

Living Faith - Chapter 7 - God's Church

7.1 The Church

- 7.1.1 The church is Christ together with his people called both to worship and to serve him in all of life.
- 7.1.2 The church is one. It is one family under God whose purpose it is to unite all people in Jesus Christ.
- 7.1.3 The church is holy. It is set apart by God through the Holy Spirit to be a chosen people in the world.
- 7.1.4 The church is catholic. It is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian Faith.
- 7.1.5 The church is apostolic. It is founded on Christ and the apostles and is in continuity with their teachings.
- 7.1.6 The church is in constant need of reform because of the failure and sin which mark its life in every age. The church is present when the Word is truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and as it orders its life according to the word of God.

7.2 Ministry

- 7.2.1 The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church. All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head.
- 7.2.2 Through the church God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

- 7.2.3 Ministers of Word and Sacrament are set apart to preach the Gospel, celebrate Baptism and Holy Communion and exercise pastoral care in Christ's name. Their ministry is an order which continues the work of the apostles. Christ preserves this order today by calling to it both men and women. The church recognizes this calling in the act of ordination.
- 7.2.4 Through the office of ruling elder men and women are ordained to share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care, and oversight of the congregation.
- 7.2.5 Specialized ministries are recognized through the designation of deaconesses and church educators, professors and administrators, missionaries and catechists, chaplains and counselors.
- 7.2.6 Through such ministries the Word is proclaimed, God's people are nourished and nurtured, supported and guided. In the oneness of Christ we seek to serve God.

7.3 Worship

- 7.3.1 The church lives to praise God. We have no higher calling than to offer the worship that belongs to God day by day, Sunday by Sunday.
- 7.3.2 Through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, in praise, prayer, teaching and fellowship, God sustains the life of the church. We worship God as Lord offering ourselves in the service of Christ, rejoicing that we have been brought from darkness to light.
- 7.3.3 Worship draws us into the work of Christ. Even now he intercedes for the world to which he came and for which he died. In union with him, the church prays for the healing and the salvation of the world.
- 7.3.4 Blessing and honour and glory and power be to our God for ever and ever!

7.4 Preaching

7.4.1 To the church and to the world Christ sends ambassadors to preach the good news. The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme turning point in the life of the world. The proclamation of his cross and resurrection calls for personal response and offers present hope. The Holy Spirit enables God's word to be heard in the word of preaching. Faith comes by hearing, and by preaching it is continually renewed.

7.4.2 Preachers must be servants of the Word; those who listen should pray for those who speak. They must be hungry to hear what the Lord has to say. The spoken word is food for all believers.

7.5 Sacraments

7.5.1 In obedience to our Lord's command and example we observe two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion. These are visible expressions of the Gospel given as means of entering and sustaining the Christian Life

7.5.2 In Baptism and the Lord's Supper, there is a sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified. Water signifies forgiveness and new life in Christ; bread and wine, the body and blood of our Lord.

7.5.3 The grace effective in the sacraments comes not from any power in them but from the work of the Holy Spirit. Rightly received, in faith and repentance, the sacraments convey that which they symbolize.

7.6 Baptism

7.6.1 Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church. Through it we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and are commissioned to his service.

7.6.2 In Baptism, water is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The water signifies the washing away of sin, the start of new life in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

7.6.3 By the power of the Holy Spirit God acts through Baptism. It is the sacrament not of what we do but of what God has done for us in Christ. God's grace and our response to it are not tied to the moment of Baptism, but continue and deepen throughout life. It is a sacrament meant for those who profess their faith and for their children. Together we are the family of God.

7.6.4 Baptism is also an act of discipleship that requires commitment and looks towards growth in Christ. Those baptized in infancy are called in later years to make personal profession of Christ. What is born may die. What is grafted may wither. Congregations and those baptized must strive to nurture life in Christ.

7.6.5 Baptism assures us that we belong to God. In life and in death our greatest comfort is that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

7.7 Holy Communion

7.7.1 In breaking bread and drinking wine Jesus told us to remember him. In this action called Holy Communion, Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, Christ offers himself to us and we present ourselves to him in worship and adoration.

7.7.2 In Holy Communion Christ places his table in this world to feed and bless his people. The Holy Spirit so unites us in Christ that in receiving the bread and wine in faith we share in his body and blood.

7.7.3 The Lord's Supper is a joyful mystery whereby Jesus takes the bread and wine to represent his atoning sacrifice, deepening our union with himself and with each other, giving us of his life and strength. Here Christ is present in his world proclaiming salvation until he comes - a symbol of hope for a troubled age.

7.7.4 The Eucharist is thanksgiving to God. We pray for the world and with gratitude offer our lives to God. We celebrate his victory over death and anticipate the joyous feast we shall have in his coming kingdom. We pledge allegiance to Christ as Lord, are fed as one church, receive these signs of his love, and are marked as his.

