

Main Idea: In Acts 14:21-28 we see a vivid illustration of who really needs the local church, and why.

- I. Young Christians need the church (21-25).
 - A. To make disciples, we must lead people to Christ (21a).
 1. This involves preaching.
 2. This involves teaching people how to follow the Lord.
 - B. To make disciples, we must link people to Christ’s Body (21b-25).
 1. Believers need strength (22a).
 2. Believers need encouragement (22b).
 3. Believers need leadership and organization (23a).
 4. Believers need prayer (23b).
 5. Believers need a reminder to trust in the Lord (23c).
- II. Maturing Christians need the church (26-28).
 - A. Paul and Barnabas submitted to the authority of the church (26).
 1. The sending church gave them a job to do.
 2. They finished it, by the grace of God.
 - B. Paul and Barnabas made themselves accountable to the church (27).
 1. Missionaries go.
 2. The church gives.
 3. God does the work.
 - C. Paul and Barnabas made themselves available to the church (28).
 1. I need the church.
 2. The church needs me.

Make It Personal: Let’s apply what we’ve learned...

1. Take inventory of your relationship with the Head.
2. Take inventory of your relationship with the Body.

This morning we’re continuing in our journey through the middle section of Acts, a section that reveals how worthy Jesus Christ is. He’s worthy of living and dying for, as we see illustrated by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:21-28

Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. In the NIV, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” In the KJV, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

We don’t talk like that in the American church. On the one hand, there are the “best life now” preachers, and they’re obviously not talking like that. But are we? When you became a Christian, did anyone sit you down and say, “We must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of God”? And when is the last time you or I shared those words with a young believer, or closer to home, with our children and grandchildren?

Are there benefits to receiving Christ as Savior and Lord? Yes! Forgiveness of sins, peace and joy, eternal life! And...much tribulation. That’s the message Paul and Barnabas preached to new believers. And we wonder why so many in our day walk away from church when the music stops playing?

In 2018, over 245 million Christians faced intimidation, prison, or even death for their faith in Jesus. Put that in perspective. There are 328 million people living in the United States. That’s three-fourths of our population. One in nine Christians worldwide were persecuted for their faith.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series at WBC in 2002.

Every year Open Doors publishes its “World Watch List,” recording “the 50 most dangerous countries to follow Jesus.” In 2019, the top ten countries are North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran, and India.”²

So... *Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.* Yes, I know that, 245 million of our brothers and sisters would say. As must we.

I’ve entitled this morning’s message, “*Who Needs the Church, and Why?*” In our study of Acts we’ve come to a text that addresses those vital questions. Most of us would probably say the church is important, but how important? And why? And is it worth the hardships that 245 million of our brothers and sisters are facing right now?

I love the church. I make no apology about it. It’s not just because I’m a pastor either. Shortly after God saved me as a child, I began to love the church. My aim in this message—and I’ll tell you right up front—is to motivate you to greater heights of love for the church, too. In Acts 14:21-28 we see a vivid illustration of who really needs the local church. Two groups.

I. Young Christians need the local church (21-25).

The story begins with Paul and Barnabas in the city of Derbe. They’ve passed the halfway point of what we call Paul’s “first missionary journey” (recorded in Acts 13-14). They left their sending church in Antioch about a year before this, around AD 46, sailed to Cyprus, then preached their way across the island, before sailing to the mainland (what today is south-central Turkey). The trek that followed took them to nine cities (as recorded by Luke), as they sought to make Christ known to people living in darkness.

This was certainly no pleasure cruise for Paul and Barnabas. Some of the highlights of this first missionary journey included the following. They led a Roman ruler by the name of Sergius Paulus to Christ while on Cyprus—and they had to strike a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus with blindness to keep him from interfering. Upon arrival in Perga, John Mark left the team and went home to Jerusalem—something that caused great pain for all involved. In Pisidian Antioch Paul preached to a packed house on the second Sabbath day, before being run out of town. In Iconium he likewise preached to great numbers and many believed, but he once again left town when he learned of a plot to kill him.

Next stop was Lystra where he healed a crippled man, a deed that the pagan crowd misinterpreted. Thinking they were gods, the people tried to worship Paul and Barnabas. The missionaries obviously objected. The cheering shortly turned into hatred and a mob stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul left the next day for Derbe.

What did he do in Derbe? Rest? Take a well deserved break? Hardly. He and Barnabas did the same thing they did wherever they went. Verse 21 says, “They preached the good news in that city.”

