn of the past decade and a half of church multiplication through GCM and our partners. Yet, for over fifty years, CCCI staff worldwide have informally helped mobilize for and plant churches.

While I (Dave) was serving as the National Director for CCCI Hungary, I received permission beginning in 1993 to plant churches in partnership with denominations, on the side, as it were. Within a few years, CCCI staff had collectively helped plant six Evangelical Free churches, one Reformed church, and several Baptist churches.¹ Gabor Gresz, then a Community Ministry Team Member, was a crucial leader in planting an indigenous Hungarian-led Baptist church.

This church multiplication increased as CCCI Hungary launched *Youth at the Threshold of Life*, a government-approved education program to instill self-esteem, emotional intelligence, relationship building, and character development among middle and high school students. The gospel was sown through these evangelistic efforts, resulting in over fifty churches being planted or strengthened.

By 2006, I had become so burdened for the multiplication of the church that I needed to give myself entirely to it. The Lord used Isaiah 41-44 to encourage me and strengthen my resolve to leave the land of my calling, Hungary, Eastern Europe and Russia to return to the United States. Cru was not allowing staff to formally plant churches then, so I left Cru to become a Teaching Elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. I thought I was returning to one of the “most-reached” countries in the world, but as I began to pastor a church in Kansas City, I quickly realized how wrong I was! America was not a mission field of restricted or no access but *rejected access* to the Gospel. The 168,800,000 lost people in America means that the USA ranks 5th with the most non-Christians in the world.²

Understanding that Cru would soon be allowed to actively work for church multiplication, I rejoined Cru in 2012 to give leadership to the precursor of Church Movements - The Convener Gate in CITY (mobilizing gospel city movements in cities) with the freedom to begin sowing the seeds for church-planting. In 2017, we reorganized into our current reality with the vision to partner to make Jesus known, multiply the church, and serve the city. At this time, Gabor moved to the US to join Church Movements and increase our leadership capacity.

¹ Two former Hungarian staff - friends and key leaders - Varga Gyuri and Kazar Andras - went on to plant two more churches.

² See statistic support in [Unwavering Resolve](#) by Dave Robinson

From May 2017 to May 2018, a small team of Church Movements' staff interview-based research project comprised 72 pastors, church planters, and biblical scholars from across theological perspectives and ministry contexts. As Cru began the US expression of GCM, we wanted to listen to leaders to learn the landscape – the Church's joys, attitudes, outlooks, vision, and concerns. From January 2018 until now, we've interacted and begun national and local partnerships. Along the way, we've continued to ask questions, listen and learn. The spectrum of leaders surveyed represents local to international leaders from traditional, multi-ethnic, ethnic, rural, urban, and simple church-planting movements. We have now surveyed over 100 leaders from about thirty-five American cities.

Our Interview Objectives:

1. To listen, learn, and build a relationship with leaders in the American Church via a personal interview.
2. To introduce Cru's mission of partnering to multiply churches and missional communities in US cities.
3. To discover potential future partners and ways Cru can best serve as kingdom partners.

Our Interview Questions:

1. What should we be thinking about as we pursue this mission?
2. What hurdles do you foresee for us?
3. What benefits do you foresee from partnering together?
4. How could we best partner with you to share the gospel, make disciples, and multiply churches?
5. Is there anything you wished I'd have asked or does anything else come to mind?

What you have in the following pages is the fruit of hundreds of hours of this research project. We pray that you, too, would shoulder the burden of seeing every man, woman, and child in the US know the gospel and experience the love of Jesus through a vital, multiplying faith community.