7.7.5 Those who belong to Christ come gladly to his table to make a memorial of his life and death, to celebrate his presence, and together as his church offer him thanks.

Scripture references are provided for those who would like to read the scripture passages on which this declaration is based.

Chapter Seven: GOD'S CHURCH

PSALM 122:1-9, HOSEA 2:19-23, MATTHEW 16:13-19, 1 PETER 2:4-10.

7.1 The Church

John 10:14-16, Acts 9:31, Ephesians 2:1-10, 19-22, 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

7.1.1 Mt.18:20, Co1.3:24, 17, Mt.28:17.

7.1.2 Eph.4:4-6, Gal.3:25-9.

7.1.3 1 Cor.3:16-17, 1 Pet.1:1-2.

7.1.4 Ps.107:1-3, Col.3:9-11, Jude 3.

7.1.5 Acts 2:42, Eph.2:20, Jn.17:6-23.

7.1.6 Rev.2:5, Jas.4:1-4, 2 Cor.3:2-3, Mk.16:20, 1 Cor. 10:16-17, Lk.11:27-8.

7.2 Ministry

Mark 10:35-45, Ephesians 4:8-16, 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

7.2.1 Jn.20:21, Rom. 12:4-9, 1 Cor. 12:12-27, Phil.2:14-16, 1 Pet.4:10-11, Heb.13:20-1.

7.2.2 Acts 13:1-3, Co1.4:17, Eph.4:12, Rom. 1:11-12.

7.2.3 Heb.13:7, Acts 20:28, 2 Tim.2:1-2, 1 Th.5:12-13, Acts 2:18-19, 1 Tim.4:14.

7.2.4 Acts 14:23, 1 Cor.12:28, Rom.12:6-8.

7.2.5 1 Cor. 12:4-7.

7.2.6 2 Tim.4:1-5, Jn.21:15-17, Jn.15:12, 1 Pet.2:16.

7.3 Worship

Psalm 84:1-12, Ephesians 5:15-20, Revelation 15:2-4.

7.3.1 Lk.24:52, Ps.48:9-10, Jn.4:23-4, Ps.145:2, Rev.1:10.

7.3.2 Mk.2:2, Acts 10:47-8, 2:46-7, Is.41:17-18, Ps.96:7-9, Rom.12:1-2, 1 Pet.2:9.

7.3.3 2 Cor. 6:1-2, Heb.7:24-5, 1 Jn.2:2, 1 Tim.2:1-4, Jn.12:28-32.

7.3.4 Rev.7:12.

7.4 Preaching

Luke 24:44-9, Romans 10:4-17, 1 Corinthians 9:16, 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

7.4.1 Jn.20:19-23, 2 Cor.5:20, Col.1:19-20, Jn.12:31-2. 1 Cor. 1:23-4, Acts 20:21, 1 Tim.1:1, 1 Cor.2:4, 1 Pet.1:25, Rom. 10:17, Col. 1:24-9.

7.4.2 2 Tim.2:14-16, Ps.85:8-9, Eph.6:18-19, Mt.5:6,4:4.

7.5 Sacraments

Acts 2:37-42, 1 Corinthians 10:14-17.

7.5.1 Mk.16:15-16, 14:22-3, Acts 18:8-11, Jn.6:52-9.

7.5.2 Acts 22:16, Lk.22:19-20.

7.5.3 Ps.51:15-17, Jn.6:63, 1 Pet.3:21.

7.6 Baptism

Matthew 28:16-20, Galatians 3:26-7, 1 Peter 3:18-22.

7.6.1 1 Cor.12:13, Rom.6:1-4.

7.6.2 Acts 8:36-8, Mt.28:19, Lk.3:2-3, Col.2:12-13, Acts 19:4-6.

7.6.3 Lk.3:16, Lk.12:50, Jas.4:6-10, Acts 4:31-3, 10, 44-8, 1 Cor.7:14, Acts 2:39.

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7.6.4 Mt.28:19-20, 2 Pet.3:18, Rom. 14:12, 10:9-10, Heb.6:4-6, Jn.15:6, 2 Cor.7:1.

7.6.5 Rom. 14:8, Col.3:1-4, Jn.14:27

7.7 Holy Communion

Matthew 26:26-9, John 6:52-9, 1 Corinthians 11:23-32.

7.7.1 1 Cor. 11:23-5, Mk.14:22-3, 1 Cor.5:6-8, 1 Pet.5:6-7.

7.7.2 Lk.24:30-1, 1 Cor. 10:16.

7.7.3 Acts 2:42, Heb.9:27-8, Rev.3:20, Jn.15:1-10, 1 Cor.11:26, Mt.24:14.

7.7.4 Jn.6:11. 1 Tim.2:1-4, Co1.3:5-17. Rom.6:9-11, Mt.8:11, Lk.14:15-24, 22:15-16, Jn.13:13. 1 Cor.11:28, Ps.78:23-5.

7.7.5 1 Cor. 10:17, 31.