

Apex

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Network Summary

Apex began as a more institutional church plant (within a Willow Creek style mega-church) to reach the post-modern people of Las Vegas in 1997. After 2-3 years of apparent growth and success, the leaders of Apex experienced a calling away from some Constantinian and "Enlightenment" assumptions that we had previously taken for granted.

Through much prayer, reading, and lively discussion it was determined that Apex should transition away from an institutional church and into a church planting movement. Since 2000 we have seen 15-20 churches start in Las Vegas, as well as three other cities in the USA. In January of 2002, Apex went independent from our mother church with their full support and blessing.

Today Apex exists to plant and network simple churches, train church planters and facilitate city-wide gatherings. We meet weekly as a gathering of house churches on Sunday nights and have just started to see more people involved in our small churches as opposed to our large gathering.

We are also just completing a trial semester of Tyrannus, an extensive church planting training program that we hope will help facilitate more churches in Las Vegas.

The stated mission for Apex is to see a church within walking distance of every person in Las Vegas and a church planting movement in every major US city.

Values and Activities

Apex Church Belief and Doctrinal Statements

Apex Belief Statement

- We view the Scriptures as the inspired and preserved record of God's Word. We believe that the following statement best expresses our fundamental beliefs about the nature of God as found in the Bible:
- We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
- We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
- Through him all things were made.
- For us and for our salvation he came from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit:
- He became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.
- For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.
- On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.
- We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
- With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
- He has spoken through the Prophets.
- We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church.
- We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
- We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

**"catholic" should be read "universal" or "world-wide".*

Our Theological Convictions:

Kingdom

God is Sovereign. The Creator, and Consummator of the universe. He alone deserves praise, worship and homage. He truly is King of all that was, is and will be.

As King, God has always desired a people to be his followers, the people of God. In this regard, God is truly "political" in the literal sense of the word, but his "polls" surpasses the kingdoms of this world, which amount to nothing compared to his Kingdom. In the Old Testament, God elected the nation of Israel to be his chosen people.

As the entire New Testament testifies, Jesus came to proclaim access to the Kingdom of God, fulfilling and completing the Law and the Prophets of the Jews. Jesus came, announcing the good news (gospel) that the Kingdom had broken into humanity in a new, fresh, and eschatologically significant way. Jesus himself was the Kingdom as he incarnated God among us. As the Messiah/Christ (literally, King) Jesus offered access into the Kingdom of God to all who would listen to his proclamation, turn from their sin and faithfully believe in his authority.

The reality of this new "Kingdom-among-us" radically transformed the lives of Jesus' closest friends and disciples. Since the death, burial and resurrection of Christ the reality and power of the Kingdom of God has been made available to all people who will continue to follow Christ as his early friends did.

Mission

God, by nature, is a missional being. He is a missionary God. Even within Himself, He is a sending God. (The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit.) The people of God reflect his missional character by allowing themselves to be sent by Him, proclaiming life in the Kingdom and incarnating the love of God in their time and place. All disciples of Jesus follow Him as King and are sent by Him as his ambassadors to the world.

The people of God are called to live as resident aliens in a world that is not their own. Therefore, for every true follower of Christ, their world (their time, place and culture) is their mission field, not their ultimate home. They are residents of the Kingdom of God-both the Kingdom of the here-and-now and the Kingdom that is to come.

A true missional spirit of the people of God allows for outsiders to partake in the community and joy of authentic Kingdom living, making "evangelism" a natural and organic process that flows from any true missional community of God-followers. The numerical growth of Jesus-disciples in any given culture is always connected to the depth of love and community that the people of God share with each other.

Community

God is an eternal community of one-ness. Though He is Three, He is also One. God exists in everlasting love within his own being- Father, Son and Spirit. God created mankind to live in community with Himself. He desires a people.

Men and women are created with an innate longing for community with God and with each other. However, the human race both originally and continually opts to sin against God. As human beings continue to prefer their own will to the will of God, true community with God and other people becomes impossible for fallen people. However, through Christ, God has returned the gift of community to the human race.

Through the faithfulness of Christ, community occurs within the context of the Kingdom of God as followers of Jesus trust the Holy Spirit and love one another in response to first being loved by God. The Holy Spirit intercedes by giving gifts to believers for the building up of the Body of Christ.

