

"Gatherings" - That's what "Congregation" Means

The Great Assembly

This is the vision of the Church that comes from the Bible. It is the vision of people from "every nation and tribe and people and language" gathered before the throne of God singing and praising God for salvation. It is about Christians from Chester and from strange and far away places with strange accents and different ways of talking - like Kagiso, South Africa and Minot, North Dakota. Speaking of Minot, here's some Biographical Information about our new vicar:

As most of you know, my name is Adam Filipek. I was born and raised in Minot, ND. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Minot is my home congregation and I have been a member all my life. After graduating from Minot State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems and a minor in Philosophy, I moved to St. Louis where I began my studies at Concordia Seminary. I was assigned to my field work congregation, Our Redeemer Lutheran, where I met Becky. We have been married for just over a year, and have a newborn son, David Hezekiah Filipek who was born Thursday, July 26 at 11:00 p.m. When I am not busy with school or work, I enjoy hunting, fishing, golfing, hockey, carpentry, and playing the guitar and trumpet.

The vision of the church is the vision of God gathering His own, from the beginning of the world until the end. (Read Hebrews 2:12; Psalm 22:22; Ps. 40:10; and Revelation 7:9-10)

The Whole Church

This is what the Church is - many different groups gathering together to worship our God. (Read 1 Corinthians 12) Paul says we are a body together and we need each other. When one is blessed all rejoice. When one suffers all suffer together.

What does this mean?

It means that right in our own congregation God is bringing us together to care for and strengthen each other. We are to encourage each other and pray for each other. And we are to treasure the worship and praise of God that each part of our congregation brings.

Our little children will join in our worship in a different way than the adults. They come up for the children's sermons and they sing children's songs. Our teenagers bring their own special something to worship. Many are truly good singers and they sing with the enthusiasm of youth.

The young people can be enriched by listening carefully to the songs our older members love, and learning why those songs are treasured. And our older members can be enriched by listening to the songs of our younger members and learning why they love those songs. That's part of being what Paul calls "the body of Christ."

In this Gathering

We are a part of something amazing and huge. As we gather for worship and prayer all over the world our fellow Christians also gather in the name of Jesus.

This is important. The Gospel brings together every kind of people. There will be young children, teenagers and the elderly. There will be people passing through from Wisconsin, Florida, Arkansas, South Africa, Korea, Germany, and more. (Those are just a few of the places we have had visitors from.)

If you want to get an idea of just how big this is I encourage you to go on a Sunday afternoon and attend the Lutheran Chinese Church in Carbondale (4:00 Sundays at Our Savior, Carbondale). What will it be like at the end of the world when God gathers His people from every nation?

I don't think it will be English only; and I don't think there will be only one style of music and singing. But this is what the Church is. It is the multitude that no one could count from every nation and tribe and people and language, and it is what Jesus Christ is doing.

What happens now?

As we gather around God's Word, His Word does what it is sent to do – gives faith and gathers souls. (Read Isaiah 55:10-11)

But the word about Jesus Christ is not supposed to stay only in church. Wherever God's Word is, it does its work. So be bold in speaking about Jesus Christ wherever you are.

Pastor Mark
1 Corinthians 2:2