



# THE PASTOR'S PEN

August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## ***The Nature of the Church***

Who are we...What does it mean to be a part of the Church?

As we think about that, let's begin by noting the origin of the word itself. The word "church" is derived from the Greek-*kyriake*-(belonging to the Lord) and *-ekklesia* (assembly). So simply, the Church is solely of God's divine design and consists of the assembly of people everywhere who have responded to, and professed faith in, God's redemptive actions on behalf of humanity through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Building on that foundational framework, the Pauline imagery of "the head and "the body" sheds further light on the subject. Simply put, all authority in the church resides first and foremost in Jesus Christ, "it's head." In connection, it continues to function as one entity through each and all of its collective parts, its universal members – "The Body of Christ."

Such imagery helps us to better recognize the overall corporate nature of the church. It reminds us of who we are and the common identity we share with all Christians everywhere. We are part of God's universal covenant which includes the community of Christians in every time and place. We are One with each other and with all of those who have gone before us, each of us recipients of God's grace and ambassadors of Christ.

This is not to say that the church forms a "one-size-fits-all" fellowship. Recognizing our "oneness" does not mean that we will all agree on the details of the great mysteries of life, death, or faith. Rather, it means that as Christians we are to stand joyfully and faithfully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ready and willing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as best as we know how. Paradoxically it is both the unity and freedom we share in Christ which enables us to come together as a collective people of faith and is the tie that binds us together as the church, "The Body of Christ."

All Christians are united by Christ's death and resurrection and that common belief should outweigh honest differences of opinion on secondary matters. We

who are One in Christ need the kind of diversity that can only grow from selfless love, mutual respect, and acceptance of differences. Show me a congregation that is long on compassion, big on building community, patiently tolerant of human differences and sensitive to fair play, and I will show you a faith community that is personifying the true nature of the Church. Indeed, I will show you a body of believers who are faithfully reflective of their head, Jesus Christ.

Yes dear ones, when we are collectively moved by compassion, drawn by what creates genuine community, joyful over the colorful diversity of our world and impassioned by what is equitable and fair, it is then that we can better say that we understand who we are, it's then that we can better say we understand the nature of the Church as God intended and intends it to be.

**Peace, purpose and blessing,  
Pastor Mark**