To fulfill our mission as Jesus-followers, we must persevere. We find a good example in this account taken from the diary of John Wesley:

Sunday, A.M., May 5 Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5 Preached in St. John's. Deacons said "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12 Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19 Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special

² Taken from Richard Chin, *Captivated by Christ*, pp. 50-51

meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26 Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2 Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

Sunday, P.M., June 2 Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

One of the reasons John Wesley was so greatly used by God is because he kept at it. Like Paul and Barnabas did.

What was the result of their ministry in Derbe? Notice verse 21 again, "They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples."

Right there are two assignments to which we must give attention if we're going to make disciples the way our Savior instructed. Watch Paul in verses 21-25. Wherever he went he poured his energy into these two assignments.

A. To make disciples, we must lead people to Christ (21a). That was the bulls-eye for Paul and Barnabas. That's the reason they went to city after city. Not to get people interested in religion, but to tell people about the person of Jesus Christ and to lead them to Him.

How do you lead people to Christ? From Paul's example it involves two activities.

1. *This involves preaching.* They "preached the good news" in Derbe. What's the good news? It's the gospel. It's the message of what the Maker of the universe has done to reconcile sinners to Himself.

You entered this world as a sinner. So did I. We inherited our sin problem from Adam. God is offended by our sin. He is holy and cannot look upon sin, but rather must judge it severely.

Which is what He did at the cross. He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Though sinless, Jesus allowed wicked men to nail Him to the Tree, according to God's eternal plan. There on the cross He took upon Himself the sin of rebels. There at the cross God judged Jesus in our place. The Savior died and rose again so that whoever repents and believes in Him is forgiven and given the gift of eternal life.

That's the good news that saves sinners. But no matter how good this good news is, it doesn't help someone until they...hear it. Thus, leading people to Christ involves *preaching* the good news to them. But that's not all.

2. *This involves teaching people how to follow the Lord.* That's what the term "disciple" is all about. A disciple is a *follower*. Jesus said to go and make disciples in Matthew 28:19. But what are we to do with these new disciples? Jesus answered that question in His following words. He said to *baptize* them and then to "*teach* them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20)."

This is what people need most, a relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be reconciled to God and experience life that is both abundant and eternal. Making disciples begins by leading people to Christ.

Notice I said *begins*. Disciple-making *begins* by leading people to Christ, but it doesn't end there. It involves a second assignment, sadly one that is often ignored.

B. To make disciples, we must link people to Christ's Body (21b-25). That's exactly what Paul and Barnabas did in verses 21-25. They took very specific steps to *link* these new disciples to a local church.

How did they do it? Verse 21 says, "Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch." Those are staggering words. *They returned*. Remember, they're going back to

cities that not only shunned them and told them to get lost, but where people hated them enough to try to kill them. To those cities *they returned*.

Dave Howard, in his book *The Power of the Holy Spirit*, tells about a fearless pastor he ministered with in Colombia named Lupercio Taba. One Sunday Taba was preaching from his pulpit when a man appeared at a side window of the church, aimed a pistol at him, and ordered him to stop preaching. The congregation, seeing the danger, dove to the floor and hid under the pews. Taba, however, went right on preaching the gospel. The man then fired four shots at him. Two shots went past the preacher's head, one on one side, one on the other, and lodged in the wall behind him. Two shots went past his body, one under one arm, one under the other, and also lodged in the wall. The would-be assassin then dropped his gun and fled. Taba, still unmoved, continued his sermon.³

That's devotion. So is this. *Then they returned*.

I looked at a map this week and saw something I hadn't noticed before. I encourage you to do the same. Look at a map. They were at Derbe. See Derbe? Look to the east and you'll see Tarsus. So if Paul had kept going in the same direction another hundred miles or so, he'd been back home in Tarsus. And if he'd kept going east, he and Barnabas would have ended up in Antioch, which is where they will end up.

But they didn't take the most direct route to Antioch. Instead, *they returned*. They went north-west, then south, and then finally east, and literally went out of their way hundreds of miles. Why? To go back to the same cities that had just kicked them out.

Again, why? Why did they return, and why return to these dangerous cities? They'd already led people to Christ there, and only a few weeks or months had passed since. They'd done all that you need to do to make disciples, hadn't they? They'd led people to Christ. What more do new Christians need than Christ?

Simply put, they need *His Body*.

