

We Believe in the Church (*Various Texts*)

EFCA Statement of Faith, Article 7

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

What is the Church?

- We use the term 'church' is used in 3 ways:
 1. The universal collective of God's people
 2. The local manifestation of the universal collective
 3. The building in which the local manifestation meets
- Scripture only uses the first two definitions

The True Church

- The word used in the NT for Church is ekklesia
 - "Those who have been called out"
 - Those who find their identity in the person & work of Jesus
- The Church consists of *everyone* who has been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone (Phil 3:8-9; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22; Jn. 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:20-28; 4:3; 5:1, 21; 8:1, 30, 33-34; 10:4, 9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9; Tit. 3:7; Heb. 10:14)
- Thus, the Church is both inclusive & exclusive
 - Inclusive: It includes anyone regardless of their gender, race, age, socio-economic position, place of origin, etc.
 - Exclusive: Requires us to claim Jesus alone as our source of salvation and relationship with God
- It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that the Church acts as the Body of Christ
 - As the Spirit brings unity (1 Cor. 12:12-27)
 - As Jesus acts as its head: Its Leader & Source (Eph. 4:15-16; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 2:19)
- Thus, the local Church's membership should be comprised only of those who truly find their identity in Jesus
 - Because, by definition, we cannot be a part of Body of Christ if we do not really know Jesus

Ordinances

- **Ordinances**: Practices that Jesus calls on us to engage in based upon our identity in Him
 - They are not means of attaining God's favor
 - But rather, practices that strength our faith and declare it to those around us
- **Baptism**: The declaration of one's inclusion and identity in Christ through the symbolism of death & resurrection enacted with water (Rom. 6:3-4)
 - *Baptidzo*: Term used for a sunken ship which had become part of the water into which it sank

- The Lord's Supper/Communion: A remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf symbolized by the consumption of bread & wine* to represent His body & blood
 - Based off the Passover Seder meal that Jesus celebrated with His first disciples on the night that He was arrested (*Mark 14:22-25*)

So What?

- We are the Church if find our identity in Jesus
 - Does that define you?
- Next week, how do we live as the Church