When the Kingdom of God is proclaimed and received in a given locality, the Holy Spirit forms the people of God into a church (literally, the "called-out-ones"). The local church functions as the people of God and as the embassy of the Kingdom of God in a given culture.

The Church as the eschatological sign, foretaste and agent of the Kingdom

The church is not the Kingdom of God. The Church submits to the Kingdom as its sign, foretaste and agent. The Church is a particularly eschatological phenomenon. This means that the church belongs to the last days (the "eschaton"). These last days came with the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ and will be completed upon his second coming to earth. The church exists in the interim days between

the beginning and the end of the eschaton. The church is a pilgrim people on a voyage toward the summation of this created realm and the ultimate and total reign of God as the true and only King. The church is the sign of the Kingdom in that it is not the Kingdom, but it points people toward the rule of God. The church is the witness of the reality that the Kingdom of God is both already alive among us and will one day fully come. In this regard, the church exists to proclaim King Jesus and his Kingdom to the world.

The church is the foretaste of the Kingdom in that it contains the true people of God. Though the Kingdom has not come fully, it has come already. The rule and love of God may be felt and understood within the church in a real and dynamic way. Life in the Church prepares us and fits us for life in the Kingdom. The church is the agent of the Kingdom in that it does the work of the Kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit. God normally chooses his people to do his work. With this understanding, the church truly incarnates King Jesus and becomes his Body and his Family on earth. The people of God function as the hands, feet and voice of Christ to those who are both near and far from Him.

The Church as the counter-cultural community of Jesus in a specific culture

The church exists as a community of Jesus followers. The community, however, is normally, if not always, counter-cultural to the dominant structures of the time and place where the church exists. The local church sees itself as the "polis" or city of God. Members of the church allow themselves to be led only by God (their true Lord), not by the epistemology, economy or politics of their culture.

More often than not, the politics of Jesus are different than the dominant worldview being lived out day to day by the people of any culture. As a general rule, when the church becomes too central or cozy with the powers that be, the church loses its marginality, its true power as the eschatological sign of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the church should normally have a marginal place in society. It creates its own cultural norms that are often counter to the norms of an anthropocentric worldview. The church strives to live true to the teachings of Jesus and to model his faithfulness to the world. If Jesus was marginalized, persecuted and hated (and he was), those who follow him should expect the same treatment.

Contrary to popular sentiment, the church grows in a more substantial way when it retains its position at the margins of society. The church dies when it converts to culture.

However, the church cannot afford to ignore the culture in which it lives as resident aliens. Since the church is a missional community and mouthpiece for the Kingdom, it should familiarize itself with culture so that it may indigenize the gospel of Jesus in a way that allows sinners an opportunity to repent and accept life. The opposite fallacy of converting to culture is ignoring culture.

The Church as the organic family of God

The church is the family of God. The members of the church are sons and daughters of their Father God, and brothers and sisters to one another. The leader of the church is the head of the family: King Jesus. Jesus leads every church through the supernatural gifting and presence of the Holy Spirit. No true church is built by people apart from the guidance of the Spirit.

The church operates more like an organism than a business or an institution. It contains structure, but it is structured through spiritual direction and giftedness, not according to the popular or cultural methods of the day. The church, the Body of Christ, grows organically, similar to the way a natural body grows physically.

Churches grow optimally when they multiply and "give birth" to new churches. This "multiplication" growth, sometimes called a church planting movement, allows the church to expand in all directions while giving each church the opportunity to remain small enough to be an intimate, holistic community of faith.

Individual Meaning

Whether people realize it or not, we all have a foundational need for meaning in life. Most people will eventually find themselves asking the three big questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?

God has put his thumbprint on our soul. There exists in each individual what Blaise Pascal called a "God-shaped vacuum". We, as individuals, have been searching to fill the hole in our heart with everything in the world only to find that nothing in the world can fill our emptiness. As Augustine said of his search for God, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

Individuals are created in the image of God. We naturally seek for meaning as part of our createdness. In essence, the basic needs of meaning surpass all other human needs as they stem from the root of a

person's being. God has arranged what Peter Kreeft calls the "three prophets" within the human soul. These three foundational longings are the pathways that God uses to draw men and women to himself:

Beauty

God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. The beauty of the world testifies to God's character and person. Individuals are able to commune with God through their imaginative and creative potential. For this reason, Apex values the arts, expression, and creativity.

