

The Servant Church

CHURCH – [Charitable Humanity Utilizing Resources Creating Hospitality]

We are told in the Gospels that Jesus came to bring the “Kingdom of God” or the Realm of God to all people. We are also told that he came to serve and not to be served. Jesus was an itinerant Rabbi and he and his followers were practicing Jews in the worship of God. Jesus never mentioned starting a church in the Gospels nor in forming a new religion. The church that later formed and became organized by those who followed him in the years after his resurrection were also primarily interested in serving others. They preached about what Jesus had done among them, they taught what they heard him say about God’s Realm, and they helped many to find healing and a new way to live.

The Book of Acts starts by telling us about the early church that held everything in common and of their great concern for serving and sharing. Soon we begin to hear of conflicts and divisions. In the middle centuries Monasteries were formed establishing communities who held things in common and acted more like the early church described in Acts. They were more concerned with caring and sharing together as a community under a rule for living as followers of Jesus. Many of them became noted as saints for their visionary thoughts and actions. A number of them were Mystics who fostered a holistic approach to understanding and because of their lifestyles many became “saints”.

Why am I writing this? Because of the problems within our churches today, I wish to briefly share how I believe that by returning to earlier times in spirit we may be able to move forward to a modern way of serving. We need to take advantage of the 501(c) criteria available to us and become a Faith Based supported church. ECUSA is very much a desire to serve rather than being served and bringing in the Realm of God as we are growing to understand it. Our Baptismal Covenant screams of that freedom to love and respect. I do not know exactly how Jesus was supported financially in his work and ministry, but he did not seem to take an offering when he saw a crowd nor did he ask for money. The Faith Based method in America today enables us to receive comprehensive support in valuable and necessary ministries needed in every one of our communities. My work at Trinity over the last 34 years has taught me that “money is never the problem, but people are always the problem”.

Today parents are working more hours at probably more than one job; they do not have much time to volunteer. Because of the economy they have less financial resources to share to give the support they might wish to for ministry. Since clergy and church staff are paid, it is often assumed that they can “do it all” in serving and accomplishing all the work of ministry, which is very unrealistic. Without enough appropriate people, talent, and money to do much of anything well, frustration and despair grows. It is a fact that tithes and offerings have never completely supported churches. They have always been traditionally supplemented with endowments, sales of all kinds, bingo, and a host of other gimmicks.

Jesus also explained that “a working person was worthy of their hire” and Paul made it clear that persons who worked for God’s Realm should be paid unless they choose to offer it for free. He was tent maker and earned his own way but suggests that you should not muzzle an ox that was treading out the grain.

When a church, through the concept of “Faith Based Ministry” via a 501(c) status in order to be paid for programs and ministries essential to their community, a significant amount of problems are solved. ★The clergy are leaders, ★Needed staff are hired, ★The laity volunteer as they are able, ★The financial supports comes from Business, Industry, Foundations, Public Funds, and a host of other resources. They get a tax break and the feeling of doing good and the church gets the money they need to totally support their sharing and caring in their local area. It really works well and I would love to help churches learn how to become a Servant Church in today’s world. CHURCH – [Charitable Humanity Utilizing Resources Creating Hospitality]

Peace [People Energizing Alternatives Causing Equality]

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