



## The Church as God Meant It to Be

Connections June 2009  
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I want to tell you a story, but I can't share with you all the details. (The pastor gave me permission to tell the story in general terms, but not to use his name or the name of his church. I'll honor that.) What I can share is a story you'll want to read and share with others.

Over ten years ago a church was born in Katy. Under the leadership of her pastor, the church grew, established some outstanding ministries to the community and looked forward to a day when they would be able to move out of a school into their own facilities. They prayed; they planned; they gave and saved. Eventually they bought land, built their new facilities and moved into their wonderful new church home.

Everything was great for a season, but we all know what has happened to the economy over the last twelve months. Church members began losing their jobs. Some of the church's biggest givers -- who had been faithful in meeting their pledges -- suddenly saw their business income decline sharply. Giving dropped.

Last fall the pastor renegotiated the church's debt with the bank to lower the interest rate. He and his wife took a cut in pay and increased their giving. Still, it was not enough. The church began to fall behind on their monthly mortgage payments. At first a week, then two or three, then five or six. They always paid their debt, but not always on time.

A few days ago the bankers called the pastor and told him they needed to meet with him in 45 minutes. During the meeting the bankers told the pastor the church must catch up immediately or the bank would raise their interest to 18% "as an encouragement" for the church to catch up on its debt. The pastor and his wife were distraught. They knew there was no way the church could make their payments if the bank did that. They were in danger of losing their property and their church facilities.

An important part of this story is that, for ten years the pastor has meet with other pastors in the Katy area weekly to pray for community transformation. They come from various denominational streams. We refer to them as The Church in Katy (like the church in Philippi or Thessalonica). They are the broader body of Christ working together, praying together, to transform their community and the world.

On the way home from the bank the pastor felt an overwhelming need for someone to pray for him. He said, "In ten years we took care of our responsibilities. We gave to others and never received anything from anyone other than our church members. I just wanted them to put us on the church's prayer list. I didn't expect to see the pastor, but they told me he was in. I told him our situation and just asked him to pray for us. That's all. Then a week later he called me and said five churches had come together. They wanted to give us the money we needed to come current with our debt and put a month's payment in a savings account so this won't happen again." The pastor was overwhelmed by their action. "I can't believe it," he said.

There's much more to the story than I can share in a brief article. The churches that gave to help their sister church had to sacrifice some of their own ministry in order to help. But they wanted to help. They are all part of the body of Christ. When one hurts, they all hurt. When one is in need, they all respond to help.

The Bible says we are blessed in order to be a blessing to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Certainly, the Church in Katy is living proof of that verse. To all those who are part of the Church in Katy, well done!

Thanks for helping a sister church and giving us all a great example of the church as God meant it to be.

What about this pastor and his church? They look forward to a day when they will be able to help other churches even as they were helped. Let it be!

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