

## FOUNDATIONS – MY LIFE IN CHRIST’S CHURCH – UNIT 2

### MLICC – 2.1

### GROUPS & GATHERINGS

I. **Introduction:** In this lesson we are learning about **THE IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE OF THE REGULAR GATHERING OF GOD’S PEOPLE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL CHURCH**. When we are converted God’s plan is for us to live our Christian Life in community with other Believers in Jesus Christ.

#### II. What is the Church?

A. The New Testament Greek word for church is “ecclesia”, meaning “an assembly of called out ones” The Church is identified as the Body of Christ. We are a living organism not an organization or building. We are not merely followers of Christ but members of Christ and of one another.

1. Unlike other religions whose founder is dead, we do not just study and propagate our founder’s teachings. **Jesus Christ is alive and continues to provide life to His body the church through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.**
2. **Colossians 1:18-19** He is the Head of the body made up of his people-that is, his Church-which he began; and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything; for God wanted all of himself to be in his Son. **TLB**

B. **The Church is a spiritual fellowship** in which all divisions that separate us have been abolished by the cross of Jesus Christ

1. **Galatians 3:26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **NKJV**
2. Deep cultural divisions overcome — Eph 2:14
3. Social and economical divisions overcome
4. Gender divisions overcome

C. **The Church is a body.** A local church is often compared to a physical body with numerous appropriate similarities. Our varied parts, limbs, and organs are all in relationship and dependant on one another. It is necessary for each part to function properly for our body to be healthy and strong. Nutrition, exercise, medicine and even surgery is often used to maintain health and/or restore healthy function.

1. **Healthy members** = connected church and Christ shared with each other as well as community
2. **Unhealthy members** = disconnected or wrongly connected church and un-reached community

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D. **The Church is alive.** Like a healthy physical body; the local Church is healthy when its members both give and receive life.

1. **John 7:38** He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **from within him shall flow rivers of living water. ASV**

2. **I Corinthians 12:18** But **now God has set the members**, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are **many members, yet one body.**

3. **I Corinthians 12:25-27-** “So that there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation ( of the parts of the body to one another) but the members all alike should have a **mutual interest in and care for one another.** And if **one member suffers, all the parts share the suffering, if one member is honored, all the members share in the enjoyment of it.** Now you are collectively Christ’s body and (individually) members of it, each part severally and distinct ( each with his own place). **AMP**

4. **Ephesians 4:11,12,16** “He (Christ) gave some apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; His intention is **the perfecting and equipping of the saints,** (that they should do) **the work of ministering toward building up Christ’s body** (the church) For because of Him (Christ) the **whole body is closely jointed and knit together** by the joints and ligaments which it has supplied, **when each part is working properly** ( in all it’s functions) **grows to full maturity, building itself up with love. AMP**

5. **Galatians 6:2 - Bear** (endure, carry ) **one another’s burdens** and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ

6. **Hebrews 10:24-25** and let us consider how to **stir up one another to love and good works. not neglecting to meet together,** as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **RSV**

E. **Signs of a Healthy Life giving Church:**

1. Life flows from each believer
2. Interest and care for one another
3. Share joys and sorrows
4. Edifies and builds up
5. Life giving unity, connectedness
6. Growing to spiritual maturity
7. Bearing one another’s burdens
8. Restoration of fellow believers
9. Exhorts and encourages one another to love and good works
10. Meets regularly

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- F. There are many blessings received by being a member of or connected to a healthy life-giving local church. Can you list the blessings that you have received while attending ACF?
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- G. Consider — Are you have fulfilling your responsibilities to others in this local assembly?
- H. How have you shared or how do you hope to share your life with others at ACF and beyond?
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### III. The Local Church in Practice: In Acts chapter 2 we find the both the “Birth” of the Christian church as well as the “**pattern of functioning** as a local community of believers. **These few verses include much of the Purpose, Core Values, and Priorities of ACF. Acts 2:38-47 identifies key aspects of church life.**

- A. **Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them (**evangelism**) saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”
- B. **Acts 2:41** Then those who **gladly received his word (conversion)** were baptized; (**baptism**) and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (**added to the Church**).
- C. **Acts 2:42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (**discipleship-foundations**) and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, (**Communion**) and in prayers (**prayer**).
- D. **Acts 2:43** Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs (**Gifts of the Spirit**) were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
- E. **Acts 2:46** So continuing daily with one accord (**unity**) in the temple (**corporate worship**) and breaking bread from house to house, (**home meetings-Life Groups**) they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
- F. **Acts 2:47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (**Fruitfulness-Discipleship**)  
NKJV
- G. At ACF we see the application of Acts 2:38-47 in both our Corporate Gatherings (Sunday morning services) and our Home gatherings (Life

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**Groups**) known as the Local Church. We find this expressed in both types of Corporate Gathering

#### IV. Corporate Gatherings:

- A. **Our Mission:** It is important that the entire local body meet together on a regular basis. This creates the unity to fulfill the call and vision of Faith Fellowship of Dexter. Much more can be done corporately than individually for the Kingdom of God.
- B. **It looks like:** become a corporate expression of the Church in our area for the purpose of **influencing each other and our community** for righteousness.
  1. Become a visible and accessible **place of refuge** for all in need
  2. **Receive ministry** of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teachers
  3. Sunday service **preaching and teaching**- messages for sound Christian living
  4. Corporate **praise and worship**
  5. **Youth meetings/nursery/children’s church**
  6. **Stewardship** of funds - Gathering and dispensing of tithes and offerings
- V. **Life Groups:** Life groups make the Body of Christ accessible within the communities where they meet. Life-groups are not just a program or ministry of the Local Church but are an expression of the Church as much as the Corporate Gathering. **We find the early church in Acts meeting in homes for prayer, breaking of bread, and fellowship.** It is in the life-groups where close fellowship (Koinonia) can be developed.
  - A. **Our Mission:** To promote healthy relationships through small groups which empower people for ministry
  - B. Defining Life Groups:
    - i. **Regularity** – meet weekly or biweekly
    - ii. **Penetration** – meet outside the church building to penetrate the world where we live
    - iii. **Evangelism** – witnessing and reaching the lost with the good news of salvation must be a priority
    - iv. **Community** – life groups offer a sense of belonging and sharing close relationships
    - v. **Discipleship/growth** – life groups offer pastoral care and spiritual growth opportunities to those attending. People are encouraged to express and develop their callings and spiritual gifting.
    - vi. **Multiplication** – the goal of each life group should be to add members through evangelism and outreach, raise up new leaders through discipleship and mentoring, and birth a new life group