

4 CHURCHES CHANGING EVERYTHING

A LOOK AT SOME OF AMERICA'S
MOST INNOVATIVE CHURCH BODIES

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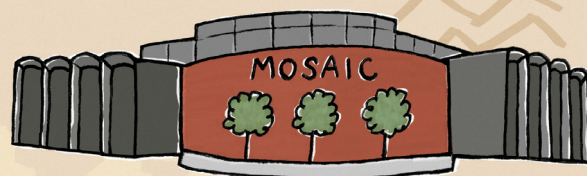
IT

is easy to bemoan the current state of the Church in America. People are leaving at record rates. The 2014 General Social Survey found that 7.5 million Americans have abandoned

their religion since 2012. And research from the Barna Group shows that nearly six in 10 millennials who have grown up in Christian churches will walk away from the Church at some point in the first decade of their adult lives.

But there are churches that are doing things differently—that are reaching out to those hurt by religion and engaging issues of faith and justice in new ways. There are churches that are inspiring faith in the Church again.

Here's a look at a few examples of those churches in the U.S.—big and small, denominational and non-denominational—and what they're doing right.



1

EMBRACING CREATIVITY

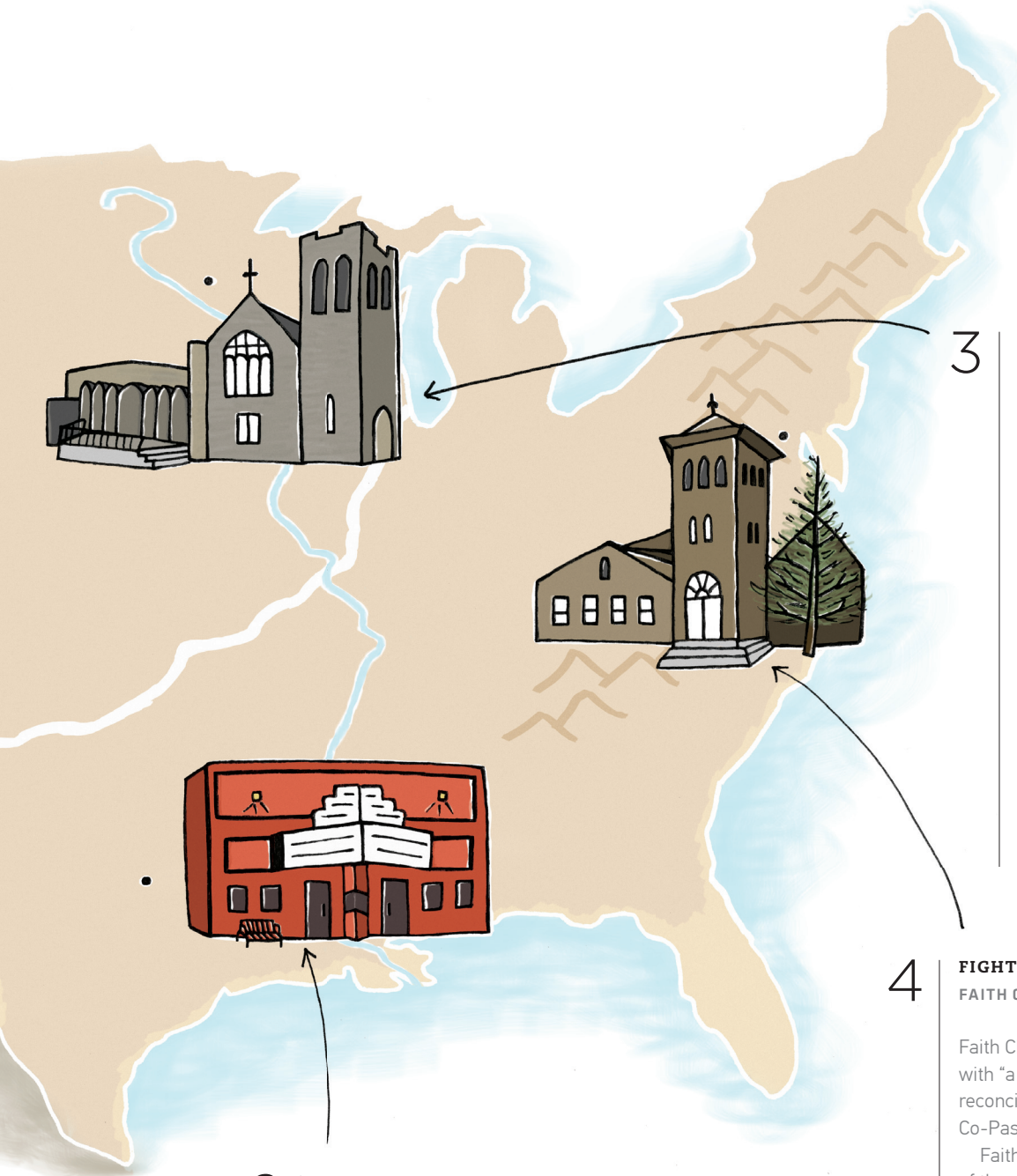
MOSAIC CHURCH, Los Angeles, CA

One of the five core values of MOSAIC, a faith community of about 3,000 in Los Angeles, is this: "Creativity is the natural result of spirituality."

But Erwin McManus, principal visionary and primary communicator of MOSAIC, says when he first introduced that core value 20 years ago, creativity "was largely seen as an enemy of orthodoxy and, at best, only a utilitarian tool to advance the Gospel."

But, he says, he doesn't see a page it isn't reflected on in Scripture. And while MOSAIC emphasizes creativity, design and artistry, that's not the point. Its power lies in seeing "all humanity as artists involved in the creative process."

"While the Church has historically focused on sin management, MOSAIC focuses on awakening and unleashing the uniquely human capacity to create what is good, beautiful and true," McManus says.



2 WELCOMING THE SPIRITUAL REFUGEE
GALILEO CHURCH, Mansfield, TX

"You'd be hard-pressed to find somebody in Texas who hasn't heard of Jesus, but there are lots of people who think Jesus isn't for them," says Rev. Dr. Katie Hays.

