

Notes on ICOC 3.0 - Scriptural Considerations

Metaphors for the Church

The universal church is also called by many other names; one book, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* by Paul Minear (b. 1906), lists ninety-six different figures of speech, each revealing a different dimension of Christ's relationship to the church.

- Body of Christ. 1st Corinthians 12:12-27, Colossians 1:18, 2:19
- Bride of Christ. Revelation 21:9, 22:1; 2nd Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:24-25
- Firstborn of Christ. Hebrews 12:23-24, Colossians 1:18
- Building of Christ. Ephesians 2:20, 1st Peter 2:5-7
- A Holy Priesthood. 1st Peter 2:5, Hebrews 4:14
- A Royal Priesthood. 1st Peter 2:9, Revelation 5:10
- A Chosen People. 1st Peter 2:9, Ephesians 1:4
- The People of God. 1st Peter 2:9-10
- The Flock. John 21:15-17, Acts 20:28, 1Peter 5:1-4
- Here are even more metaphors depicting a vital, personal intimacy between Jesus and His church: Cornerstone/temple (Eph. 2:20–21); Beloved/virgin (2 Cor. 11:2); Ruler/city (Rev. 21:9–10); Owner/possession (Titus 2:14); Firstborn/household (Eph. 2:19); Creator/new creation (2 Cor. 5:21); Heir/inheritance (Eph. 1:18); and Vine/branches (John 15:1)

Scriptures from the *Church of Christ, A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* by Ferguson in Support of Local Autonomy:

- 1 Peter 5:1–3 (NIV) To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
 - *Note: this is a general or catholic epistle which could refer to the greater flock*
- Acts 14:23 (NIV) Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.
 - *Note: while each church will have established leadership, it seems that trans-congregational leadership was required for its establishment*
- Ephesians 1:20–23 (NIV) he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (not autonomous due to rule of Jesus)
 - *Note: "in Ephesus" likely did not appear in this letter's introduction, so a broader idea of church could be view here*
- Acts 20:28 (NIV) Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

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- 1 Corinthians 16:1–4 (NIV) Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.
- 1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.
 - *Note: as in all the churches does not promote the idea of hyper autonomy*
- 1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.
 - *Note: trans-congregational leadership is at work here in Paul's authority*
- 1 Corinthians 16:19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.
- 2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
- 2 Corinthians 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:
- Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;
- Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.
- Notice one more place in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. The apostle Paul could have referred to his fellow ministry laborers as ministers or messengers to the Church of God or of Christ, but he doesn't:
- 2 Corinthians 8:23-24 As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the **churches** and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the **churches** can see it.

The local church is commanded to remain pure and to be on guard for leaven that would corrupt our local church. This again would be impossible except in a local assembly of believers.

References to Regions of Churches:

Judea:

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- 1 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV) For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews
- Galatians 1:22 (NIV) I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
- Acts 11:27–30 (NIV) During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Galatia:

- 1 Corinthians 16:1–4 (NIV) Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.
- Romans 15:25–27 (NIV) Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.
- Ephesians 4:14–17 (NIV) Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
- Gal 1:21-23 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."
- Colossians 2:1-5. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, ... 5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Macedonia: 2nd Corinthians 11:8, Philippians 4:14-18, Acts 18:11, 1st Corinthians 9:9-14, 1Thessalonians 1:7-8

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Regarding Act 15 Council:

- First, substantiating the earlier point, the authority of this "convention" was the apostles and prophets who represented God. Uninspired congregational representatives voting upon a creed or course of action are in no way parallel to this meeting that was guided by inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- "They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings"
- The examples of New Testament churches are clear: Each congregation was equivalent in rule and was to have elders, who were to oversee the affairs of their local church. Moreover, each set of elders was limited to the oversight of the "flock among them". The Bible offers no other method of church oversight beyond that of the local church and its elders. Therefore, any form of governing body beside the authorized and approved autonomous local church constitutes an "adding to" God's Word and is wrong by God's condemnation of any form of "adding to" or "taking away" from God's Word.

Notes from *Systematic Theology, Volume Four: Last Things* by Giessler

The Pre-Ordination of the Church, even from OT

Like every other work of God, the church is not an afterthought; He ordained the church from all eternity.

- Though the church began on earth after the time of Christ, the Old Testament made preparation for it. The church, ordained by God from all eternity, also began as prescheduled. Thus, "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).
- Pentecost predicts a coming together of all people into one body. It's the reverse of Babel. It's the fulfillment of Mt. Sinai when the law was given in all languages. It's the fulfillment of the two loaves as part of that covenant.
- Ephesians 2:19-22. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- 1Cor 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.
- Acts 20:28 "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." - this is a reference to the church of God, not the church of Ephesus

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- The church was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), the church was gifted by His ascension (Ephesians 4:8-11)
- Ephesians 1:18-23 here the church is explicitly referenced, with much glory and power around it. "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."
- Pentecost Scriptures 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV) For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink., 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. and Romans 12:5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.(for greater unity)
- Gentiles are the great mystery culminated in the church Ephesians 3:4-6 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.
- Eph 3:10-22 and 1Peter 1:12 this is just epic awesomeness on the church
- Jesus at the Gates of Hades Matthew 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- Ephesians 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
- Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.
- Hebrews 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
- The Church was chosen before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)
- God causes it to grow Colossians 2:19 - and it's the whole body that grows. See also growth in Ephesians 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.
- John 17 is important to note repeatedly!
- The universal church will accomplish the ultimate mission for which God called it (cf. Eph. 3:9–11). See also Matthew 16:18 and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

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- Acts 8:3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (and notice Acts 9:4 - why do you persecute me?)