Dave Robinson and Gabor Gresz
Executive Field Directors
Cru Church Movements, USA
August, 2024

Purpose Statement

- provide context and direction as we (Church Movements, 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 communities.
- 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 God

The Synoptic Gospels record that Jesus began his earthly ministry by declaring that His kingdom had arrived.³ This was the kingdom prophesied long ago by Isaiah that would “proclaim good news to the poor... freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free...”⁴ Jesus called for all people everywhere to turn to him, forsake all other paths, and adjust everything in their lives to live as citizens of His Kingdom. But the inauguration of this hoped-for Kingdom would arrive *mysteriously*.⁵ Unexpectedly, Christ’s Kingdom was not fully consummated upon his first arrival. His Kingdom was inaugurated at His first coming and it continues to be proclaimed as the Church lives out the gospel; while the consummation would come at Christ’s return. Biblical Scholar Gregory Beale highlights the tension of the “already not-yet” well. This tension deeply informs every Christian’s experience, and we must acknowledge the missional implications that are carried with it.⁶ Historically, Protestant Christians have affirmed that the Kingdom contains a people, a realm, and a reign. This Kingdom’s people would form a new society – a new people.⁷ It is characterized by:⁸

- **Forgiveness** – Jesus’ death on the cross has atoned for sin for all who believe.⁹
- **Identity** – Transferred from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom¹⁰
- **Citizenship** – Formation of a new people group¹¹
- **Allegiance** – Submission to His authority and worship Him alone¹²
- **Values** – Adoption of kingdom values¹³
- **Priorities** – Seek first the kingdom of God¹⁴

³ Mt 4:17, Mk 1:14-15, Lk 4:16-21.

⁴ Is 61:1-2, Lk 4:18-19.

⁵ Mt 13:1-58.

⁶ G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), p 430-432.

⁷ Acts 15:14; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Colossians 3:10-12 ; Ephesians 2:14,15

⁸ Categorizing the Kingdom’s people as a new society is drawn from George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p 111.

⁹ Jn 3:16, Ro 3:20-26, 1Jn 2:2.

¹⁰ Col 1:13-14, Col 3:1-3.

¹¹ Eph 2:11-17, Col 3:20, 1Pe 2:9-11.

¹² Mt 4:10, Mt 28:19, Jn 5:23, Rom 12:1-2, 2 Cor 13:14, Eph 4:1, Jas 4:1-12, Rv 5:11-14.

¹³ Mt 5:17-19, Rom 3:31, 6:15, 13:8-10, Eph 4:17-5:20, 6:2, Col 2:1-4, Jas 2:8,10-11, 1 Jn 2:3-4,7-8.

¹⁴ Mt 6:33, Gal 5:13.

- **Mission** – Reception of a purpose and mission from the King¹⁵
- **Unity** – Christ is the head with a multitude of diverse parts, but one body. This society is to express unity-in-difference, rather than division and prejudice.¹⁶

This new Kingdom society was founded by Jesus, existed under his reign, called into being by the Holy Spirit, and is constituted of all peoples from every tongue, tribe, and nation.¹⁷ Jesus called this people the Church.¹⁸

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 composed of people.

Those who belong to the Lord *gather*. They naturally come together as a worshiping, 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.¹⁹ 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

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)

¹⁵ Mt 28:18-20, Mk 16:15, Lk 24:46-49, Jn 20:21, Ac 1:8.

¹⁶ 1Cor 11:17-12:31, Eph 4:2-5, Jas 2:1-13.

¹⁷ Gn 8:20-9:17, 12:3, 17:7-14, Ex 31:12-18, Dt 28:1-68, 2 Sa 7:8-17, Ps 72:1-20, Jer 31:27-34, Ez 36:22-38, Mt 16:15-19, 28:19, Mk 10:13-16, Acts 2:38-42, Ro 4:11-12, 1 Co 7:14.

¹⁸ Mt 16:18.

