

Walking the Way

God's Church

Who we are: The vision and mission of our church (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

- **Vision:** "We will reach the world for Jesus one person at a time."
- **Mission:** "We will make biblical disciples in relational environments."
- **Definition of a disciple:** One who is committed to *following* Jesus. One who is committed to *being changed* by Jesus. One who is committed to the *mission* of Jesus. (**Matthew 4:19**)
- We are all on a discipleship journey that involves Share, Connect, Minister, and Disciple-making (SCMD)
- This process gets lived out in the 5 Spheres of our lives based on what we see in the book of Ephesians.
- The core sphere, abiding in Christ, is the most important and effects every other sphere of our lives.

Focus point today: The Church was and is God's idea.

- **Today we're answering the question: What is the Church?**

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NLT) ¹⁹ So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. ²⁰ Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. ²² Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

What is the Church?

- The Greek word for church is "*ekklesia*", which means "called out" or "assembly"; the body of believers gathered to worship Jesus (not the building in which they meet). (**Ephesians 1:22-23**)
- As Christians, we are called out of something to something different. We are called out of the world (death) and called into the Kingdom of God (eternal life through Jesus Christ and being His ambassador on Earth).
- This speaks of our citizenship in Heaven, we are no longer of this world. We are now part of this new kingdom, this new spiritual family built on Christ.

Philippians 1:27 (NLT) ²⁷ Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.

Who does Jesus say about the Church?

- **"I will build MY church..."**

Matthew 16:13-18 (NLT) ¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." ¹⁵ Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. ¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

Ephesians 3:10-11 (NLT) ¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

- We have mission, we've been given an assignment. We are to represent God's wisdom to the spiritual forces and the people around us.

It takes unity, under the headship of Christ, to accomplish our mission of the Church (Ephesians 4:1-6)

- Christ is the head, but He has given us a structure that allows people to be a part of what He is doing.
- God gives us earthly leaders who follow Christ. (**Hebrews 13:17**)
 - *When we reject God-given authority in the church, we're rejecting God's authority.*
- Godly leaders *equip* His people to serve and do their part. (**Ephesians 4:11-16**)
- Every disciple of Jesus is important and has a part in the body and everyone brings gifts to make the body better. We all bring something to the table that is needed. (**1 Corinthians 12:12-21**).
- There are several passages that talk about different kinds of gifts in the body- Spiritual Gifts, Leadership Gifts, Practical Gifts (**1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4**).

Scripture guides us into clarity on how the Church functions (Acts 2:42-47)

- **The apostle's teaching.** The foundation for the church because the apostles' teaching came directly from Christ, who himself was the bedrock of the church (**Matt. 16:18**). These, in part, are the commands given to the apostles to teach wherever they went (**Matt. 28:19**).
- **Fellowship.** More than just getting together for fun and/or food. The early church shared their lives in deep, meaningful relationships.
- **Communion.** It was called the "breaking of bread", but this was shorthand for the sacrament of communion.
- **Prayer.** Communal prayer characterized the early church.
- **Gatherings.** The people physically gathered together. In order to experience true and full fellowship, we must also physically gather (**Acts 2:46**).
- **Regular meetings.** The believers initially met "every day (**Acts 2:46**), but then began meeting weekly on the first day of the week (**1 Cor. 16:1-2**). While one-time gatherings have their place, a biblical church requires us to have relationships and regular touch-points with others.
- **Worshipping God.** When we function as God's church, we don't just teach *about* God, but we also praise God himself.
- **Evangelism.** "The Lord added...daily those who were being saved" (**Acts 2:47**). While churches can grow at different rates or have lulls, healthy biblical churches evangelize the lost and grow.
- **Giving.** As the church grew, they shared physical possessions with those who had need (**Acts 4:34-35**). They also brought money to their meetings based on their income. Barnabas, for example, gave money he received from the sale of his property so the church could use it as God directed the leaders (**Acts 4:36-37**).
- **Elders.** Paul made sure that churches "in every town" soon had elders in place (**Titus 1:5**). God still leads his church through a plurality of elders today.
- **When we talk about what the church sphere should look like, we need to be careful to not say what we think it should look like, but what God says His Church is and what it looks like.**

What are the Elders and leaders of RLMSV calling you to do?

- Join God's family if you haven't already.
- Commit to growing in spiritual maturity. As a family, we won't always function perfectly, but we strive to honor God as He changes us to be more and more like Him.
- Get and maintain real, authentic relationships. We are a small groups church at RLMSV.
- Use your gifts in the body of Christ.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NLT) ¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.