

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 // The Rev. Ben Robertson

What is Church?

I have a love-hate relationship with the word “church.” I DO NOT have a love-hate relationship with THE church - I love the church, especially All Saints - but I do wonder about the best use of the word “church.”

The word “church” can mean many things. According to my dictionary, church has ten possible definitions: six as a noun, three as an adjective, and one as a verb. It can mean a building set apart for public worship, a liturgy or worship service, or the whole body of Christians. Most often we use the word to refer to a physical building, or even the room in which we gather for worship. Sometimes we use the word to describe the act of worship. My father - a man of few words - when he approved of a worship service, would shake the officiating minister’s hand as he was leaving, look them square in the eye, and say, “good church.”

But church can also mean the entire community of believers beyond an event or a place, and that definition has always resonated with me the most of all the definitions of church. The church is certainly the good folk who gather at 8787 River Road on a Sunday, but the church is also the Zany Zoo Class in the Preschool, or the Boys and Girls Choirs singing at Avery Point, or the Congregational Care Committee sending a care package to a college student. The church is in the grocery aisle, traffic on the expressway, or the shelter. In the same way that love, “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,” (1 Corinthians 13:7), the Church, through the witness of all believers, is in all things.

When we are out and about, at lunch with a friend, writing a text, or in an interminable meeting, be the Church. Bear the light of Christ in that place, no matter how difficult or banal. Do the work Christ calls us to do in your context. Celebrate the Good News always and everywhere. If we are the church, wherever we are, the Kingdom of God is near. AMEN.