

I am often asked, “What are the marks of an emergent church?” To me, they have these characteristics:

**1. Rooted in Context and Relationship:** Emerging churches are deeply, profoundly rooted in context. Context is the traditions that have made us who we are. Context is also the local situation. So see what’s going on in the culture around you, in your neighborhood, on your campus, among young people. See where community is already forming: coffeehouses, yoga studios, clubs, online social networks. See how God’s spirit is already active, where people are finding meaning and holiness. Enter relationship with the voices on your margins. Listen for where their hunger and yearning is strongest. Then imagine the church’s worship, space, preaching, teaching, leadership, identity, community and ministries prayerfully shaped by those insights.

*“[We’re] re-imagining church in ways that are radically incarnational and contextual to embody the gospel and reign of God in today’s culture.” Karen Ward, Pastor, Church of the Apostles, Seattle*

**2. Contextual Worship:** Emergent communities embrace fresh forms of worship that connect ancient traditions and postmodern culture. By fresh, we’re talking more than rock bands and projectors. Fresh may be candlelit vespers, silence in a chaotic world. It may be a hip-hop remix of liturgical traditions, or the “Agnus Dei” set to Moby. Fresh is collaborative, experiential. It invites us to bring our whole selves to God. Context meets tradition and God’s new thing is born.

*“At The Crossing, people dance around the communion table! There is ‘Open Space’ for us to practice the presence of God.” A voice from The Crossing.*

**3. Collaborative Leadership:** We hope to share power and build collaborative or networked leadership structures. Instead of a ladder, think of a web: people connected to and trusting each other all the way around. The clergy or other animating leader is a facilitator who holds out the community’s vision, recognizes gifts, nurtures more gifts, and creates the conditions for people to become powerful disciples and apostles. Everyone’s asking: “What could we do together for God?”

*"We share our stories, take turns preaching; we hear each other into speech, pray with each other. I'm finding my voice, stepping up for leadership." A voice from The Crossing.*

**4. Radical Community:** The emergent dream aims to reinvigorate Christian community, with an emphasis on real people in real, life-changing relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ. The hope is to gather, share our stories, know and be known, live as Christ's body in our ever-changing world - to build beloved community.

*"Something happens during the Eucharist here. Transformation. Intimacy with Jesus. It's beautiful and surprising and amazing." A voice from The Crossing.*

**5. Serious Discipleship:** These communities embrace a radical call to discipleship and mission. We want to be so in love with Jesus, so much part of his body, we can't help but engage the neighborhood, share the good news, build relationship with the lost and least. It's not that we are holy people redeeming a Godless world; it's that God is present and active "out there." As God's church, we are committed to God's mission.

*"When I share lunch with a hungry person, God is there and feeds my soul." -A voice from The Crossing*

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