

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

Why Membership Matters

New Group Study
Wednesdays, June 29 – July 27, 2022
Noon | Online

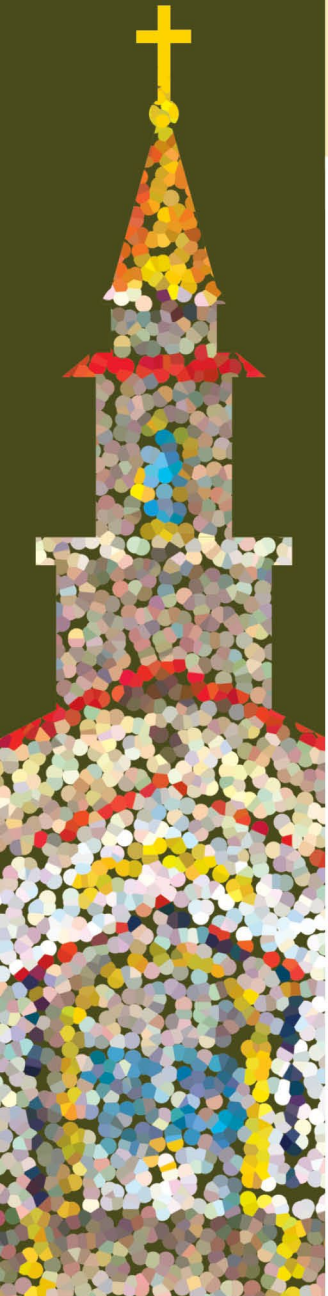
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PREFACE & OPENING PRAYER

PREFACE: This study is geared especially to people who may have been raised in the church and might still consider themselves Christians but who do not view official membership in a congregation or regular participation in worship as important. For active church members, it also serves as a good refresher or general explanation of what congregations are and do. The book can give regular churchgoers a clearer understanding of what they already experience at church and help them communicate the importance of it to their loved ones who are questioning their need for church.

OPENING PRAYER



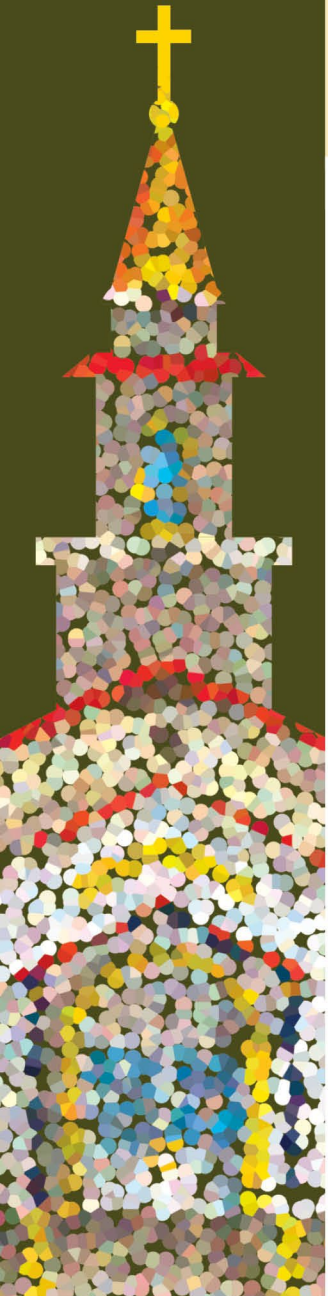
INTRODUCTION

Anybody familiar with broad cultural trends can see that, statistically speaking, Christian church membership and attendance is declining in twenty-first-century America.

Many people who might check themselves off as "Christian" on a demographic survey nevertheless do not join or regularly attend services at a Christian church.

And many people who perhaps formerly considered themselves Christians would now check "none" when asked about their religion.

In this session, we will discuss the concepts in Chapter 1...



INTRODUCTION (Continued)

The “Body of Christ” metaphor St. Paul uses to describe Christians in *1 Corinthians 12* speaks to such people: **One Body with Many Members**

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^[d] or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 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. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts,^[e] yet one body.

INTRODUCTION (Continued)

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, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Chapter 1 Discussion

In Chapter 1, we looked at Two Types of Membership: Collective and Organic
For Organic Membership in the Church...

- **Do you think of membership in the Christian Church as more like voluntary membership in a club or more like membership in a family?**
 - Do you think your answer is typical?
- **Why is membership and regular participation in a visible, institutional church the best way to realize (treat as real) the membership all Christians have in the Church via Baptism?**

Chapter 1 Discussion (Continued)

- **If someone said, "I am a dedicated baseball player, but I don't believe in organized team sports," how might you respond?**
 - **Does such an idea make sense?**
 - **What is it that makes faith acceptable to some people as long as it is not "organized religion?"**
- **How should a Christian who comes to the realization that active membership in a congregation is the best way to fully live a Christian life decide which congregation to join?**

Chapter 1 Discussion (Continued)

In Luther's Small Catechism, his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed says the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth."

- **What causes Christians to resist the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives?**
- **How do we resist all four of these works of the Holy Spirit?**

"A Christian is called to be a living, working part of the corporate body of Christ. The personal relationship and the corporate membership are two sides of the same coin, inextricably linked."

For Next Session...

We will get a little deeper into some of these questions at our next session...

If you have not already done so, read the Book...

Chapter 2 (Pages 37ff)

Prayer Requests & Closing Prayer

- Recording is turned off
- Any SPECIFIC Requests for prayer?