

**General Topics :: "Organic" Church Movement****"Organic" Church Movement - posted by Mattie, on: 2009/5/25 23:22**

Over the last few years there has been a growing increase of brothers and sisters gathering together in homes. Back in 2006-2007 it was estimated that between 1 and 4 million believers were leaving the "institutional" church setting to gather in a less organized, traditional church setting. Some have called this movement, not just a 'house church' movement, but the 'organic' church movement. The word organic is not to be mistaken for 'organic' food, but something that is born and sustained by life rather than organization.

Author and church planter Frank Viola gives this definition to what many are calling 'organic' church...

"By 'organic church,' I mean a non-traditional church that is born out of spiritual life instead of constructed by human institutions and held together by religious programs. Organic church life is a grass roots experience that is marked by face-to-face community, every-member functioning, open-participatory meetings (opposed to pastor-to-pew services), non-hierarchical leadership, and the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ as the functional Leader and Head of the gathering."

What are your thoughts of the work that is taking place?

Have you heard of it?

If so, what positive/negative reactions do you have towards it?

Does it matter if we choose to meet in a more 'organized' setting or an 'organic' setting? Is our church model really that important?

Your thoughts...

Re: "Organic" Church Movement - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/5/26 6:43

I personally think, generally speaking, that the "organic" house-church movement is a mighty move of God in these last days. While I personally distance myself from the likes of Frank Viola, who I think represents the worst of the house church stream, I believe God is ultimately returning the church to much simpler and apostolic times, as such is the only means by which we will reach the fullness of the stature of Christ. Denominations and large dead institutions are on their way out the door. While used by God, they have never been of God. At best they have been an Ishmael. But as we know, Ishmael and the bond woman have to be put out, as God has only one child of promise, that which is born of His Spirit.

The greatest examples (though not without it's problems) of an "organic" church are not to be found in America, but in China. Indeed, the church in China is almost nothing but an organic thing. God wants to bring the church to maturity and the fullness of the stature of Christ. Traditional, even evangelical churches, must ultimately be transformed and pruned.

Re: "Organic" Church Movement - posted by reformer, on: 2009/5/26 6:53

Its just a fancy name for house church. it seems that house churches are increasing at a high rate due to the church system we have today. people are wanting more of Christ, true fellowship and are not getting it in "church" on Sundays.

I am currently reading Pagan Christianity by Viola and Barna. It is probably one of the best books that I have read in a while. As far as church history...how it started. Why we have what we have today. It like reading two books in one. The notes that are supplied to check the sources and just story itself.

I think Frank is more of an emergent Christian. He is a bit more liberal in his view, but nonetheless a believer and follower of Christ.

I don't think it is negative to have the organic church, I am not quite convinced yet if his way is the best. reading some examples of his gatherings have me a little uncomfortable; meaning the style; it seems like a free for all. But I am sure it

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is because I don't completely understand the involvement in a house church, because my mind is corrupted by the institutional church.

Personally I don't think it matters how we fellowship together, in a traditional service or house church. you have to go where the Lord is leading you to go. The house church is lines of more biblical than what we have today.

We left the institutional church about 6 months ago. I struggled with so many questions about year before I left. Why do we have this in church? Why do we sing, pass the plate around, shake hands, sing some more, preach a watered down message, then leave? Why do we tithe? are we just paying for the building and salary for the pastor? Why another building campaign? I could go on, but that is another thread. The point is God is to be worshiped in truth and spirit, and that doesn't mean that only takes place on Sunday morning for an hour and half. We can have fellowship at home with our family and if the Lord leads us to house or friends that is fellowship?

a good sermon on fellowship by Paul Washer: (<http://media.sermonindex.net/18/SID18532.mp3>) <http://media.sermonindex.net/18/SID18532.mp3>

I would recommend that you might consider reading Pagan Christianity. It is an eye opening book and challenging.

blessings
 reformer

Re: , on: 2009/5/26 8:15

I think the house church movement is great so long as the house church is organized along biblical lines. Scripture gives us clear guidelines concerning church governing. I know of some house churches that are not, and they are wrong.

