

The Organic Church

WHAT IS IT EXACTLY?

The term "organic church" is often used as a synonym for "house church," "simple church," or "home church." But this is not correct. There are [huge differences](#) between an authentic organic church and a group of people who meet in a living room and call themselves a church.

Coined by T. Austin-Sparks, an "organic church" is a church that lives and gathers according to the spiritual reality that the church (ekklesia) is a spiritual organism rather than an institutional organization.

FIVE MYTHS ABOUT ORGANIC CHURCHES

* *In organic churches, nothing is organized and everything is spontaneous.* Not so. Just as a physical body has a specific expression and contains organization, so do organic churches. The members plan and arrange when and how they meet. Such planning is completely consistent with spiritual life. God Himself plans and arranges.

* *An organic church has no leadership.* Not so. Leadership comes from every member of the body at different times. Different people lead according to their different gifts and ministries. In the organic church, all are priests, ministers, and functioning parts of the body just as the New Testament teaches. Leadership is open, participatory, and fluid.

* *Organic church is the same thing as post-church.* Not so. Organic churches can be visited. They meet in real locations on a regular basis. They aren't ghost churches. ([Click here](#) to read a critique of the post-church view.)

* *Organic churches always meet in homes.* Not so. While organic churches do not own or possess "sacred" religious buildings, they can meet in any location. Whether a home, coffee shop, clubhouse, park, rented building, etc.

* *Organic church is a unified movement.* Not so. Many Christians use the word "organic church" to describe very different expressions of church, even institutional churches. We've recommended some books and articles below to help bring clarity to this term.

SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ORGANIC CHURCH

* The members of the church are learning to live by the life of Jesus Christ together and are expressing that life in tangible ways.

* The members are pursuing Jesus in their life together and sharing Him in their gatherings and community life.

* There is no clergy/laity divide. Every member functions and participates. All have different ministries and roles, and all contribute in the ministry and decision-making.

* Jesus is the head in a real discernable way.

* The church has been founded on Christ, not a certain theological system, a set of practices, a method, or a human personality. While God uses people to root the church in a real on-going relationship with Jesus, such people point to Jesus rather than to themselves.

*The church is not a once-a-week meeting. The members of an organic church meet often. They live as a face-to-face community.

* The church stands for and seeks to fulfill God's eternal purpose. They don't meet for a special interest such as evangelism, discipleship, social justice, spiritual gifts, church multiplication, but for [God's ultimate intention](#) which may include yet transcends all of these things.

Recommended Books to Learn More

- * [The Community Life of God - Milt Rodriguez](#)
- * [Reimagining Church - Frank Viola](#)
- * [The Priesthood of All Believers - Milt Rodriguez](#)
- * [Finding Organic Church - Frank Viola](#)
- * [God's Spiritual House - T. Austin-Sparks](#)
- * [Pagan Christianity - George Barna and Frank Viola](#)
- * [The Normal Christian Church Life - Watchman Nee](#)

Recommended Websites on Organic Church

- * [The Rebuilders](#)
- * [Reimagining Church](#)
- * [House Church Resource](#)
- * [Present Testimony Ministry](#)
- * [Milt Rodriguez's Blog](#)
- * [Neil Cole and Frank Viola Discuss Missional Organic Church](#)
- * [Articles on Missional Organic Church](#)