¹⁹ Hebrews 10:25

The New Testament authors use the term church, ἐκκλησία in the original language, in several ways and with multiple metaphors.²⁰ On a macro scale is the Universal Church which incorporates all the people of God in every place at every time. This is the whole number of the redeemed in Christ.²¹ Additionally, the Church can be described on a micro-scale to mean all of God's people at a particular time in a city or region.²² On other occasions, ἐκκλησία seems to be referring to specific assemblies that meet in buildings, houses, or other gathering places.²³

God sovereignly calls His people to regularly gather together for the teaching of the Word, administration, for prayer, and reception of the Sacraments, and growing in holiness.²⁴ Acts 2:42-47 is the classic passage narrating why the first church gathered and what they do when they are together. The Church exists to worship the King by glorifying Him and living for His glory. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul reminded the Church that we have been given a shared mission to “[proclaim] the kingdom of God and [teach] the Lord Jesus Christ – with all boldness and without hindrance!”²⁵

Historians have discovered credal statements dating to the earliest Church that summarized what they believed about God and the gospel. In the fourth century, the geographically sprawling Church gathered to produce the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, which affirmed that the true Church was “one holy catholic (meaning: universal) and apostolic.”²⁶ These four adjectives have continued to be used as identifiers throughout the history of the Church.²⁷

The interview-based research we conducted in 2017-18 with church leaders and biblical scholars from various theological perspectives and multiple approaches to church ministry revealed two general responses to what the church is at the most local, particular level. What follows is our attempt to describe the two broad summaries for their answers in their own words. Therefore, some churches might have minor differences from what we've articulated here. We aim to honor and embrace the spectrum represented by allowing for greater emphasis in different areas of the various

²⁰ For a comprehensive reference list of ἐκκλησία, see BDAG, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Listed here is a sampling of those various metaphors: *Temple* - Isa 28:16, Ps 118:22, 1 Co 3:11, 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Co 6:16, Eph 2:18-22, 1 Pe 2:4-7; *Body* - Ro 12:4-5, 1 Co 10:17, 12:12-14, Eph 4:12, 5:23, 5:30, Col 1:24; *Bride* - 2 Cor 11:12, Eph 5:31-32, Rev 19:7-8, 21:9; *Family* - Mt 12:46-50, 2 Cor 6:18, Gal 6:10, Eph 2:19, 1 Ti 5:1, 1 Jn 3:13-18; *Flock* - Ps 77:20, 78:52, 80:1, 95:7, Isa 63:11, Jer 10:21, 13:20, 23:2-3, Ez 34:8-22, Mi 2:12, 5:4, Mt 26:31, Lk 12:32, Jn 10:12,16, Ac 20:28-29, 1 Co 9:7, 1 Pe 5:1-2; *Building* - 1 Ti 3:14-15, Heb 3:6, 1 Pe 4:17; *Vine* - Ps 24:1-6, Isa 5:1, Jer 2:21, Jn 15:1-27, Ro 11:17.

²¹ Eph 1:22-23; 4:4, 5:23.

²² Ac 9:31, Rom 16:23, 1 Th 1:1.

²³ Mt 18:17, Ac 20:28, 1 Cor 16:19, Col 4:15, 1 Ti 3:15.

²⁴ This is a description of the historic Protestant definition of what constitutes a church. Some may prefer to say “discipline” in place of “holiness” but these are different aspects of the same mark. For exegetical support of this description see Ex 20:8-11, Is 56:2,4,6-7, 66:2, Mt 4:10, 13:19, 28:19, Jn 5:23, Acts 1:11,21, 2:42, 10:33, 16:25, 1 Cor 11:23-29, 2 Cor 13:14, Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, 2 Tm 4:2, Heb 4:2,10:25, Jas 5:13, Rv 5:11-14.

²⁵ Acts 28:31

²⁶ Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 7, 15, 18.

²⁷ For examples of how this have been articulated see the graph “Comparative Analysis of Protestant Traditions on the Doctrine of Ecclesiology”
https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTDn1S6wVzu5-NJk_hmihUCBEIYH5m2--SInhcIL7IKzj7eAqEDpBaoP0n5WuahDskDt3zE4h3H0L76/pub

expressions within this spectrum: (a.) a comprehensive definition, a deeply theological and institutional expression, and (b.) the simple, house-group church perspective, which is also a Bible-honoring expression that allows for greater organic emphasis. With that said, below are the two distinct definitions:

1. What is the church? – a comprehensive definition

The church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him.²⁸ 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.²⁹ We are called to obey, worship, and be conformed to Christ – we are alive to please Christ.³⁰ 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, as Paul teaches in 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.³¹ 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.³² It is a group in covenant with each other as Christ’s people, a new society “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).”³³

KEY FEATURES OF A HISTORIC PROTESTANT 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
- Spiritual gifts are manifested and used for the edification of the whole body

²⁸ Eph 1:22-23.