Notice carefully what it was that was so important that Paul and Barnabas risked their lives to accomplish. Starting at the end of verse 21, the text tells us what they did when they went back: "Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,' they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

That's why they went back, because new believers need some things if they're going to make it in this hostile world. And not just new believers. Every believer needs five resources, and the God-ordained place to receive these five resources is the local church.

1. *Believers need strength (22a)*. "Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples."⁴ ESV, "Strengthening the souls of the disciples." The participle is from the Greek term *episterizo* [related English word "steroid"] which means "to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief."⁵

Ever heard the phrase "wishy-washy"? It's not a commendable trait. A wishy-washy Jesus-follower won't last. He needs strength.

How do you "strengthen" someone? Paul tells us in Colossians 2:6-7, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him,

³ As retold by Kent Hughes, p. 188.

⁴ "Confirming the souls of the disciples" is how the KJV renders it.

⁵ Louw-Nida

strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” That’s how you give young believers strength, by teaching them God’s Word, and that’s why Paul and Barnabas returned, because believers need strength.

2. *Believers need encouragement (22b)*. “Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and *encouraging* them.” What kind of encouragement do believers need? Paul and Barnabas delivered two kinds. First, they taught the believers how to respond to error (NIV, “they encouraged them to remain *true* to the faith”; ESV, “encouraging them to continue in the faith”). Don’t believe everything you hear, but only what’s consistent with *the faith* we’ve delivered to you.

Secondly, they encouraged them how to respond to trials, “saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (ESV).”⁶ Doesn’t sound very encouraging, does it? Actually, it does. Letting people know what’s coming is part of God’s way of *putting courage into* (which is what “encouragement” is). Frankly, it’s not easy to live for Christ. We face great temptation to pursue the course of least resistance—by watering down the true faith, or by leaving the fold altogether. We need to know that up front, so we’ll be ready for what comes and then face it by the strength Christ provides. We need encouragement.

This, too, is why the missionaries returned.

[Share story of Richard Johnson, 1788, first chaplain to Australia; Chinn, pp. 61-3]

3. *Believers need leadership and organization (23a)*. Verse 23 says, “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church.” This was priority for Paul, to train leaders so that people he led to Christ would prosper *after* he was gone. In disciple-making our job isn’t done until the person we’ve led to Christ is a vital, contributing member of a local church where he is serving, worshipping, and accountable.

A disciple can’t survive on his own. He needs the Body. If I severed my hand from my body, how long would it last? How about my foot, or my eye? The individual members of my body can’t survive on their own. They are a part of a whole.

Romans 12:4-5 explains, “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

What is the church? God’s Word refers to it as a *Body*. What are believers? They are *parts* of the Body.

There’s a common thinking that says, “I’ve got the Lord. I’m okay. I don’t really need the church.” That’s not biblical Christianity. According to God’s Word, to have a relationship with Christ and *not* have a vibrant relationship with Christ’s Body is abnormal. How can you love a person’s *head* and act like the rest of the body isn’t there? You can’t. So to be right with Christ, you need His Body, the church.

That’s why Paul and Barnabas returned. When they left Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch the first time, they left behind people who knew Christ as Savior, praise the Lord, but they still lacked something. These believers needed to be organized into local churches. A living organism needs structure.

What kind of structure? They appointed “elders.” In Titus 1:5, Paul told his associate Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained in order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”

⁶ NIV, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

Elders. Overseers. Pastors. The terms are interchangeable in the New Testament. Left to themselves the disciples in these cities would never make it. They needed shepherds to feed them and lead them.

Shepherds *plural*. Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in every church.” The plurality is good for the elders’ sake, for it provides accountability for the men. It’s also good for the church’s sake, for many reasons, and I’ll mention two now.

One, it’s impossible for one man to shepherd by himself a congregation. Preach, yes, but not shepherd. Shepherding takes time and involvement. Jesus Himself chose and poured His life into twelve men, and unleashed them to do the same. Having a plurality of elders is for the good of the flock.

Two, having a plurality of shepherds provides a much needed variety of perspectives and giftedness. Only Jesus possessed every spiritual gift. I certainly don’t. And I’m thankful for the team of men that God has raised up to shepherd this flock, who pray for you, teach you from God’s word, equip and encourage you, and who restore you when you stray from the fold.

4. *Believers need prayer (23b)*. Notice that the decision to appoint elders was made “with prayer and fasting.” I take it from the wording that Paul and Barnabas did the prayer and fasting, and in so doing they taught the new churches a couple of vital lessons. One, these elders are gifts from God. And two, never make any important decision without prayer. Before the Body does anything, it needs to communicate with the Head and find out what He wants. We need prayer.

