

September 7, 2014

Series title: Living As the Cross-Centered Community

Message Title: This Thing Called Church

Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

#### Overview:

This fall we are taking a journey into the beauty and challenge of the book of 1 Corinthians, particularly those sections that deal with how we live as a cross-centered community in a world that needs the message of the cross. The Corinthian church wrestled with many of the same kinds of issues that churches, including ours, have always wrestled with. This book invites us into the messiness of living out our faith in our broken world. It is important for us to explore two ways we intersect with our world. First, how it impacts us and then how we are called to impact the world.

Before we enter into the depths of those questions, we will need to remind ourselves of the overall message of the book and the sure foundation of Christ upon which our church must be built. The first two messages in this series will do that.

#### Engaging with each other

1. Describe the most beautiful church building you have ever seen. What made it beautiful to you? What do you think it says about how the people who built it thought about church?

#### Engaging with the text

1. In the first major section of the book Paul grounds the church in the work of Christ on the cross and he ends the book by grounding our hope and perseverance in the resurrection of Christ. Why do you think he does that?
2. In 1 Cor. 1:1 Paul begins by referencing his calling to be an apostle. The office of apostle was one of highest authority in the early church. Why do you think Paul appeals to this as he opens the book?
3. In verse 2 Paul says that the church is “called to be holy.” Why do you think Paul includes this idea of calling in his introduction?
4. What is the importance of Paul referencing all the people in every place who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? What is the importance of the phrase “their Lord and ours?”
5. In verse 3 Paul has adapted a normal greeting phrase and custom to convey a uniquely Christian message. What do these words tell us about the gospel?
6. Read verses 4-9. Given the long list of negative issues Paul will deal with in this letter and the disrespect some of the Corinthians have for Paul, why do you think he describes them in such positive language in this passage?

## Engaging with our lives

1. If someone asked you to explain what the church is, how would you answer?
2. How do you think the people around us would evaluate our presence, corporately and individually, in the community?
3. How has being a part of the church helped or hindered your spiritual growth?
4. What would be the impact be if you were to give thanks for the people who have caused you grief?