²⁹ 1 Cor 15:12–20, Eph 1:4; 5:26, 1 Pet 2:24–25.

³⁰ Ps 117. 2 Cor 3:16–18, 1 Jn 2:3–6.

³¹ Titus 2:11-14.

³² Eph 3:10, 1 Ti 3:15.

³³ Russell Moore, “Why You Need a Church (Not Just a Campus Ministry)”, AUGUST 24, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-you-need-church-not-just-campus-ministry/>

- Some form of what can be considered membership is practiced
- Church discipline is part of the culture
- Generous living among followers of Christ that generate resources to build the kingdom

2. *What is the church? — a simple definition*³⁴

The church is a body of followers of Jesus Christ, with recognized spiritual leadership,³⁵ 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 multiplying themselves. A microchurch can be planted by a leader or might grow toward appointing a leader, and give attention to the priesthood of all believers.

Often, the vision is to express what they see as the most foundational unit of a church, the house-church/micro church, as being more easily reproduced. They believe that these simple churches should voluntarily connect with each other for development, resourcing, and encouragement. No one way of organizing is practiced. Instead, the structure is contextualized from network to network. If this is a newer church expression to you, we recommend reading descriptions of this approach by Underground, Simple Church Alliance, We Are Church, Global Alliance for Church Multiplication, and CCI Global Church Movements.³⁶

KEY FEATURES OF A MATURING SIMPLE CHURCH

- One head of the church: Jesus Christ
- Two authorities³⁷: The Word of God - the Holy Spirit-inspired inerrant Word 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

Organizational and Missional Expressions Of the Church

Throughout the ages, faithful believers have studied Scripture and arrived at various persuasions on

³⁴ Pertaining to a simple, micro- or house-group church expressions

³⁵ As a reminder, this is a highly diverse ecclesiastical approach and, as such, there is a measure of variance on the necessity and role of leadership in a microchurch. Some networks and thought leaders list recognized, qualified leaders as essential to a church while others seem to view leadership as something that may or may not organically arise from the congregation.

³⁶ Underground, “Our Manifesto”, <https://www.tampaunderground.com/our-story-index/#manifesto-intro>, Simple Church Alliance, “Vision & Values”, <https://simplechurchalliance.com/about/mission-values/>, We Are Church, “About”, <https://www.wearechurch.com/about>, Global Alliance for Church Multiplication, “Descriptions”, <https://gacx.io/about/descriptions>, Global Church Movements, “Core Contributions”, https://globalchurchmovements.org/core_contributions

³⁷ Authority here is used as the power to influence, control, command thought or action. The Word of God and the Holy Spirit filling, directing and empowering us to obey Him as directed in the Word that He inspired.

how to organize themselves.³⁸ Each has its merit from the Scriptures and has borne fruitfulness when practiced worldwide. At the risk of being overly simplistic, three major models have arisen for organizing churches. First, an episcopal model is one where either by a singular bishop, hierarchies of bishops, or a plurality of bishops, varying degrees of church authority reside above a particular congregation within a broader church system.³⁹ Conversely, a second model is congregational, in which church authority resides in the collective voice of the people who constitute a church.⁴⁰ A third model is presbyterian, which has a plurality of elders from the congregation who exercise authority in the life of their church, and within some constructs, those elders also exercise some level of authority in a region of churches.⁴¹ As the Church has engaged new peoples, generations, or places, she has contextualized her organization in a multitude of expressions.

