

WE BELIEVE!

WK VII - CHURCH

The Church and on-going Mission

We believe that the body of Christ is the one, holy and universal church, composed of those who have been called out of the kingdom of darkness and justified by grace through faith in Christ. This universal church is manifest in local churches who assemble in the name of the Lord to worship God and experience his presence through the preaching of the Word, prayer, fellowship, the exercise of gifts given by the Spirit and the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism. We believe that Christian baptism is by immersion of believers in water as a public response to the Lordship of Christ in identifying with his death, burial and resurrection and living out our death to sin and resurrection to new life. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service where we eat bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Christ's body broken for us and the new covenant in his blood. We eat both in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for us and as the Bride of Christ in anticipation of the marriage feast upon his return.

We believe that although Christ is seated on the throne and we are reconciled to him, his mission of redemption is not yet complete. The church participates with the Spirit in dispersing into the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus' life, death, burial and resurrection through word and deed, baptizing and discipling those who believe. The church also participates with the Spirit in the ongoing process of sanctification by dying to our old ways and living out our new life in Christ. Our role as image-bearing representatives of God, which was marred by sin, is therefore increasingly restored as we are transformed into the image of Christ.

We believe that God's continuing mission is opposed by an evil adversary, Satan, who, along with his demons, is the sworn enemy of God. However, God has not left us alone but has given us his Spirit as our comforter and guide into all truth. We also believe that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, where he not only reigns but also serves as our great High Priest, interceding on our behalf and enabling us boldly to approach the throne of God for grace to help in time of need. Therefore, we believe that true believers will endure to the end and that they are kept by the power of God through faith throughout this battle.

Key Scriptures for the Week

- Acts 2 (The Church is Born)
- Matthew 28:19-20 (The Great Commission)
- Romans 6:3-5 (Baptism)
- 1 Cor. 11:23-26 (The Lord's Supper)

Key Points

- **Christ formed and founded the church, first in the apostles and then outward from them.**

WK VII - CONT.

Key Points cont.

- **The Church is the...**
 - **Body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
 - **Royal Priesthood** (1 Peter 2:4-10)
 - **Bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:25-32, Revelation 21:1-9)
 - **Adopted sons of God** (Romans 8:12-17)
- **Ordinances:** These are critical steps of obedience to be practiced as a local church: we baptize new believers and regularly remember Christ's death in communion. These are both a sign and memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, both pointing back to the moments they occurred and forward to the promise of new life with Him in glory.
- **One:** the church is marked by unity and called to maintain this oneness.
- **Holy:** the church is purified by the Spirit and set apart for service to Christ.
- **Catholic:** this means "universal." The church has always crossed cultural and geographic boundaries.
- **Apostolic:** we were established through Christ, upon Peter, and the true confession has been passed down to us, and we are to pass it down to those who come after us.

Discussion Questions:

- What was your first experience of church like?
- What are some stereotypes unbelieving people have about church? Why do you think that is?
- What ways have you seen church done differently? What have you appreciated? What challenged or troubled you?
- What is most important to you about church life?
- Why do you think it is significant that we baptize and observe communion in the church family?

We Believe! Outside the Gate

A friend of yours says they love God, believe in Jesus and the gospel and are professing Christians. They attend church about once a month, don't offer gifts or serve, and aren't members. They are content with listening to podcasts, reading books, and occasionally talking about God with friends. They insist their path is a good choice for Christians to choose - one among many.

- What do you think about the way your friend is choosing to engage church?
- In what ways does their chosen "path" differ from the instructions in Scripture?
- How would you encourage your friend in this situation?
- What is the harm of not actively engaging in church life?

"I BELIEVE..."

Summarize in your own words your beliefs about the purpose and function of Church.