

Ephesians 4:1-16 ESV

# The Holy Christian Church

## Its Unity, Gifts, Structure, and Purpose

Sunday, August 2 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, August 3 at 7 PM

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity – 2015

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: What is the Holy Christian Church? It includes all who are repentant, *thus sorry for their sins and trusting in Jesus for eternal life!*

As members of the Holy Christian Church, we are also members of the one body of Christ. In that body Jesus is the head, *so He is in control*; we are the other parts of the body, so we ▶are united to each other, ▶need each other, and ▶are called to function in harmony with each other.

### 1. **HCC Unity:**

- a. <sup>1</sup> **I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [thus God's work through His Word by which you believe in Jesus] to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. //**

Paul was serious about living for Christ, which landed him in prison. Then, *to maintain unity in the body of Christ*, he urged the believers in Ephesus *then* and *us today* to live as God's holy children *in these ways*:

  - i. With humility – lowliness of mind, not arrogant but trusting in the Lord.

- ii. With gentleness – not selfishness, but with genuine concern for others.
- iii. With patience – endurance, not giving up.

- b. <sup>4</sup> **There is one<sup>1</sup> body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, <sup>2</sup> who is over all and through all and in all. // There are many denominations within the Christian Church, but – among those many denominations – *ALL who are sorry for their sins and trusting in Jesus for eternal life are members of the ONE body of Christ!* Within that ONE body the ONE Spirit is working through God’s Word to keep the members united together. Those members have:**
- i. ONE Lord – *thus they all confess Jesus as Lord!*
  - ii. ONE faith – *thus they all believe the contents of the Apostles’ Creed!*
  - iii. ONE baptism – *thus they are all baptized into Christ and His one body, the Church!*

## 2. **HCC Gifts:**

- a. <sup>7</sup> **But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.**  
<sup>8</sup> **Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” // So Jesus, after He ascended into**

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<sup>1</sup> “There are seven “ones,” God’s number for completeness” (TLSB, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> “God claims fatherhood over all because He created all (Eph 3:14-15; Rm 11:36). But only through Christ can we acknowledge Him as Father (Gal 4:6)” (TLSB, 2022).

heaven, sent believers the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26); now, *those who have the Spirit* show forth the *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22-23: “love, joy, peace...”) in their lives. But here the “gifts” are *especially* pointing ahead to verse 11.

- b. <sup>9</sup> **(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth [Greek text: “...into the lower parts of the earth,” no comma, so possibly a reference to His descent into hell]? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) //** So we understand Jesus’ greatness and ability to give gifts!

### 3. **HCC Structure and Purpose:**

- a. <sup>11</sup> **And he gave** [these gifts to bless the Holy Christian Church, thus the ONE body of Christ] **the apostles** [the ones Jesus called and sent to take the message of His work to the ends of the earth], **the prophets** [the ones moved by the Holy Spirit to speak and/or write the very words of God], **the evangelists** [Philip is called “the evangelist” (Acts 21:8); Timothy is charged to do the work of an evangelist: “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1-2)], **the shepherds and teachers**, // As shepherds *feed* and *protect* their flock of sheep, so pastors are called to *spiritually feed* and *protect* the believers entrusted to their care. So through *what means* is that accomplished? *The teaching of God’s Word!* So it is important for *pastors to rightly teach God’s Word* AND for *believers to faithfully learn God’s Word!*
- b. [So pastors are given] <sup>12</sup> **to equip the saints** [thus believers] **for the work of ministry** [or service], **for**

**building up the body of Christ**, // So, as your pastor, I am trying to equip you by ♦teaching the Word and ♦encouraging you to benefit from the Word each day. Then, *having learned that Word*, it is vital to *live and share* that Word to build up the body of Christ! That can include ♦serving on the “Pastor Team” here at BLC, ♦teaching the Word to youth and children, and ♦inviting others to come, hear God’s Word, and eternally benefit!

- c. [For how long?] <sup>13</sup> **until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**, [For what purpose?] <sup>14</sup> **so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.** <sup>15</sup> **Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,** <sup>16</sup> **from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

**Conclusion:** Now, *with a better understanding of the Holy Christian Church*, let us ♦remember our part in the one body of Christ, ♦be equipped through God’s Word to serve, ♦firmly stand on God’s truth, and ♦speak God’s truth in love!

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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