I left the church and great things happened. A report from last weekend in NYC.
I left the church and great things have happened!
A short report on what happened last week.

Dear Wendy,

Last week I invited each of you to join me in leaving the church. Some of you were startled at the very notion. I received emails from various individuals; some applauded this idea and a few cautiously hesitated at my invitation to "leave the church."

Here is a short report on what happened. My wife and I started the day, Saturday, May 26, as we usually do. We began our drive to New York City around 7:30 a.m., arriving at the Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, in the Union Square area of NYC.

(We rent this pleasant meeting place from the Lutheran Church. There is a wonderful chapel that seats about 50 people, and a beautiful pipe organ. The building itself is a sort of hotel where guests from all over the world stay when they are visiting NYC. The denomination I belong to used to own such a building in the heart of Times Square; unfortunately, they sold it many years ago.)

My associates, Michael Bryan and Junko Soneda, joined us and opened the small-group meeting. We weren't really expecting a large group, since it was the first time we'd met there in months. To my surprise, one of the former members of this group, whom I hadn't seen in my own church for a long time, joined our gathering. It was wonderful to see her again.

I asked her what happened and why she had stopped coming to our church. Her answer is something we can all learn from. She stated that the larger, more formal church setting "just didn't work for me." She continued, "I loved the small group we had where we could actually get to know each other, and that is why I returned when I heard you were starting this venture once again."

This young woman is a professional working in the health-care field for the City of New York. She expressed what many feel is the attraction of small-group ministry. They find that the less-formal atmosphere provides a much better way to connect with others and that it is also a friendlier place to find God.

At around 10:50 a.m., I said good-bye to the group, and Michael and Junko stayed by to begin the 11:30 gathering, which was next on the agenda at our East Side small-group venue. I left for my duties at my regular church, historic Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, across town in Greenwich Village. This is a more formal setting, with stained-glass windows, a praise team, collection plates, pews—you know, a real church. I love it there, but it isn't everyone's cup of tea.
At 1:30 p.m., after the service, I started my usual routine of meeting privately with church members, which included a marriage counseling session for one of the couples in my church.

By 3:00 p.m., I was back on the road again to join Michael at our East Side small-group venue. The gathering began at 3:30 in the small library section, which has a nice table and seats about 12 people comfortably. To my surprise, by the time we started, at least 14 people filled the room. We had a simple Bible study on the conversion story of the Apostle Paul and a fantastic discussion on how God can change the direction of a person's life.

During our discussion and study, a young man reminded me that he had also attended the REACH-NYC Vegetarian Seminar a month or two earlier, and indicated he was interested in God and in living a healthy life. He then told me that he wanted to be baptized. Now, in case you are taking notes, this was a young, intelligent individual who had come to one of our outreach programs, and had been attending our larger church gatherings on and off for a few months; but it was here, in a small-group setting, that he was relaxed enough to share his desire to be baptized and become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Like most pastors, at my larger church I am so busy running around and taking care of things, that I don't get a chance to meet many people one-to-one. In a small-group setting, you can't help but meet people and understand their needs. You can spend some really meaningful time together.

All of us at REACH-NYC are excited by what is happening and to be getting back to our small-group meetings. We plan to continue having these meetings on a weekly basis. We are overjoyed that in our first startup session we found people who are returning to the small-group venue, as well as one who seeks baptism. God is truly blessing.

This coming Saturday, Michael Bryan will lead the group beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel at Union Square, 123 East 15th Street. I will join him at 3:30 p.m., and we will once again have our small-group Bible study in the Mezzanine/Library section of the building.

If you are in NYC and looking for a relaxed atmosphere in which to learn about the teachings of Jesus, or to ask questions or share some thoughts, please join us at one of these gatherings. There is a tremendous benefit in getting together and praying for each other in a place where we can connect, person to person.

As I mentioned in last week's newsletter, I have just finished intensive studies in pastoral care and counseling. I believe now, more than ever, that the last thing we all need to do is to merely attend "church" as it has developed over the years. God wants more from us than to just sit in a pew, listen to the sermon, and then go home. Perhaps sitting in a pew is not the issue. However, I have found that sitting together in small groups and sharing with each other on various topics can lead us to a better understanding of ourselves, our situation, and most importantly, our God, who loves each and every one of us.

Perhaps this kind of small-group gathering is exactly what you have been looking for.