That's why Hays started Galileo Church: to seek spiritual refugees, rally spiritual health for all who come and fortify every soul with the strength to follow Jesus without pretensions.

"You can be the same person on Sunday or with your church friends as you are other places. You can be fully engaged as your whole self," she says.

But, she says, her congregation doesn't want to *be* the mission, they want to have a mission. The church takes its name from Galileo's discovery that the sun did not revolve around the Earth—"We are not the center of the universe," Hays says.

3 REACHING OUT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
Minneapolis, MN

Redeemer Lutheran Church has about 100 members, but it functions "as a church of 4,000," according to Pastor Kelly Chatman.

That's because, the pastor says, he decided to view all the residents in the church's neighborhood as his congregation.

The church runs several projects powered by neighborhood residents through its non-profit, Redeemer Center for Life, including after-school programs, housing programs and even a bike and coffee shop.

"Those things are a visual to a neighborhood that is stigmatized," Chatman explains. "It's a statement to both the neighborhood and the larger church community that we're there."

4 FIGHTING FOR DIVERSITY
FAITH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, Baltimore, MD

Faith Christian Fellowship was founded in 1981 with "a vision to be an urban church to bring reconciliation in the body of Christ," according to Co-Pastor Stan Long.

Faith Christian now has about 350 members; of those, about 55 to 60 percent are white and 25 percent black, he says.

One of the most important things the church has done, Long says, is "we have a black man who preaches—and I say that humbly." Also important, he says, is that the church is very intentional about its music, including gospel songs and "a little more volume, a little more jazz."

Still, Long says, the church doesn't have any "illusions" it's going to come in and solve all society's problems. But that's not what it's called to do, he says, pointing to the words of Micah 6:8, "God calls us to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly."