

# What's a Church?

## ***Wesleyan Essential Ecclesiology to Empower the Multiplication Movement***

The Wesleyan Church uses a strategic focus statement to guide its work: *We celebrate every time a disciple makes a disciple and a church multiplies itself until The Wesleyan Church has a transforming presence in every zip code.* This strategic focus is in alignment with and support of Wesleyan leaders aggressively pursuing creative missional works in new places with the purpose of reaching those who are missing from Christ and his church.

With great enthusiasm, more and more people are taking discipleship and multiplication seriously. New leaders, lay and clergy, have felt called to initiate and guide new missional works, many of which do not look and act like the majority of modern church structures. The leadership assumption is that these new forms of church are rising up out of a move of the Holy Spirit and a sincere commitment to following Jesus, wherever the Spirit might lead. This season invites The Wesleyan Church to clarify our essential ecclesiology in order to empower the expanding discipleship and multiplication of the church.

The intent of this document is to help leaders embrace and encourage new forms of the church, while remaining aligned with biblical expressions of healthy church definition and structure, or what has been traditionally been called “ecclesiology.” The hope is that a leader can use this document to guide personal reflection on the fundamental question: “is what we are doing really a church?” A person asking that question might be ready to use this document. If not, then the depth of this document might prohibit it from being a helpful resource to that person at this time.

The early church adopted a cultural term, *ecclesia*, and transformed it into a term for their Christian communities. *Ecclesia*, in English, can be rendered “*called out ones*.” As a tool to remember the following questions, those three words can be used as categories:

- 1) those **called** who enter “discipleship,”
- 2) those disciplined who live sent **out** on a “mission” and
- 3) the unified **ones** living in authentic church “community.”

## ***Discipleship (called)***

- Are disciples being equipped to make disciples?  
*(Matthew 28:19-20; also see [this resource](#) for clarifying questions on discipleship)*
- Are believers set apart as holy for a special purpose by and for God, thus equipping them to understand and utilize their spiritual gifts?  
*(Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; [The Discipline](#) 518.5)*
- Is there an accountability structure to implement church governance and discipline, to ensure correct doctrine is followed?  
*(Matthew 18:15-20; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 2:1-22; The Discipline 518.5)*

## ***Mission (out)***

- Are there celebrations and stories of individuals committing to follow Christ and being baptized?  
*(2 Peter 3:8-10; Romans 6:4)*
- Is there intentional progress toward sending out leaders and reproducing new churches?  
*(Acts 1:8)*
- Are there forms of outward-oriented witness to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly into communities that are nearby, hard to reach, or faraway around the globe?  
*(Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:16; Acts 1:8; The Discipline 518.3)*

## ***Community (ones)***

- Are the gathered believers united in loving fellowship around the Trinitarian presence of God: the Father, the Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?  
*(Matthew 28:19-20; 210; The Discipline, Article of Religion 1)*
- Are times of prayer, teaching of the word of God and the Lord's Supper all meaningful parts of church gatherings resulting in a loving witness to the world?  
*(Acts 2:42; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:5; 1 John 4:11-12)*
- Are there regular gatherings so that believers might band together to study and apply the Bible to their lives?  
*(Acts 2:42; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Timothy 3:16; Luke 22:14-23)*
- Are non-believers welcomed into relationships with believers and church gatherings, so they might respond to the saving message of Jesus Christ and enter into the Kingdom of God?  
*(Romans 1:16, 6:1-4, 10:14; 1 Corinthians 15:23; Romans; Matthew 28:19-20; The Discipline 518.2)*