Our experience in house church has been a good one, but not without it's problems.

There is absolutely no way one can make any blanket statements about house churching since it is done in so many different ways by so many different people. But again, it does have to be done scripturally.

Krispy

PS: often on this forum I have promoted Viola's book Pagan Christianity. I think it is one of the best books, period. I've read it 6 times. He does not strike me as being "emergent" at all, at least not how I view the term "emergent" with all of it's false doctrines, etc. Thats not Frank Viola.

Re: - posted by reformer, on: 2009/5/26 11:59

Quote:
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Let me clarify...I say he is emergent in his style of fellowshiping. I don't know about his theology, as far as doctrinal statement...grace, hell, salvation and so on. he doesn't explore his theological views in the book or on his website. Some of his description of the organic church reminds me of Doug Pagitt's style of church.

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Re: - posted by Know-Him, on: 2009/5/28 11:47

Neil Cole's book - Organic Church - Growing faith where life happens; makes some very good points with regard to the Organic church.

I like the expression 'Simple Church.'

I believe that we have taken something that Jesus meant to be simple and natural and made it complicated and difficult. The church ought to be alive, growing and spreading.

It is good to look at all our practices and ask the question, "Do we do this out of biblical command or because of our cultural tradition?"

Re: - posted by Aussiedler, on: 2009/6/8 14:53

I think all that matters is our heart and not organisation. I don't think, that the organized form is so important.

Re: - posted by wayneman (), on: 2009/6/8 20:49

I recently tried to contact several house churches in my area that were listed on (housechurch.org) housechurch.org and another website. Every one of them is now defunct. I've been involved in efforts to plant three house churches. All three fizzled out. The organic church model is superior in many ways to that of the professional clergy, but some of its exponents seem to think that it is the answer to everything. It's not.

In the old days, the Plymouth Brethren decided that the professional clergy with professional interests to protect were the cause of divisions in the Body and most other problems. So they organized autonomous local bodies with no salaried pastors and a church life run strictly along New Testament lines. A lot of good has come out of the Brethren movement, but it didn't take long for division to arise between the Open Brethren, who would fellowship with any and all Bible-believing Christians, and the Exclusive Brethren who would not break bread with anyone outside their own sect. By the 20th Century, the Exclusive Brethren had schismed into no less than 48 different sects. One of them, known as the River Brethren, made foot-washing rituals an integral part of every gathering, and disfellowshipped everyone who didn't. Then a controversy arose among the River Brethren: Should one brother wash feet and another dry, or should both functions be performed by the same brother? And they schismed over that!

So much for the professional clergy being responsible for all the divisions in the church! What went wrong with the Exclusive Brethren? Maybe the problem was that they put their faith in a formula.

I'm all for the house church movement, as long as we don't proceed on the assumption that the windows of heaven will automatically open upon anyone who holds church in a house.

Re: - posted by reformer, on: 2009/6/8 21:17

Quote:
-----I recently tried to contact several house churches in my area that were listed on housechurch.org and another website. Every one of them is now defunct.

I have had that problem too. Its hard to find other believers who desire the same. But I trust that the Lord will lead me through.

Try this website...it is really good for those who desire true fellowship but can't seem to find it. There is a article called No Fellowship, No Problem..was very helpful during times without regular fellowship.

(<http://www.theschoolofchrist.org/>) School of Christ

your Brother
reformer(Mike)

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/6/8 22:31

The early church met publicly and from house to house. I don't think this is an "either-or" issue, rather, a "both-and." We do need both platforms. The larger platform especially for those who are older and more seasoned in the Lord to address a local congregation in one grand swoop. Watchman Nee called such "apostolic meetings." Our unity should be found in Christ, not what type of building we meet or do not meet in.

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2009/6/9 0:20

Come visit us in WI. You will find a very strong and growing number of HC's. Sometimes you just have to look in the right places. Most successful HC's that I know are not known by the masses. They are grown by "word of mouth" and nothing more.

I would be hesitant (not necessarily against it, just hesitant) to go to any HC that feels the need or urge to "market" itself.