Since our research between 2017 and 2018, we developed several categories to help us understand the types of churches we generally observe in the U.S.:

- **Existing churches**

- **Single-congregational churches** vary in the number of pastors and worship services, often influenced by theological vision, regular attendance size, and space availability, while all at a single location.⁴²
- **Multi-congregational churches** are shaped by the church leadership's theological vision and strategy preferences. The locations, campuses, or satellites are under a singular, shared leadership structure.
- **Multi-congregational church networks** are similar to Multi-congregational churches, but distinctly, each church within the network has its leadership structure while all share some functions regionally, such as IT, Operations, and Human Resources
- **Ethnic-specific churches** are entirely or where the great majority are from a particular ethnicity. Healthy ethnic-specific churches teach and equip their congregation in how to understand their ethnic identity in light of their Kingdom identity. They focus their evangelistic efforts in contextualized ways toward their ethnic community. Furthermore, they promote hospitality and postures toward cross-ethnic unity,

³⁸ The way in which a church organizes themselves is their polity. Each of the board categories listed here should be understood as generic models which have been innovated and adapted in many ways, consciously or intuitively. The following synopsis of polity models has been shaped by a series of ecclesiology lectures by Dr. Drew Martin of Covenant Theological Seminary, in St. Louis, MO.

³⁹ The episcopal polity can be found in the Anglican Church of North America, Church of God in Christ, Free Methodist Church, Global Methodist Church, United Methodist Church and others. The Church of the Nazarene and Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod are good examples of an episcopal and congregational hybrid.

⁴⁰ The congregational polity has been expressed by churches associated with the American Baptist Convention USA, Assemblies of God, Evangelical Free Church of America, Southern Baptist Convention, Vineyard USA, and many others.

⁴¹ The presbyterian polity has been modeled by the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Reformed Church of America, and others.

⁴² Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan 2012), 16-21.

friendship, and partnership.⁴³ Dr. Henry Tan, President of the International Leadership Consortium, said these ethnic-specific churches are “here to show us how a united, Kingdom-focused people can reach the USA for Christ.”

- **Cultural-specific churches** are those in which 80% or more of the congregation is from one particular culture. Like ethnic-specific churches, their calling is contextualizing evangelism and disciple-making towards the ways their shared culture distorts or reflects God’s design for culture-making.⁴⁴
- **Multi-ethnic churches** sense a heightened calling to address ethnic boundary issues among the diverse peoples 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.
- **Multicultural churches** have no distinct culture constituting 70-80% of the congregation, and where multicultural leadership and membership are intentionally fostered.
- **Diaspora churches** have a unique calling to minister to a diaspora community in the U.S. Often, these churches minister to one specific nationality or heritage. Still, some are more broad in whom they intentionally minister.
- **New Missional plants** are new missional activities that have been intentionally started to sow the gospel in hopes of seeing a new faith community emerge. The name for this category can vary greatly depending on theological persuasion or missional culture held by the planter and planting team. Some approaches to church organization, such as the simple / micro / rapid-house movements, hold this perspective as a specific calling and normative status for healthy churches.

The Church and Cru

CCCI/Cru has clearly and openly affirmed the historical, orthodox understanding of the Church in our Statement of Faith:⁴⁵

- “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.”

⁴³ Thank you Dr. Mark Covell, Cru Church Movements Cincinnati, for recommending the following book to help us distinguish between ethnic-specific and ethnocentric churches. Sabrina S. Chan, Linson Daniel, E. David de Leon, and La Thao, *Learning Our Names: Asian American Christians on Identity, Relationships, and Vocation*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2022), 155.

⁴⁴ Cultural-specific churches might relate to ethnicity but not necessarily. Some additional cultures that we have in mind are: urban, suburban, rural, U.S. regions, historical spiritual heritage, etc.

⁴⁵ Cru, “Statement of Faith,” <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/statement-of-faith.html>

Furthermore, CCCI/Cru is not a church denomination or organized local congregation. Our self-understanding is expressed well by CCCI's second president, Steve Douglass, who 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 active participation in and partnering with local churches.⁴⁶ All Cru staff are commissioned as missionaries. We also have been sent 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. As Church Movements, we specifically help catalyze movement toward missional frontiers, church multiplication, and new leader development.⁴⁷ Therefore, we are compelled to:

- Think about the scope of the mission, where the gospel is not yet flourishing.
- Help fulfill the Great Commission by evangelizing the lost on the frontiers, planting churches, and building up the Church.
- Build bridges to the gospel and break new ground.
- Develop leaders to establish the Church in new contexts.
- Act and innovate – moving with aligned partners committed to multiplication and ready to mobilize others.
- Lift burdens, solve problems, and create opportunities for missional advance.
- Partner by building close, enduring relationships across geographic boundaries created through networks, mobile communities, and migration.

