

Pastor column: Saying hello to the community

The Homer Horizon

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I have a confession to make. I have a love/hate relationship with the Christian church (Since I am new to this place, I am writing about larger issues — not my current congregation. I am only going to speak out of my experience of my tradition. This may be relevant to other people or traditions, but someone from those places will need to speak to that).

This can be a problem for me, because I am a pastor. It sometimes seems like it is my job to love church. And, I do. But I love Jesus more. Jesus has saved my life more than once. Jesus, for me, is about finding the people on the edges — the people without power, the people who are down on their luck, the people without resources. I often tell kids that Jesus was put to death because he said that everyone should share and take care of each other and that God loves everyone, but the officials in power wanted to be greedy and keep things for themselves. They were mad about what Jesus said.

Sometimes, I fear that the church today — not my congregation in particular, but the whole church as a global institution — is really about hate, fear, judgement, and, therefore, power. Or, that Jesus has been watered down so much that church is a social club about getting my needs met and hanging out with my friends.

I live on the line between Generation X and millennials. From long before I came here, I don't often get to hangout with friends my own age in church because either they are pastors at their own churches on Sunday mornings, or they want nothing to do with church. They are either in it to change it, or they just can't see how church and Jesus matter to their everyday lives.

My vision for church is that we would be sure that we're focusing on Jesus' saving love and sharing it with the world. My vision is that we care for one another and the world around us because Jesus first loved us. Church can be a place where lives are changed and the world is healed.

And yet, I can't convince my non-church going friends of that. I'm not sure why — I don't have all the answers. I do know, though, that we are due for our 500-year reform. Around the year 500, Christianity was made legal. Around the year 1000, the Eastern and Western churches split. Around the year 1500, Martin Luther came along and began a reformation. It is now around the year 2000, and because I know that people always need to experience the saving love of Jesus, I am excited to be part of something that is remaking itself.

I'm in Homer Glen on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. for worship and on Wednesday afternoons. Contact the church if you'd like to chat with me about the church, God or the community. Do you love the church? Hate the church? Both? Come see me and let me know!

The opinions of this column are that of the writer. They do not necessarily reflect those of The Homer Horizon.