What I have seen is that most "traditional" churches who try to start House Churches usually place way too many restrictions on people wanting to attend them. Example. A brother that attends my HC was running one through a different church fellowship in the area. The Pastor of that church informed my brother that in order for him to run a HC through his pastor's church, the brother would have to do the following:

1. Take a 3 month training course on how to run a House Church
2. All attending members of the House Church would have to be hand picked from the pastor himself.
3. No new people, or outside people would be allowed to attend the House Church for 2 years.
4. The (the brother holding the HC) would have to teach on what the pastor told him to teach on/about.

As you can see, this isn't what House Church is to be like. This Pastor left no room for the Lord to move in its midst. All are welcome and you come as you are. You will be surprised how many non-believers will show up to learn about the Lord when you allow the Spirit to draw them in, and not have them "picked" by man.

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/6/9 0:40

Quote:

KingJimmy wrote:

The early church met publicly and from house to house.

The verse that's being used to justify this was brought out by one of the men in the Q and A session, which I listened to the Audio of... and I don't think it really gets it right. I don't think it can be assumed that these were continual side-by-side things... that the early church had both house meetings and public meetings going on all the time.

The verse is: Acts 20.20, where Paul says he taught in Ephesus "both publicly and from house to house."

It seems to me (in my reading) that it was the pattern of the early church to gather in homes. Not because it was their doctrine: we believe in home gatherings. But that's where they lived: in their homes, so they gathered there... or wherever they could in times of persecution... and then also from time to time as the Lord led, they had larger public gatherings... probably renting some kind of facility for the purpose.

...I concur with the other brethren here who have pointed out that gathering in a home is no guarantee of having wonderful meetings with the Lord's Presence always there. Lots of home meetings have dried up and have been abandoned.

But this does not justify the kind of setup commonly called "church" in our day; this is not an argument for the validity of the denominational system.

What's the answer then?

...I don't know that there is an easy answer in 25 words or less. We are in difficult days, and I think there's going to be a

ard travail to see birthed what the Lord has on His heart.

...We really need to be seeking the Lord.

AD

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/6/9 6:59

Quote:

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I think the early church didn't think a lot about where they met. I think they just met. Of course, they probably looked to meet in homes more often than not. But renting a neutral location to meet at would've been much more difficult in their day than today. According to archeology, it appears early Christians who could afford to do such would sometimes renovate their home quarters to fit many more people than normally possible. I think one dig revealed a house church capable of holding about 75 or so people in it, which is about the average size of most churches today.

Re: - posted by Mattie, on: 2009/6/9 11:03

I don't think the issue is where you meet. There are no rules where to meet with other believers. It could be a house, a building, or an office.

However, the key issue that needs to be discussed regarding the reason many are leaving the 'institutional' structure is because of what the whole new covenant stands for....

1. Christ lives in every believer.
2. Every believer is a priest and minister to God

In many institutional models, this will be agreed to doctrinally but practically the clergy will dominate as the minister. It's unbiblical. Yes there is a place for elders, teachers, evangelists, etc. But the NT is clear that these are gifts/functions of God for the edifying of the body, not positions of authority over others.

I agree it's about the heart and 'not the organization', but the heart must be jealous for what God intended. If His death on the cross opened up the way for us to have access to the Father, and we all have become a royal priesthood through His blood, then we do well to encourage and promote that.

Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2009/6/9 11:25

Just thought I would share some of an article I read this morning. I think it fits pretty well with your thoughts about church.

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Seeing GOD Affects the Way You See CHURCH

But in truth, God means for the Church, the Body of Christ, to be viewed with an awe, and if we aren't viewing it that way, then we aren't seeing it properly. In those who first saw the Church, there was a transition that took place. It was reported that those early believers "were filled with awe" when they saw the Church. Something very dramatic happened in their lives to the extent that they all abandoned their separate lives and were together and had everything in common. It's not just, "Yeah, yeah, I know. They loved Jesus. They gave their life to the Messiah who they realized had come. They repented of acts that lead to death." Something else happened, too. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

hing, to fellowship, to prayer, and to the breaking of bread—all these things have to do with other people and have to do with the Church. They instantly had a regard for the Household of God as something much more than a loose-knit affiliation of people who each believed in God. It was not just about praying in their prayer closets and then acknowledging these other people, "Well, they are Christians, too. I'm going to live for God, and they are going to live for God. So, we ought to at least try to get along and attend something together regularly." That isn't how the believers 2,000 years ago viewed the Church.

