

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The 'Church'. A word so filled with meaning, both positive and negative, depending on the context used and the hearers worldview. From a Christian perspective though, the Church is the people of God, those who profess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, but it is also much more than the people of God.

The people of God are individuals, but the church is a collective, a gathering if you like. In fact the word *ekklesiā* is the ancient Greek word for a political assembly of citizens, and has come to be understood as the collective body of believers in Christ, who constitute the church. But notice that it is a collective body. This isn't stand alone individual Christians doing their own thing with God.

Jesus' fourth 'teaching discourse' found in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 18 is what we are now moving onto in a five sermon series. Ch.18 Jesus deals with the sincere discipleship life of the Kingdom community founded in Him. So, I urge you each Sunday to hear our preachers and if you miss a Sunday, catch up via the podcast, because what we understand and believe about the church matters.

I am reading a book called '*Who Needs the Church*' by Terry L Johnson, with a sub-heading, '*Why we need the Church (and why the Church needs us)*'. It talks about our collapsing ecclesiology (the study of the Church, the origins of Christianity, its relationship to Jesus, its role in salvation, its polity, its discipline, its eschatology, and its leadership) is manifesting in a churchless Christianity. It's an attitude of 'I don't need



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ENCOUNTER Worship Series

The New City Catechism

2nd and 4th Sundays at 6.15pm



Gillespie Memorial Church, Chapel St. Dunfermline, KY12 7AW | 01383 421253 | gillespiechurch.org

the church and am not called to attend or join a church but rather I am the church'. This is wrong on so many counts but especially scripturally. I don't have the space to go into detail in this short pastoral letter but note just a few points to you.

1. **Jesus said he will build His church** (see Matthew 16.18). It is clearly Jesus' church! In Revelation 21.2 He says *"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband"*. The church, the 'holy city', the 'new Jerusalem', the 'bride' of Christ are there at the end, built by Jesus for His purpose, which is that the gates of hell will be broken down and will not prevail before the church (Matthew 16.18)
2. **Jesus says** in Matthew 18.15-17, in a dispute over sin between Christians that if there cannot be resolution to **'tell it to the church'**. Johnson states that the church Jesus envisions has: *'1) standards of belief and conduct to which participants are expected to conform; 2) membership, with clear guidelines about who is to be included or excluded; 3) a process of discipline which evaluates misbehaviour and errant beliefs; 4) a form of government; 5) meetings at which a pertinent matter may be discussed; 6) officers who administer the whole.'*
3. **Benefits of the Kingdom** - how do the benefits of Jesus flow to us today, so many years after his death, burial, resurrection and ascension? Biblically it is communicated to us by the God-ordained 'means of grace'. Primarily this is understood to be through God's word (read, sung and especially preached), the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and prayer. God saves and sanctifies His people through these means.

All that is to say, the means by which Jesus Christ brings His grace to bear upon the world is through His church. It is where you find Jesus! In the same passage as noted above from Matthew 18 Jesus closes the passage about dealing with sin in the church by saying, *"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."* Jesus is of course everywhere present, but he has specifically promised to be with His gathered people. He can be present anywhere, but **He IS present** where

two or three (or two or three hundred) are gathered in His name. In other words **the presence of Jesus Christ is found in His gathered church.**

If as Christians we wish to be where Jesus is, we surely must be in His church; be present at Church; be member of His church; and serving in His church. Often relationship with church can be one of inactive participation. We come, receive and then go. That is not what Christ imagined.

A congregation should feel like family, and when you walk in it should feel like home. So my question to you to assess, does Gillespie feel like a family home? Are we the family of Jesus Christ where it is not about me but about one another? If our faith is about anything it is about 'one another', so my question about assessing our church asks not 'what am I getting out of it and are my needs being met?', but rather 'what am I giving?' If involvement is only on a Sunday then can we say we are a true church family, engaging in Kingdom work and supporting one another?

GMC has much on offer: The Guild; OpenHouse Café; Prayer groups; Women's Group; Men's Group'; Youth Outreach and OpenHouse; Messy Church; Encounter Evening Worship; plus opportunities to serve in leadership, prayer, praise and worship. There is so much beyond our Sunday morning worship services and these opportunities throughout the week that makes us community. So I ask, more than just coming to worship each Sunday (though that is both important and essential) become involved in our church family at Gillespie Memorial, one of the churches of Jesus Christ.

Through the whole life and ministry of Jesus and His love for His bride, the 'Church' was born. He calls us, His church to that same level of love and sacrifice...

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

In 2023, consider your weekly and monthly schedules and ask, 'how does Jesus and my church fits into it', and what can give to His kingdom?

Your servant in Christ, *Pastor Mike* (Minister, GMC)

Dates for the diary

Every Monday: 7.30-8.30am Start the week with PRAYER (Gillespie centre)

First Friday Month: Embrace, the women's ministry at GMC meet at 7.30pm

First and Third Saturday Month: Men @GMC meet for breakfast at 8.30am in the Gillespie centre

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AT GMC

YOUTH - support Lee (GMC Youth Pastor) weekly, once a month in his work (speak with Lee to find out more!!)

PRAISE TEAM - can you sing or play a musical instrument. We would love to expand our pool of musicians and sings to praise the Lord in worship (speak with Gordon to find out more!!)

PRAYER TEAM - do you have a heart for prayer? Can you support every so often our prayer ministry on a Thursday evening? What about leading prayer at worship? (speak with Pastor Mike to find out more!!)

OPENHOUSE CAFÉ - Can you speak and chat to people? Maybe clear tables, or serve coffee/ tea and refreshments? Love working in a team getting to know your church better? (speak with Pauline to find out more!!)

There are also other areas to serve - please speak to Pastor Mike

THANK YOU for supporting the mission of GMC ministry to our church family and for our community. Please continue to journey with us in 2023

- **PRAYER:** will you pray for opportunities to change lives for Jesus?
- **PEOPLE:** will you participate by offering some of your time each week or month?
- **POUNDS:** will you make a regular offering to the work of our church?

Are you in need of pastoral support?

Do you want to volunteer or financially support the work of GMC? Then contact

Rev. Mike Weaver OR the Office

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