

ASHLAND AMEN

SESSION 7 | THE CHURCH

What is the church?

“Ekklesia” - “called out ones;” assembly; gathering

The Old Testament Promise of the Church

Genesis 28:3

“God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.”

Created by Spirit

Ezekiel 11:17-21

“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.”

Jeremiah 31:33-34

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Gathered by Gospel

Acts 2:38-39

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’”

The Presence of Jesus in the World

Acts 2:42-43

“⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

The “Called Out Ones” Lived as a Community

Acts 2:44–47

“⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The “Called Out Ones” Gathered on the Lord’s Day

Acts 20:7

“⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread...”

Jesus and the Church

Matthew 16:18

“¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 18:17

“¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

By the Spirit, the Church – all who believe and were gathered through the gospel – are One with Jesus.

The church is the Body of Christ

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The church is the Bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:25-33

“²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church...²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives...²⁹ just as Christ does the church...”

2 Corinthians 11:2

“² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”

Revelation 19:7-8

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure...”

The Church is a Reality Before God in Heaven Expressed in the World

The church is joined to Christ by faith

Ephesians 4:4-6

“⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”

Joined to One Another by the Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

“¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all

baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

Will be Gathered from the Nations

Revelation 7:9

“⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...”

The universal church is described as a reality in heaven now

Hebrews 12:22–23

“²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...”

Revelation 3:5

“⁵ The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.”

The local church is the visible expression in a specific place on earth of the universal church in heaven and around the world.

Hebrews 10:25

“²⁵ ...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

The vast majority of references to the church in the New Testament are about specific local churches.

1 Corinthians 1:2

“² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...”

The New Testament assumes the universal church is made up of local churches scattered throughout the known world.

- The churches of the Gentiles (Rom 16:4)
- The churches of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2)
- The churches of Asia (16:19)
- The churches of Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1)
- The churches of Judea that are in Christ (Galatians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14)
- The churches of God (2 Thessalonians 1:4)

What is a local church?

A community of believers who covenant together as witnesses of the Lordship of Jesus in the world.

Practice

Believers in a local church *gather* on the Lord's Day for worship where they practice the *ordinances* and hear the *preaching of God's word*.

Authority and Leadership

The local church exists primarily under the authority of Christ *by His Spirit according to his Word*. Under His authority the local church is to be led by qualified men called to offices of pastor and deacon.

Mission

The mission of the local church is to *make disciples of all nations*.

Doctrine & Accountability

Each local church is responsible to define doctrine and preach doctrine. Each local church protects the witness Christ through accountability and the practice of church discipline.

Ashland Church's Leadership Structure



What is church membership?

The covenant you make with a specific local church family that identifies yourself as a Christian. The local church recognizes your profession of faith through your baptism and engagement in the gathering and the practice of the ordinances.

Why should you join a local church?

- You can't join the universal church
- You can't be held accountable by the universal church
- You can't gather with the universal church
- You can't practice ordinances with the universal church
- You can't be shepherded or served by the universal church
- You can't carry out "one anothers"

You serve the body as one member gifted by the Spirit in a local church

Romans 12:5–6

⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith..."

If Jesus is incomplete without the church so are you

Ephesians 1:22–23

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

The church needs men to be men

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love."

How will you serve your local church and lead your family to the same?

The Essentials / Connect Card

Homework

Are you a member of a local church? If not, why not? If yes, how has being a member of our church helped you grow as a Christian?

How would you answer the following question to your family? “Why do we go to church?”

How would you answer a lost family member, neighbor, coworker, friend? “Why do you go to church?”

How would you answer the questions, “Do I have to join a local church?”

How are you serving our church? List the ministries at Ashland you are regularly serving in. How has serving at our church helped you grow as a Christian?

What things can you do for others specifically and the ministry of your local church in general to cultivate an attitude of selfless service in the church?

Are there areas of ministry in which you are interested in serving? Are there ways in which you are personally gifted to serve that your church would benefit from? (fill out a connect card or speak with a leader ASAP)

What are the ways in which your wife and kids are serving the church? If they are not serving, how could you lead them to serve? What do they like to do? How are they gifted? How can they use their desires and talents to serve the church? (Get them to fill out a Connect Card or speak to someone ASAP).

Are there certain commitments or activities in the life of family that you know should be changed or alleviated to make sure you are fully committed to gathering with your church family?

What other commitments keep you from consistently gathering?

What does your level of commitment to the church communicate to your family?

The church is

- My highest priority
- A very high priority
- Important
- A good thing when we have time
- More of an afterthought
- Kind of a nuisance

Are there lesser priorities that take time, energy and resources from you and your family that could be given over to your local church?

Sunday church is a Saturday decision. How will you prepare yourself and your family on Saturday night to be at church on Sunday? What practical steps can you take to help your wife and/or kids arrive early on Sunday mornings focused and ready to worship Jesus?

Read through Paul's prayers for churches in Ephesians 1:15-23, Philippians 1:3-11, Colossians 1:3-14 and write down some specific ways you will pray and lead your family to pray for our church.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17 and list some practical ways to respond to the leadership of our pastors.

Do you aspire to the office of pastor or deacon? Why or why not? Review the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-11 and Titus 1:5-9 and write down some specific ways you can grow toward being a mature godly man. (Make sure to speak with one of your pastors or church leaders about this desire in your life).