Truth

God is true and has made His truth known in the Scriptures and through the person of Jesus Christ. Reason and knowledge are from God and point the creation to the Creator. Individuals are able to commune with God through their intellectual and reasoning potential. For this reason, Apex values to know, live and proclaim Truth.

Goodness

God is good and righteous. All good things are from God alone and point seekers of righteousness to Him. Individuals are able to commune with God through their conscience and innate attraction to goodness and virtue. For this reason, Apex values right and disciplined living.

Apex Mission Statement

In light of our beliefs and theological convictions...

Apex exists to see a church within walking distance of every person in Las Vegas

AND

Apex exists to see a church planting movement in every major city in the United States

Stuff we are passionate about:

1. We all suck. (We aren't good enough apart from God to do anything quite right.)
2. It's all about God. (We can't do church any more for our self-worth or justification...or...we must not make the Bride of Christ our personal whore.)
3. In Jesus we meet not a series of ideas about God, life and humanity, but an invitation to join a movement, a people. (Stolen from Resident Aliens.)
4. Salvation is not so much a religious contact between God and an individual, but baptism into a community that has a true and divine story.
5. Jesus came to earth to call people to repent and proclaim the Kingdom (reign) of God. We should do the same.
6. The western church, both liberal and conservative, has bought into many modern lies, such as individualism, consumerism and rationalism.
7. The church should be the polis (city) of God that exists as a witness to the powers of the fallen world.
8. The Trinity exists as mission and community and the church is invited into this missional, communal dance.
9. Jesus commended the church to be in the world, but not of it...most of western Christianity exists of the world, but not in it.
10. So... we do house/organic churches because they allow us to best live life with the above beliefs.

Formative Resources

- *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard. This book is a modern masterpiece regarding the call to discipleship and the practical implications of living the Sermon on the Mount. Willard has an amazing gift to explain the Kingdom of God to his readers. Anyone who has been damaged by the church should read this book.

- *Resident Aliens* by Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon. Any serious church planter should read this book twice. It breaks apart many of the churches paradigms of practice and tradition that tend to enslave Western Christianity. The readability is moderate, but more than worth the effort. This book will assure you that the church is at its best when it is a counter-cultural witness to the world.
- *Transforming Mission* by David Bosch. This graduate level book is large, but worth the time spent reading it. Bosch builds an exhaustive case for a missional theology by beginning with the Biblical accounts of the gospel and working throughout church history. He explains the historical changes in the understanding (and misunderstandings) of Christian salvation.
- *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder. Read this book to understand that the church exists as its own political, economic and social order within a given culture. It is not too lengthy or academic. Nothing makes the Kingdom of God more real or practical than Yoder's view of church.
- *Missional Church* by Darrell Guder, ed. Through somewhat academic, this critical collection of essays is a brilliant commentary on church as mission in a post-modern world. The reader should be prepared to think historically and sociologically regarding the influence of modernism and The Enlightenment on the current state of the North American church.
- *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* by Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin was born in Great Britain, but spent most of his life as a missionary in India. This experience allowed him to critique the Western church from the unique vantage point of both insider and outsider. Many find the book difficult to read, but careful study will show that many other modern missiologists are simply expounding on Newbigin's works.
- *The Church* by Hans Kung. Kung is one of the greatest Roman Catholic missiologists. This book is not an easy read, but is a very interesting commentary on the missiological and ecclesial significance of Vatican II. Every anti-Catholic protestant should be forced to read Kung. His understanding of Kingdom is nearly flawless.
- *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* by George Hunter. This short, readable book compares our current Western culture with the ancient Celtic world of St. Patrick. Though not a house church book per se, Hunter persuasively argues for the starting of smaller authentic communities of faith over traditional church structures.
- *Community and Growth* by Jean Vanier. This book should be mandatory reading for anyone who is considering communal living or intentional covenantal community. Vanier pulls from his personal experience as the founder of a community house for the mentally ill. This book will be helpful to anyone who finds it difficult to love those who are different or socially awkward.
- *Christianity for Modern Pagans* by Peter Kreeft. This commentary on Blaise Pascal's *Pensees* is one of the best works of apologetics for the postmodern world. Kreeft gives a wonderful contemporary retelling of Pascal's famous arguments for Christianity.

Family

Joe Boyd

Joe Boyd and wife Debbie live in Las Vegas with their two children..

Greg Hubbard

Greg Hubbard and wife Rebekah live in Las Vegas with their daughter.

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