5. *Believers need a reminder to trust in the Lord (23c)*. What was the last thing the missionaries did before leaving town? Verse 23 says they “committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” If we lead people to Christ, but keep the apron strings attached to us, they are in trouble. We, too, are in trouble. If they’re dependent on us for stability and growth, we’ve misled it. We must commit them to the Lord, the One they’ve trusted in for salvation. We must remind them to trust in Him for all things.

Then the missionaries left town. Verses 24-25 state, “After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia,²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga,⁷ they went down to Attalia.”

So they left. No, they didn’t leave for good. No good parent forgets his children. Paul would return again to Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, on his second missionary journey, and on his third. But he could now leave because two vital connections were in place.

They were *in Christ*. And they were *in the church*. Is that true of you?

Someone might say, “Well I’m a part of the invisible, universal church. I don’t need the local church.” That reminds me of a story that Vance Havner told. A lady came to him once and said, “I want to sing in the choir.” He replied, “If you want to sing in the choir, you need to be a member of the church.” She replied, “I don’t want to be a member of this church. I’m already a member of the invisible church.” To which the pastor replied, “Then sing in the invisible choir.”

Where is Christ today? You say, “He is in heaven.” True, but He is also *here*. He sent His Spirit to indwell His Body, the church. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

⁷ There’s no mention that they preached at Perga the first time there when John Mark left (13:13).

So the Living Head now works through local churches. The emphasis in the New Testament is on the local church, not the universal church. Look at the letters in the New Testament. They were written to local churches or to individuals working in local churches.

“To the church of God in Corinth,” Paul began the letter we can 1 Corinthians.

“To the churches in Galatia,” Paul likewise began in Galatians 1:2.

“To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons,” we read in Philippians 1:1.

“To the church of the Thessalonians,” Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

At the beginning of Paul’s letter to *Philemon*, “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, ² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and *to the church* that meets in your home.”

Wherever Paul went he not only led people to Christ, but he then linked those people to visible manifestations of Christ’s Body. That is, he established local churches and placed his spiritual children into them. It was there that they could obtain strength, encouragement, leadership and organization, prayer, and a continual reminder to trust in the Lord, long after he was gone.

Beloved, you can’t get these essentials from a television or online preacher. You need the local church. And COVID-19 doesn’t change this. We need to be more intentional than ever about making our church priority in our lives.

“But we have to physical distance!” you say. Okay, we can do that and still prioritize church. Our brothers and sisters in China are forbidden to gather, yet they still find ways to be in the Scriptures together, pray, meet needs, and mobilize themselves in making Christ known to others. It can be done. It must be done.

Someone may be thinking, “Well, this may be true for new Christians, but what about those of us who’ve been saved a long time? I mean, after all, I’ve got my Bible and I can talk to God all I want right in my own home. Do I really need to prioritize the church?”

How would you answer that person? This mentality is widespread especially in our area. A lot of people are disillusioned with the local church. Perhaps they’ve been hurt in the past. Top that off with a mindset that says, “Well, I ‘did my time’ in church. I brought my share of pies to the church dinners, and even taught Sunday School for years. It’s time for somebody else to take my place. I don’t need the church any longer.”

Is that true? Is the church only for the spiritually young, something we outgrow as we age? Let’s answer that question with another question.

Did Paul outgrow his need for the local church? Please notice the very next thing he and Barnabas did, recorded in verse 26, “From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch.” That’s Antioch in Syria. Why did they go there? The next phrase says, “where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.”

That’s significant. What did Paul and Barnabas do after finishing this missions trip? They returned to their sending church. Who needs the local church? Yes, new Christians do. But the fact is, we never outgrow our need for the church.

II. Maturing Christians need the local church (26-28).

The text mentions that these two missionaries did three things that underscore their high view of the local church.

A. Paul and Barnabas submitted to the authority of the church (26). Verse 26 indicates they did. “From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.”⁸

In all Paul and Barnabas traveled more than 1,000 miles on a trip that probably took them between one and two years to complete. Why did they take that trip? Simply put...

1. *The sending church gave them a job to do.* Remember the beginning of Acts 13? Paul and Barnabas had a great thing going in Antioch. They were part of a fine ministry team there, but when the Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them (13:2),” they obeyed. The whole church obeyed. After a time of fasting and prayer, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (13:3).

So they went because their sending church gave them a job to do. And...

