



The Church as a Foretaste of Heaven

Matt Garvin
December 21, 2014

_____ we are representatives of _____.

Church is a core element in the strategy of the Holy Spirit for providing human witness and physical presence to the Jesus-inaugurated kingdom of God in this world. It is not that kingdom complete, but it is that kingdom.

~ Eugene Peterson

Gods Strategy

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:10-11 NIV

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23 NIV

Trinitarian community means:

- **The Life of the Tri-une God in Heaven becomes _____ on earth, in Jesus, and _____ us to be the church.**

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:17-20 NIV

- In _____ we identify with the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ. We are saying publicly that we want his life to be our life.
- In _____ we regularly re-align ourselves with the cross of Christ and the peace that only comes through him.

Trinity is the most comprehensive and integrative framework that we have for understanding and participating in the Christian life. ~ Eugene Peterson

- _____

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

Colossians 3:12-15a NIV

When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Halls; . . . I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit. ~ C.S. Lewis

The way we express our commitment to one another in this church is through _____.

- _____
Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

Philippians 2:1-3 NIV

Community is where the person you least want to be with, is.

~ Henri Nouwen

Oneness requires grace and mercy which requires _____.

Many people seek a sympathetic ear and do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking even when they should be listening. But Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either... Those who cannot listen long and patiently will always be talking past others, and finally no longer will even notice it. Those who think their time is too precious to spend listening will never really have time for God and others, but only for themselves and for their own words and plans. ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- _____

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 1 Corinthians 12:18-20 NIV

Individuality requires _____.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. Ephesians 4:15 NIV

Confession of the Truth

In confession there takes place a breakthrough to community. Sin wants to be alone with people. It takes them away from the community. The more lonely people become, the more destructive the power of sin over them. The more deeply they become entangled in it, the more unholy is their loneliness. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of what is left unsaid sin poisons the whole being of a person.

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Church, In Christ, Committed, One but Individual.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work

Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV

The Holy Spirit forms church to be a colony of Heaven in the country of death.

~ Eugene Peterson

Membership Covenant

It is my desire to take ownership for my apprenticeship journey with Jesus – and, as an integral part of my journey, to participate fully in the St. Albert Alliance Church family.

I believe that engagement in a community of Jesus-followers is a vital part of making myself available to the Holy Spirit's work of forming Christ within me.

By the grace of God, my commitment to this church family will be evidenced through supporting the leadership and faithfully giving towards the kingdom work that has been entrusted to us.

I commit to reordering my life around Jesus in the following ways, for the sake of his glory and in order to demonstrate his kingdom.

By Discovering God

- Through diligent personal prayer and engagement with the Bible.
- Through a lifestyle built around vital spiritual friendships (*such as Discover Partners*).
- Through gathering with our church family for worship, teaching and prayer.

By Connecting with Others

- Through building and maintaining relationships within the church family that are characterized by
 - humility, gentleness and love
 - embracing people as they are
 - believing the best in one another
 - keeping short accounts with each another
- Through “doing life” in intentional community with other apprentices of Jesus (*such as in a Small Group*).

By Serving Neighbors and Nations

- Through serving out of the God-given gifts and capacities that I have been entrusted with – both inside and outside of the church.
- Through a lifestyle of engaging with people that are spiritually disoriented or marginalized (*such as through regularly Sharing Meals*).
- Through cultivating a lifestyle of generosity in which I invest the money, time and energies that I have been entrusted with for the purposes of God's kingdom – both locally and globally (*such as through Adopting a World Need*).