

The Dream

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submitted by Cary Pallin

Let us dream of a church

in which all members know surely and simply God's great love, and each is certain that in the divine heart we are all known by name.
in which Jesus is very Word, our window into the Father's heart; the sign of God's hope and his design for all humankind.
in which the Spirit is not a party symbol, but wind and fire in everyone; gracing the church with a kaleidoscope of gifts and constant renewal for all.

A church in which

worship is lively and fun as well as reverent and holy; and we might be moved to dance and laugh; to be solemn, cry or beat the breast.
people know how to pray and enjoy it -- frequently and regularly, privately and corporately, in silence and in word and song.
the Eucharist is the center of life and servanthood the center of mission: the servant Lord truly known in the breaking of the bread.
with service flowing from worship, and everyone understanding why a worship is called a service.

Let us dream of a church

in which the sacraments, free from captivity by a professional elite, are available in every congregation regardless of size, culture, location or budget.
in which every congregation is free to call forth from its midst priests and deacons, sure in the knowledge that training and support services are available to back them up.
in which the Word is sacrament too, as dynamically present as bread and wine; members, not dependent on professionals, know what's what and who's who in the Bible, and all sheep share in the shepherding.
in which discipline is a means, not to self-justification, but to discipleship and law is known to be a good servant but a very poor master.

A church

affirming life over death as much as life after death, unafraid of change, able to recognize God's hand in the revolutions, affirming the beauty of diversity, abhorring the imprisonment of uniformity, as concerned about love in all relationships as it is about chastity, and affirming the personal in all expressions of sexuality; denying the separation between secular and sacred, world and church, since it is the world Christ came to and died for.

A church

without the answers, but asking the right questions; holding law and grace, freedom and authority, faith and works together in tension, by the Holy Spirit, pointing to the glorious mystery who is God. So deeply rooted in gospel and tradition that, like a living tree, it can swing in the wind and continually surprise us with new blossoms.

Let us dream of a church

with a radically renewed concept and practice of ministry and a primitive understanding of the ordained offices.
where there is no clerical status and no classes of Christians, but all together know themselves to be part of the laos-- the holy people of God—a ministering community rather than a community gathered around a minister.
where ordained people, professional or not, employed or not, are present for the sake of ordering and signing the church's life and mission, not as signs of authority or dependency, nor of spiritual or intellectual superiority, but with Pauline patterns of "ministry supporting church" instead of the common pattern of "church supporting ministry."
where bishops are signs and animators of the church's unity, catholicity and apostolic mission, priests are signs and animators of her eucharistic life and the sacramental presence of her Great High Priest, and deacons are signs and animators — living reminders -- of the church's servanthood as the body of Christ who came as, and is, the servant slave of all God's beloved children.

Let us dream of a church

so salty and so yeasty that it really would be missed if no longer around; where there is wild sowing of seed, and much rejoicing when they take root, but little concern for success, comparative statistics, growth or even survival.
so evangelical that its worship, its quality of caring, its eagerness to reach out to those in need cannot be contained.
in which every congregation is in a process of becoming free -- autonomous -- self-reliant -- interdependent, none has special status: the distinction between parish and mission gone; but each congregation is in mission and each Christian, gifted for ministry; a crew on a freighter, not passengers on a luxury liner. peacemakers and healers abhorring violence in all forms (maybe even football), as concerned with societal healing as with individual healing; with justice as with freedom, prophetically confronting the root causes of social, political and economic ills. A community: an open, caring, sharing household of faith where all find embrace, acceptance and affirmation. A community: under judgment, seeking to live with its own proclamation; therefore, truly loving what the Lord commands and desiring His promise.

And finally, let us dream of a people

called to recognize all the absurdities in ourselves and in one another, including the absurdity that is LOVE, serious about the call and the mission but not, very much, about ourselves, who, in the company of our Clown Redeemer can dance and sing and laugh and cry in worship, in ministry and even in conflict. (1)