

A simpler church

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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Anthony Robinson said it well in a recent [Stillspeaking devotional](#). Maybe the future of the church is a lot simpler than it is today. Breaking bread, prayers, learning about the word and caring for the lost are the simple acts Jesus led his little band to engage in.

When I first began my study of emergent models of the church, I was led to something called [Sant'Egidio](#). It is a sort of “alternative church” growing out of the Roman Catholic tradition but ecumenical in nature.

Sant'Egidio began among young Catholics in the late 60's and has grown internationally to about 50,000 adherents. They do not own buildings but meet in the shadow of the traditional church. They follow a simple book of daily prayers and readings in small groups. Each participant makes a commitment to a local mission project. They practice no sacraments, and have no paid leaders other than a small administrative office in Italy. Their members have successfully engaged in peace negotiations in Mozambique and are active in ministry with the homeless and HIV/AIDS. They also work for abolition of the death penalty.

How radical, especially for Catholics, to just say, “Let's do church without a priest, a building or a formal liturgy. Let's just pray and do mission projects together.” Talk about simple!

Is it too idealistic to dream of a church that simple? How would you feel about being part of that kind of community?

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