The word "*apostle*" ἀπόστολος means "*one who is sent*" in New Testament Greek – this sent one is an ambassador on a mission from the one who commissioned him or her. This term is used in two ways throughout the New Testament. First is the unique office of the Apostle, who were those in the first century who had encountered Jesus and were specifically called by Him to *lay the foundation* of the Church.⁴⁸ The second usage concerns leadership giftings, as Paul describes in places like Ephesians 4:11-16, which are for the *building* of the Church. We **only** refer to the second usage when discussing missionary leaders, church planters, or missional leaders. This leadership gifting is the word applied in the New Testament to other Christian leaders and teachers in the Church. Here are a few examples:

⁴⁶ For Cru staff, we refer you to Cru's Human Resource Handbook for Missionary Staff Members for the section on "Church Involvement" under the heading "Additional Responsibilities" at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c3miJA_2Qav8BYGp9jgqDTo6x-q4itAY2Ank8FDJmCs/edit#heading=h.gzpsxjir765i

⁴⁷ This section has drawn heavily from chapter 2 "What is an Apostolic Leader?" and chapter 8 "Help Wanted!" in my book, *Unwavering Resolve: A Guide for Apostolic Leadership*, (Orlando: FL, CruPress, 2023).

⁴⁸ Eph 2:20.

- **Romans 16:7:** “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.”
- **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.”
- **1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2:6:** “Paul, Silas, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you... We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority.”

These messenger-missionaries were part of the church’s normal life. Cru missionaries are sent from and by the Church to come alongside other gifted leaders, to build up the Church.

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

2. As evangelists, we are to take the Word to new territories, effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers, and equip others for a pray-care-share lifestyle.

There is a significant overlap between evangelists and apostles. Evangelists build bridges to the gospel and mobilize others for gospel engagement. However, the evangelist differs from the apostolic leader in scope—they focus on the individual rather than the unreached masses. While the apostolic leader tends to give energy to the mission's macro, futurist, and big-picture needs, the evangelist is burdened with the personal response to the gospel by each lost image bearer of God.

As evangelists, we seek to:

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

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 Jesus's mission 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.

Cru and Church Partners

CCCI founder Bill Bright commonly admitted, *“We’re only a part of the vast body of Christ. We see ourselves as only a leaf from a twig from the branch of the Vine.”* Today, we carry forward this understanding as part of the body of Christ. Cru does not exist outside of the Church, but within and as part of her manifold expressions of God sovereignly bringing His Church to completion. 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. Because of our unity in Christ, we partner with denominations, networks, associations, organizations, and local churches to help fulfill the Great Commission.

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

We believe He is calling us to partner together to see every man, woman, and child know the love of Jesus and be connected to a vital, multiplying church.

Acknowledgments

As with many writing endeavors, this white-page document was only possible with the contributions of many people. We (Dave Robinson and Gabor Gresz) have appreciated the feedback from Cru staff who read this document as part of their orientation to Church Movements. I especially want to thank the interview team, which, from 2017 to 2018, spent hundreds of hours interviewing, summarizing, and writing the initial draft of *What is the Church?* Alan Nagel, Alisa Bently, Jack McGill, James Cottier, and Larry Christiansen, your time invested at the beginning of Church Movements USA has continued to bear good fruit! Lastly, the editorial work by Adam Jones, David Hardy, and Samuel Kassing has been a blessing in preparing an internal direction-setting document for external training, specifically for the first cohort of Cru Fellowship for Church Multiplication in the fall of 2024. We all desire this document to encourage and empower church multiplication efforts in the USA for God's glory.