

Newsletter for April 2019

Dear Church Family,

Slowly, cautiously, carefully, we make our way in making a reality for our “church for those without a church.” The exact name remains a mystery, except for the second part of it—An Evangelical and Reformed Baptist Congregation. The reason for this is “full disclosure.” We want people to know exactly who we are. Most of the online churches are of a Pentecostal nature and focus on entertainment. From what I have observed, we want to distinguish ourselves and lead with what is of value to us: evangelism, Bible teaching, preaching, and ministry from a reformed position. Baptist, which is the largest Protestant grouping in the world, has many faces but is known for a focus on the finished work of Jesus Christ. We have been around for more than 500 years, and most of the church was Baptist for the first several centuries of the Christian era. This is a good platform for us.

There will be many facets to our ministry, and all presented or accessed from our church website, milleravenuechurch.org, or via an app that is yet to be created. There will be live streaming of our Sunday morning worship service, then somewhat later in the day or week, the same with American Sign Language presented. (Perhaps with closed captioning down the line.) There will be Bible studies, prayer meetings, deliverance ministry (yes, some of you may want to be trained in this very vital ministry), the study of Greek and Hebrew, pastoral counseling, children’s ministry, writing seminars, addiction-oriented programs, the Divorce Recovery workshop, for starters. We already have pastors in two places in the country with which appointments may be made for any number of issues. We will provide a way to become a member and will issue membership certificates. People will be able to give tithes and offerings by means of a third-party platform like EasyTithe or similar. And yes, it may well be possible to provide communion and even baptism, but that will take some more thinking. There are more areas of ministry, too, including music and art. There is no end to the possibilities.

There will some changes in our morning service. It will get shorter, but at this point we have not even begun to figure things out. We will continue the Lord’s Supper but may not film it. We may cut also cut out one hymn. In any case, we want to get the televised part down to an hour.

One of the goals is to include as many folks as possible in actual ministry. The online church presents a perfect opportunity to do so. I can imagine as many as 20, maybe even 30 of us actively involved. Some of those involved will not be local, will not live in California, or maybe not even in the USA. There are two positions that are vital to our church for those without a church: one, a webmaster/appmaster, and two, an administrator. No one with the last name Philpott will be either of these. I have no idea who these people might be; they are not presently on site. Remember what Jesus said about praying the Lord of the harvest to bring workers in to His vineyard. This is our prayer.

Why are we engaging in such a large project? is a fair question to ask. One, because it is being done successfully by many others. Two, it is a natural way to fulfill the commission we have to preach the Gospel to the world. Three, and according to a recent Barna survey, about 52% of self-identified Christians do not attend a brick and mortar church. Four, there are so many different folks who simply cannot get to a local church. There are the disabled, those who are institutionalized, those with severe medical conditions, and those with service dogs. And way too many people are simply offended at what is going on in local churches. Or, folks are looking for a church they can agree with theologically, which is not a small matter. And you may think of others who have no church home. And I suspect for some, an online church may be a step toward finding a local church that will be a good fit.

What began as an idea 25 or more years ago is now in process of formation. Please let us pray each day for our church for those without a church.