

# **The church as the body of Christ needs its members.**

1 Cor. 12:12-27

23 Aug 2015

**Providence has only one requirement** for attendance and one only; you must be a sinner in need of redemption. That is the only requirement we have to worship here.

If you do not become a member of this local congregation, **you will still be welcomed here!** You do not have to become a member of Providence Reformed Baptist Church to worship here!

Membership, is a declaration by those who say they commit to this congregation, as part of the body of Christ.

- who would give their time to its people,
- who will serve them,
- who will pray for them,
- who will lead them,
- who will rejoice with them,
- who will cry with them,
- who will suffer with them,
- who will Disciple them.
- But its also the members who will hold the elders accountable, who will hold me accountable.
- And its also the members who will biblically submit to the leadership of Providence

But every sinner who comes seeking to be fed from the life-giving righteousness of Jesus Christ is welcome here.

**Whether member or not!** You are all welcomed here.

## **SO WHY BOTHER?**

Why bother committing to church, let alone church membership, if I can be fed by my favourite preacher online, or on TV.

We wrongly assume **that if** we are hearing God's Word preached then we no longer have **NEED** to go to church or become members. So we then give little thought to membership of the local church. And we forget that church membership is a reflection – **a living metaphor** if you like, that represents the body of Jesus Himself.

## **SAUL SAUL**

You know there is a classic scene where Saul of Tarsus (who would later become the Apostle Paul) is killing Christians and persecuting the church. And Jesus Appears to Him in a great Light and says;

**Acts 9:4-5**

**4** "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

**5** And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

**Paul is persecuting the church, not Jesus!** Jesus has already ascended to heaven... Such is the connection between the church and Jesus, that when the church was being persecuted, Jesus Himself would say that He was being persecuted.

*...But we still see Christians* think of church **as an option**, not as a necessary means of our sanctification.

IS your local church being **led by faithful men**, who have a high view of Christ Jesus, and the pastor preaches the whole counsel of God once for all delivered to the saints, and **is it through this community** that your Spirit **flourishes**, and do others see this in you?...**what stops you from committing to this local community?**

You must discern if the local church is God-glorifying through Christ-exalting and that your hope and joy in the glory of God increases. **This is your litmus test.**

## **HERE ARE FOUR POINTS FROM OUR TEXT**

**POINT number 1.**

1. The Church is a metaphor for the body of Christ, and it is when the **many come together** as ONE do we truly represent the body of Christ. So it is only when each local church is gathered as ONE – united - does it **visibly represent** the body of Christ. **[Only when we come together as one that we visibly represent the body of Jesus]**
2. Church members have been given different abilities and gifts that make them indispensable to the body of Christ and each other. Therefore church members need one another.
3. Church members need one another so that there no division and we show equal care for one another.
4. Church members that care for each other are the means of how God provides and cares for His people

## **POINT #1**

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Just like there is variety, or functional differences in God, there is but One God. We believe that God is a trinity. Tri – Unity, Three in One - The Godhead is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, **Three persons**, and yet One essence, One God!

So the great Jewish *Shema*; The Jewish confession of faith is also ours;

### **Deuteronomy 6:4**

**4** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, **the Lord is one.**

Such is our God...there are three persons, NOT one, but **in this** distinction of persons there is but One United God.

So notice the importance of **unity in diversity** in our passage by how many times the word “one” is contrasted with the word “many” – one – many – many – with One. With the point of stressing unity.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

**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**.

**14** For the body does not consist of **one member** but of many.

Then verse 19

**19** If all were a **single member**, where would the body be?

**20** As it is, there are many parts, **yet one body**.

Verse 27

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

## **APPLICATION**

See what is said here? Just like our body has many members or parts to it, that make it a body, so it is with the body of Christ – the church – the church is not just an individual.

*It is the collection, the individual parts, the individual members together as one, that make the church.*

This is what marks the church. How are we to say we are ONE body **if we resist coming together**? We can only say we are the visible and united church when we gather together.