2. *They finished it, by the grace of God.* Grace makes ministry possible. We can’t do it on our own. Paul and Barnabas knew it, and here we’re told that the Antioch church members knew it. Luke says that before the missionaries left, the church committed them to the grace of God, and that grace made all this happen.

Let’s not miss the authority of the local church here. Though Paul was an apostle, he didn’t freewheel. He and Barnabas went out to do ministry in submission to the authority of the local church. They did something else, too.

B. Paul and Barnabas made themselves accountable to the church (27). “On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”

We might call this the first “missionary conference”. Upon returning home, the missionaries “gathered the church together.” This points out that the church is *people*, not a building, that the church is wherever the people are, that to have the church you must gather the people, that if the people don’t come, you might have a building you call a ‘church,’ but you don’t have the church.

As the sending church, the Antioch church had a vital part in the lives that were changed from Cyprus to Derbe. The church had prayed. The church had been willing to give up two of its best teachers. Now they shared in the fruit.

Why did Paul and Barnabas call the church together? Obviously they had a story to tell, but why did they tell it to the church? It’s because they saw themselves as *accountable* to the church. Luke says they “reported” to the church.

Are you making yourself accountable to your local church? When the Lord does something in your life, are you sharing it with your brothers and sisters, for His glory?

I see a wonderful picture here of the teamwork involved in missions.

1. *Missionaries go.*

2. *The church gives.* But when it’s all said and done...

3. *God does the work.* They reported “all that *God had done* through them.”

We’re in trouble when we forget that ministry is about God, not us. If there’s fruit, it’s because God worked and the glory belongs to him.

C. Paul and Barnabas made themselves available to the church (28). Here are three key concepts associated with the local church—authority, accountability, and availability. Paul and Barnabas recognized them. So must we. They submitted to the authority of the church, made themselves accountable to the church, and thirdly, made themselves available to the church.

⁸ ESV, “They sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.”

Luke says in verse 28, “And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.” Just how long was this “long time?” Probably more than a year. Why did they stay in Antioch this time? Perhaps to recuperate and be refreshed. It had been a hard trip, and the Lord intends His church to be a haven for the hurting. But it’s also a place to serve, and undoubtedly Paul and Barnabas used their gifts to continue edifying the Body during the months that followed.

Two things are always true, when it comes to the church.

1. *I need the church.* I can’t be a maturing Christian and neglect my church, any more than I could cut off my finger and expect it to remain healthy. Just like my finger needs the body, I need the church. In addition...

2. *The church needs me.* Each member of the church has God-given spiritual gifts. He gave us those gifts for the good of the Body. When we fail to use them, the Body suffers.⁹ The *whole* Body suffers, including me.

Okay, sounds good, but let’s be honest. There are times when it doesn’t *feel* like I need the church, and the church needs me. At times, it feels like the last thing I need is the church, because the church is made up of people who at times disappoint us, or even hurt us.

I remember talking with a brother in the front of this auditorium one Sunday who told me he and his family were leaving the church. Why? Because he didn’t want to be part of a church, didn’t want his *children* to be part of a church, that had problems. What would you say to this brother? My response was something like...

“You know, I don’t like the problems either. But...I want my children to grow up and love the church the way it is, problems and all, not the way they wish it would be.”

I’m so thankful that this church is filled with people who share that commitment, who love this forever family no matter what, and who resolve to respond to the inevitable problems we face with Christ’s power and grace.

One of the church fathers put it thus, “No man can have God for his father unless he has the Church for his mother.” We could argue that the language is too strong, to say we need the church as much as we need God. But the truth is, *God* says we need the church. Young Christians and maturing Christians alike.

Make It Personal: Let’s apply what we’ve learned...

1. *Take inventory of your relationship with the Head.* Colossians 1:18 says, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” Are you connected to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ? Is He your Lord and Savior? How close are you to the Head?

2. *Take inventory of your relationship with the Body.* It’s impossible to be right with the Head and not right with His Body. What’s the condition of your relationship with the Body?

Since that’s kind of hard to measure, we have a tool to help us. It’s called our church covenant. Yes, it’s a man-made document, but it’s based on biblical principles. Every member of this church has made the following promise:

⁹ See 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Church Covenant of Wheelersburg Baptist Church

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, the angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to faithfully attend its regular services; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions, to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; and to be temperate in all things, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling, and courtesy of speech, to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay. We more over engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Song of Response: #283 "We Are God's People"

This evening: Communion, business meeting, preachers in training in Galatians