I have also found that most people who have attended church for years, or who call themselves "Christians," really do not understand the teachings of Jesus Christ very well. They have let others tell them what religion is all about, when in fact "religion" just might be the problem. Remember, Christ had little to do with religion when He walked
the Earth; in fact, He found Himself rejected by the faith community of His time. He spent most of His time teaching among individuals and small groups. This is the concept of REACH-NYC, and I know you will enjoy your fellowship with us.

I invite you to explore your own life story, learning what God has in store for each one of us, in a place where it is safe to relax, be yourself, and say what's on your mind, and where you will find a meaningful relationship with God, and good, caring friends. We have two places to meet, and three trusted friends will join me in this endeavor. Below are the dates, times, and addresses of each location where our meetings will take place:

**Saturday Morning, June 2 / 10:30 a.m. / Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, NYC, Corner of Irving Place and Third Ave., in the Union Square area.** Look for the sign that says "The Chapel At Union Square." When you enter the building, make a right and head for the chapel. Michael Bryan will meet you there for discussion and some good music. The study of the Word is on the agenda and you can share your thoughts and ideas or ask a question or two.

**Saturday Morning, June 2 / 11:30 a.m. / Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, NYC, Corner of Irving Place and Third Ave., in the Union Square area.** Look for the sign that says "The Chapel At Union Square." When you enter the building, make a right and head for the chapel. The sharing of God's word continues. You are invited to relax and be yourself.

**Saturday Afternoon, June 2 / 3:30 p.m. / Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, NYC, Corner of Irving Place and Third Ave., in the Union Square area.** Look for the sign that says "The Chapel At Union Square." When you enter the building, take the elevator or the stairs on the right; we will meet upstairs in the Mezzanine / Library for our discussion. Tony Romeo and friends will meet you there for the sharing of the Word and group discussion.

**Tuesday Evening, May 29 / 7:00 p.m. / Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC, just 1.5 blocks west of Seventh Ave. South.** We will meet in the Board Room. This is an intimate setting where we can have a group discussion, pray for each other, and learn about the Word of God in what we call "A Conversation with the Word."

**Thursday Evening, May 31 / 7:00 p.m. / Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC, just 1.5 blocks west of Seventh Ave. South.** We will meet in the Board Room. This is an intimate setting where we can have a group discussion, pray for each other, and learn about the Word of God in what we call "A Conversation with the Word."

I hope that one of these times, dates, and locations will work for you. I truly look forward to meeting you as we share the love of Jesus and learn about a lifestyle that is the greatest teaching Christ gave to His disciples. As we examine the Word of God, we will discover some great advice from the Apostle Paul, a Jewish believer and Roman citizen who became a follower of Jesus. He was an advocate for Christ's teachings, which many have yet to fully comprehend.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." - John 13:33-35

"Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you." - 2 Corinthians 13:11
May God richly bless you as you prepare to join us for a time of refreshing and peace. Christ has fully paid the price so that our lives can be restored. Salvation is a free gift, and what a joy it is, once we've found it.

Best regards - Tony Romeo
P.S.: If you have any questions, please write me at: romeo.anthonyj@gmail.com

For those who enjoy a more formal worship service (you know, pews, music, praise teams), I invite you to join me at historic Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC, each Saturday morning at 11:30 a.m. This is a beautiful landmark building where I share the Gospel message each week among a congregation of wonderful people. You will love the music and the story of Jesus and His love for you.

If you are not being fed in your small group, church, or faith tradition, you might want to try a new place to worship, one that features the Gospel, presented in what one visitor has suggested is a "brutally bold and honest style."

P.S.: If you would like to support this ministry with your gifts, as many have done from around the world, please make your check out to REACH-NYC and send your donation to:

REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560

All donations are fully tax deductible. REACH-NYC is a registered not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Thank you for all your help.

The Special Guest Speaker at historic Manhattan Church on Saturday, June 2, 2012, at 11:30 a.m., will be Ms. Edda Laurea, who works in the banking industry here in New York City, and is an Elder in the church. Her insights and thoughts about God will be a blessing to all who attend.

Manhattan Church is very easy to get to by bus or subway. The little map below will help you find us. Please join us in ministry to the people of the City of New York.

Click here for map of location of Manhattan Church

Donations to REACH-NYC help us in our efforts to reach out to the people of New York City. REACH-NYC is recognized by the IRS.
as a tax-exempt corporation, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.*

Contributions can also be made by check payable to:
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Thank you for helping the REACH-NYC ministry!

*A receipt will be sent recognizing all contributions at the end of the year for tax purposes.