



Back to Basics

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Can you do church with the DIY attitude of punk rock? What would that even mean? If you did, what would it look like?

The church as an institution/entity finds itself in the midst of another massive shift, but it's not an earthquake. It's erosion. In this transformation, the fastest growing "religious" group in the United States is the "nones": folks who leave for numerous reasons, i.e. rejected by the church, the church is not relevant, etc. All of this is happening as the Surgeon General warns us of a massive epidemic of loneliness.

So the call for the church to change and meet the moment envelopes us.

Kairos Collective's purpose is to engage those with little or no faith background with the life and love of Jesus; to re-engage those who have been rejected by or turned off to the church; and to re-energize those whose faith journey is stuck.

So why a punk rock ethos? Punk rock challenged popular music by stripping everything down to its basics. It was about simplicity. Just drums, a guitar, a bass and a singer. Nothing more. Nothing less. Folks often did not even know how to play their instruments. Rather, they played what they could and they learned how to play in the process. At the beginning, this meant everyone was welcome. People just needed passion and curiosity. Over time, punk bands added aspects which they loved to their music. As you can guess, it could be messy and flawed with many beautiful moments.

Kairos Collective is part of a movement, [PCUSA's 1001 New Worshiping Communities](#). Like punk, Kairos Collective wants to do church differently. We strive to strip church down to its basics and make entry for everyone as easy as possible. We are spare. We celebrate the sacred throughout the world around us and use it in our worship gatherings. For Dinner Church, we gather monthly for a simple meal and curated conversation. We build relationships in small groups as we interrogate how scripture is relevant to our daily lives. We share our hopes and dreams as well as our worries and concerns during discussions and prayer. For our Living Faith gatherings, Milwaukeeans who are artists, musicians, civic leaders and others share in conversation with Kairos participants how they live out their faith in their daily lives. A quarter of Kairos' active participants put their faith into action through service or organizing monthly. The first Saturday of each month, we volunteer at Kinship Community Food Center, a food ministry which fosters peoples' journeys from charity to justice to solidarity.

Punk rock and new church development share the drive to break barriers to active involvement. Many people think of punk rock as anti-church but it was truly about creating welcoming spaces without the obstacles to participating. For church, stripping something down to its fundamental elements can mean no sanctuary or no hymnals or spare liturgy. Some people disliked punk's back to the basics approach. Others disliked the amateurish musicianship. Others found the approach disrespectful to what had gone on before. This reaction to punk rock wasn't new and has been repeated. We witnessed this disapproval before with the birth of rock and roll, after, with the emergence of hip hop, and constantly in all fields experiencing a change to the status quo: TV, film, painting, etc.

Kairos Collective aims to be a simple and stripped down faith community. We want people to enter a group with minimal barriers for participation. Two years in, we continue to make mistakes and learn from them. Our gatherings can easily take unexpected directions. **And** people are building new relationships and showing up for one another. People are beginning to experience Jesus in new ways.

We hope in doing all of this we can play a role in taking Jesus' word seriously, "the kingdom is near."