References to “Churches

- Romans 16:4 (NIV) They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.
- Romans 16:16 (NIV) Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.
- 1 Corinthians 7:17 (NIV) Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.
- 1 Corinthians 11:16 (NIV) If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.
- 1 Corinthians 14:33–34 (NIV) For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.
- 1 Corinthians 16:1 (NIV) Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.
- 1 Corinthians 16:19 (NIV) The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.
- 2 Corinthians 8:1 (NIV) And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.
- 2 Corinthians 8:18–19 (NIV) And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.
- 2 Corinthians 8:23–24 (NIV) As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.
- 2 Corinthians 11:8 (NIV) I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.
- 2 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV) Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.
- 2 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV) How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!
- Galatians 1:2 (NIV) and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia:
- Galatians 1:22 (NIV) I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

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- 1 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV) For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews
- 2 Thessalonians 1:4 (NIV) Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.
- Revelation 1:11 (NIV) which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."
- Revelation 1:20 (NIV) The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
- Revelation 2:11 (NIV) Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.
- Also Rev 2:17, 29; Rev 3:6, 13, 22.
- Paul addressed most of his epistles to local churches (See 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thess. 2:1; Philem. 1:2). In fact, while there are some cyclical letters for churches in a given area, such as Galatians (cf. 1:2) and Revelation (cf. 1:10), there are no letters explicitly written to the whole visible church. However, the general epistles, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, 1 John
- It is noteworthy that Christ addresses each of the seven (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) as an individual church; collectively they are known as "churches" (2:11, 17, 29, etc): "All the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts" (2:23 NKJV).

References to Order or Cooperations

- Colossians 2 refers to Paul's delight to see how well ordered their ranks were.
- Acts 6:1-7; 14:23; Phil. 1:1 refer to locally appointed leadership
- Titus 1:5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you--
- Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
- Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
- Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- Great tension between universal and local. 2nd Corinthians 1:1 to the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia. Same in 1st Corinthians 1:2 where he greets "to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours."
- Paul specifically encourages churches to help each other: He himself sponsored an offering to help poor believers in another church (Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10); he requested prayer for those in other churches (1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1); he was sent out as a missionary from

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one church to start others (Acts 13:1–3); and he received the “right hand of fellowship” from another group of members (Gal. 2:9 NIV). In addition, there is the overall duty to manifest love to the brethren of other churches (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16).

References to Local Church Functions

- The Congregation Screened Their Own Membership 1Tim 5:9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,
- The Congregation Chose Their Leaders Acts 6:2-6 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.
- The Congregation Exercised Church Discipline 1st Corinthians 5:1-5, 2nd Corinthians 2:6-7
- The Congregation Commissioned Missionaries. Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
- The Congregation Settled Its Difficult Matters 1st Corinthians 6:1-5
- The Congregation decided whom to send to conferences Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
- The Congregation decided to cooperate with aid to others 2nd Corinthians 8:8-19 (although Paul may have been able to “command” them to participate)

Early Church Fathers on The Church

Ignatius (d. c. 110)

- “The disciples were called Christians at Antioch, when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church” (EIM, 10).
- “The Lord Jesus Christ ... according to His own will, has firmly established His Church upon a rock, by a spiritual building, not made with hands, against which the winds and the floods have beaten, yet have not been able to overthrow.... There is but ... one Church which the holy apostles established from one end of the earth to the

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other by the blood of Christ, and by their own sweat and toil." (EIP, 1, 5)

- "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" (EIS, 8).

Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165)

- Therefore these words testify explicitly that He is witnessed to by Him who established these things, as deserving to be worshiped, as God and as Christ.... It thus addresses the church which has sprung from His name and partakes of His name (for we are all called Christians). (DJ, 63)
- "The word of God speaks to those who believe in Him as being one soul, and one synagogue, and one church" (DJ, 63).

Irenaeus (c. 125–c. 202)

- "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith" (AH, 1.10.1).
- "The Universal Church ... through the whole world has received this tradition from the apostles" (ibid., 2.9.1).
- "Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church" (ibid., 3.1.1).
- "[The Church] is the synagogue of God, which God—that is, the Son Himself—has gathered by Himself" (ibid., 3.6.1).
- "The Church throughout all the world, having its origin firm from the apostles, perseveres in one and the same opinion with regard to God and His Son" (ibid., 3.12.7).
- "Christ was also, in a strange country, to generate the twelve-pillared foundation of the Church" (ibid., 4.21.3).
- "The Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world" (AH, 1.10.3).
- "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church" (ibid., 3.24.1).

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Tertullian (c. 155–c. 225)

- “Therefore the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (founded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring)” (PAH, 20).
- “His Holy Spirit ... builds the church, which is indeed the temple, and household and city of God” (FBAM, 3.23).
- “[Jesus] was born the God-man who was to build the church according to the Father’s will” (ibid., 4.13).
- “We have one faith, one God, the same Christ, the same hope, the same baptismal sacraments; let me say it once for all, we are one Church” (OVV, 2).
- “The churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (founded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring)” (PAH, 20).