Instead, the way they viewed the Church affected every ounce of their being. When they saw the House of God, the gate of Heaven, something radical happened in the way they began to function with one another. They now saw their lives as actually belonging to each other, rather than themselves. It wasn't just simply, "I believe the Messiah has come." Something happened in the way they viewed other people. Something about Christ with His Head in heaven and His feet on earth was awe-inspiring to them and had a dramatic effect on their lives. It was a dreadful thing, not in the negative sense of course, but there was something very awe-inspiring about who Jesus was and is in His People on this earth. They saw it and they responded to it.

rdg

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2009/6/9 14:21

Quote:

Mattie wrote:

I don't think the issue is where you meet. There are no rules where to meet with other believers. It could be a house, a building, or an office.

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Yes, very well said. This vital functioning of all believers as a kingdom of priests is held as a doctrinal tenet by the Protestant churches, but that's about as far as it ever goes. Take your pick of any of the churches advertising in the Saturday newspaper, and go there next Sunday. I can tell you what you will find (and so can you tell me)... and it will not be this beautiful corporate priesthood you are speaking of.

...And so you're right: it doesn't really matter where we meet. In a home, a rented hall, out in the trees... whatever. But there must be a seeking that acknowledges it is Christ Himself who is the "minister of the Sanctuary," and not the "pastor" up at the front. When there is a jealous concern for His lordship, there will be liberty for each one to function as God intends... even the pastor. He, too (as you said) is given of God for the edifying of the body... but it is a sad setup when the whole thing is always left up to him, to this one man.

...What would we think of a body whose only working part was one of its hands?

AD

Re: , on: 2009/6/9 14:30

The last few posts were great.

Now the question remains, what would the Lord have us do about things, if anything?

Re: - posted by Mattie, on: 2009/6/9 20:58

I believe there are several things that are necessary to advance God's purposes...

1. Stay humble. When pursuing Christ in such a setting as the one we are describing, there should not be an "us vs. the m" mentality (institutional vs. home church). That is an elitist spirit and not the heart of God. We need to realize that the family of God exists in all settings, if they genuinely have repented and looked to Christ.

2. Learn from believers/pioneers who are meeting this way. Frank Viola is one. Art Katz is another brother who has spent years gathering in such way, though in more of a community oriented fashion. History has shown believers who have gathered this way. But we do well to especially heed the wisdom of those in our present day who are living like this.

3. Lay down all agendas and seek Jesus Christ with other like-minded brothers and sisters. Have no plans. Lay down all selfish ambition. Seek Jesus. Let Him have preeminence in and through every member of the body. Walk in love toward one another and serve one another, in keeping with the balance of being jealous for the Truth and remaining in the confines of what is Scriptural.

4. Share this with other believers. Share what God is doing. There truly is a reformation taking place. God is opening the eyes of believers across the country to return to simplicity and unity together.

5. Pray that the Holy Spirit acts on the hearts of others to convict of Truth and Righteousness.

This is my own opinions as to what is healthy to be done.

Re: , on: 2009/6/9 21:14

I agree. I would also add not to be afraid. I've noticed that the thing which many people that I've come across have had problems with is fear. Fear of not having fellowship, fear of not going to 'church', fear to be heard, etc...

Re: - posted by Mattie, on: 2009/6/9 22:10

Another thing to be prepared for is to be labeled. Mark my words, you will be labeled a rebel for following this kind of path. You will be misunderstood. You will be labeled as one who has been wounded and is bitter and that is why you are on the path you are on.

In times like that, bless such people. Love them. Pray for them. And thank God for the opportunity to be reviled for His name sake.