

The Christ-Centered Mission of CWR/PTM

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How CWR/PTM fulfills our mission as a media ministry, and the resources and services we offer, often leads to questions and comments about how we in some ways function as/like a church, and to comparisons of our ministry with a more traditional brick-and-mortar church.

We conclude, as many do, that we are a media ministry, **and a bit more**. Being more than just an electronic media ministry means we are a para-church ministry working alongside, outside and across denominations and congregations that worship in a brick-and-mortar building.

Perhaps it would help to understand how CWR/PTM is both a Christ-centered media/para-church ministry by starting with a definition and clarification of what is meant by the word “church.”

Upon hearing the word *church* many people first think of a building. But the New Testament defines “church” (Greek *ecclesia*) as an “assembly” which can describe a small or large number of individuals in a group, a crowd or a meeting, with or without, inside or outside of a building.

Jesus said “*where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them*” (Matthew 18:20). No numerical size is implied by the word *ecclesia* other than the sense that it is a collective word, not restricted to denominational dogma, membership, structure or control.

Neither is *ecclesia* reserved only for assemblies that focus on spiritual matters. In Acts 18, an *ecclesia* describes a crowd engaged in rioting in the city of Ephesus. Indeed, when people today talk about a church building or “going to church” a riot is normally not what they have in mind.

The New Testament often speaks of the collective, spiritual church as the body of Christ—the universal body of Christ—of which he is the head. It does not speak of a particular place or a particular denomination or legally incorporated organization or building as “a” or exclusively “the” church—but rather a gathering or assembly of people who follow Christ.

The ancient Greek language used the word *agora* to characterize a physical meeting place where an *ecclesia* (meeting or assembly) could gather.

The New Testament does speak of the church as “*the temple of the living God*” (1 Corinthians 6:19) but this reference is not of a literal building but of Jesus, our risen Lord, living in the body, soul and spirit of the individual Christ-follower. This word picture often used by Paul illustrates how Christ-followers grow in grace and knowledge so that as we, by God’s grace, mature in Christ, God is actually building us as his very own spiritual building (Ephesians 2:10, 20-22).

The church is not primarily a physical building to which we travel or attend—**the church is who we are, in Christ**. We are first and foremost, by the grace of God, members of the universal body of Christ. If we decide to be a member of an earthly organization that is legally incorporated as a church, such membership is neither one and the same nor conditional upon being a member of the body of Christ. Jesus does not call us “members” of his church but he calls us his *friends* (John 15:15).

Just after the death and resurrection of Jesus one of the major issues confronting first century Christians in Jerusalem was their apparent lack of historic foundation or of perceived religious value as they lacked a building to call their own. When Stephen was on trial for speaking against the established religion, its temple in Jerusalem became a focal point in his response to the religious authorities at that time. After speaking of the old covenant tabernacle, and the temple (the “house” for God Solomon built) Stephen said, “*However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands*” (Acts 7:48).

How CWR/PTM Is a Church

As Christ-followers, part of his universal body of spiritual sisters and brothers, we are free in Christ to choose how we can “be” the church we already are, by the grace of God. How do we find and share spiritual nourishment, remaining in the vine (John 15) where

we receive spiritual life in Christ, by Christ, and through Christ? As we choose to “be” the church we follow the lead of Jesus as he lives his risen life within us.

If one chooses to eat at a restaurant, or if one decides to prepare food at home, or have that food delivered—does the place it is prepared, where it is eaten and how it is delivered make a difference as to the quality and reality of the food? If one makes a hamburger at home or if one goes to the Golden Arches, it’s still a hamburger (in this comparison, one grilled at home might be healthier!). No particular entity has a divine mandate or a divine franchise that enables it and it alone to serve Christ-centered nourishment here on earth.

As Christ-followers, we are, collectively, “the” church. We may affiliate with “a” church if we choose to do so, but the gospel of Christ puts us under no obligation to do so. We are individually free in Christ to determine how we befriend, connect with, fellowship and receive spiritual nutrition. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not enjoin Christ-followers to become dues-paying members of any earthly organization, religious or otherwise.

Sitting in a church building and attending its services no more transforms a person into a Christian than sitting in a barn will turn them into a cow.

CWR/PTM, by the grace of God, is seated collectively and individually, by God’s invitation, at the table of the Lord. We are a part of God’s kingdom on earth. Thus we reflect the light of Jesus in our individual lives and we collectively reflect his light by worldwide public proclamation as we together pool our resources. We boldly publish and broadcast the much-needed message of God’s amazing grace into the dark places of this world.

“Disputable” Matters

As Christ-followers, we are free in Christ (Galatians 5:1). We are free for many decisions we may make and in many of these choices we

may differ from other Christ-followers without becoming greater or lesser spiritually as the result of our choices. We may and do differ without dividing or condemning. We stand or fall before our Master, striving not to pass judgment on others on “disputable matters.”

There are also non-disputable matters of faith and belief. There are dysfunctional, toxic teachings and practices that call into question the authenticity of someone who individually identifies as a Christian or an entity that identifies itself as a collective group of Christians.

Disputable matters are optional choices (as defined biblically) a Christ-follower may make, including but not limited to:

- the race or culture of a Christ-follower
- the language they may speak
- whether or not they choose to involve themselves in a legal entity called a church
- the choice one may make of whom (or whether) to marry
- what career someone may pursue, where one might live
- what one might eat, or whether one might favor one political party or another
- how much water might be used for a baptism or how often one can or must partake of Communion, the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist—the list of *disputable matters* is endless.

Based on the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the freedom he gives us by God’s grace, it is the opinion of CWR/PTM that any collective group of individuals organized in a spiritual/religious manner, who audaciously claim that they are the one and only true church may not even be Christians at all. Their judgmental, overbearing, heavy handed authoritarian edicts may well prove they are not Christ-centered.

How CWR/PTM Follows Christ

The teachings of CWR/PTM are grounded in Christ, we are aligned with the historic and traditional teachings of the physical body of Christ on earth, and we are definitely

a part of the universal body of Christ. However, because we do not observe worship services on a piece of real estate in a brick-and-mortar building, we do not claim to be “a” church but prefer to define ourselves as a media and para-church ministry.

We proclaim a Christ-centered message shared via hard copy, with digital content online and via audio and video messages. We communicate with those who seek our help and insights via letters, emails and phone. By the grace of God, we provide Christ-centered nourishment on a regular and consistent basis.

By the grace of God we serve Christ-centered nourishment where we can and for whomever chooses to allow us to do so. If someone chooses to be involved at any level in the worldwide ministry of CWR/PTM as well as being a member of a denomination, we are happy to serve them. If someone chooses to exclusively be involved with CWR/PTM for their spiritual nourishment, we are also happy to be of service, in Jesus’ name. □

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Come
for hope, comfort,
healing & encouragement

Stay
for connection, care
& community

PTM/CWR All Jesus, All the time