**Moreover**, I cannot say I am part of the body of Christ, unless I am part of the body of Christ.

I know some may be thinking well I am one with the universal body of Christ – and I would say yes you are, but if you avoid unity with the local church– you cannot say you are one in **the visible body of Christ...**

## **POINT #2**

Why many to make the one...? Because...

Church members have been given different abilities and gifts that make them indispensable to the body of Christ and each other. Therefore church members need one another.

Each and every one of you present here today has a God-given ability or gift that is indispensable to every person at Providence.

**You all belong here.** There is no stuttering, there is not typo in my notes; you all belong here. **Be encouraged brother and sister** you have been purposely built, moulded and manoeuvred here to Providence for the blessing of this church as part of the church.

**1 Corinthians 12:15-16**

**15** If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

**16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

But you know we always **focus on the downtrodden**, the one that thinks too little of themselves. Well what about the person that doesn't really **THINK** they need to come to church; Who says; "I have no need, or there is nothing within this church that I have need of"

That is the person that thinks too highly of themselves. if you don't regularly attend church (or think you don't need the people at church) **your life shows that you don't really need church**, and what you are saying with your life is;

"I have no need to be part of God's people," and therefore what this demonstrates is that "I have no need to be a member of the body of Christ" ...**this is weighty stuff isn't it?** This is where I see it;

**1 Corinthians 12:21f**

**21** The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

**22** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker **are indispensable**,

So really, the apparently weaker members of our Church may indeed be the most valuable, **if only we would see this to be true**, we

would seek one another because we would need one another, we **wouldn't think** we didn't need church because we would see each other as **indispensable**. We would seek and need to be members of the body of Christ.

## **POINT#4**

But why the need to care for each other?...because

Church members that care for each other are the means of how God provides and cares for His people.

God uses you and I, all of us, as the means by which God cares for His people.

### **1 Corinthians 12:18**

**18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

This is an echo of verse 11 where Paul tells of how the Spirit allocates the spiritual gifts.

### **1 Corinthians 12:11**

**11** All these [that is gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually **as he wills**.

Just as God has arranged the parts and members on our body for the functionality of our lives...So God has arranged the **members in the body of the Christ** for the function of the church.

You all, through God's providence and His sovereignty have not only been moulded for a purpose and function in His church, but have been supernaturally guided to this church to carry out His will...

### **Romans 12:4-6**

**4** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,

**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:**

We all have been assigned certain abilities and gifts according to the grace given to us, but allow me to ask, who are the beneficiaries of your gifts and abilities?

Do you think the gifts and abilities of God are for our spiritual status? God is using His people to deliver His grace.

**1 Corinthians 12:7**

**7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**1 Peter 4:10**

**10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Have you ever given any thought **why the outpourings of the Spirit** in our lives are called the fruit of the Spirit?

Just like the fruit tree, **in that it bears fruit but does not herself eat the fruit**, rather, the fruit of the tree is for the savouring and nourishment of another. So are the gifts and abilities given to us as individuals...they are given...for the greater good of the church – for the greater good of the members of the church.

## **CONCLUSION**

How will this work at Providence if we do not know who are its members?

- How am I to **unite** with someone who isn't here?
- How am I to **employ** my indispensable abilities if I am not here?
- How am I to **care** for someone I do not see?
- How are we to **love** someone we do not know?
  
- Who are these people that I **can call upon as members** of this body;
- by which I **rely** upon they upon me;
- by which I **can care for** and they for me;
- for which God has **given to me to love** and for them to love me?

Who are the people of Providence that the apostle would direct this letter to? Are we just phantom believers roaming the earth without a home?

Does not your heart yearn for a church that would come together united in the name of Jesus.

Does not your heart yearn for church to say to you; I need you, you are indispensable to this body, my body.

I pray it does, for God has placed us here for you.  
We are the means by which God seeks to care for you.

Let us pray.

**Amen.**