

Finding our fit in the Body of Christ

Every believer has a unique God given plan for their life – As we flow in God's plan for our life, we help others to fulfil God's plan for their lives and help to see God's Kingdom expanded here on earth



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

- We all as Christians have an important role to play in the Body of Christ



- God will connect us with other believers in a local church fellowship to help us to flow in God's gifts and calling for our life
- I will begin by looking at four passages of Scripture and their significance in relation to fulfilling God's plan for our life

i) God calls certain Christians into the five-fold ministry to help equip and build up all believers to be effective in fulfilling God's plan for their lives – The five ministry offices are gifts that Christ gave for the nurture and equipping of His church

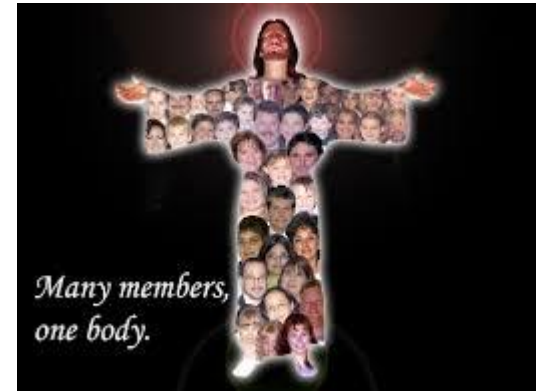
The Apostle Paul wrote, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” **(Ephesians 4:11-13)**



ii) God has placed every believer in the Body of Christ just as He has chosen – We just need to know as believers our fit in the Body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” **(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)**

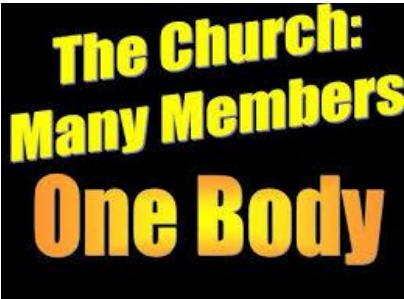


“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

“And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

(1 Corinthians 12:14-17)



**The Church:
Many Members
One Body**

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” **(1 Corinthians 12:18-22)**



“And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” **(1 Corinthians 12:23-25)**

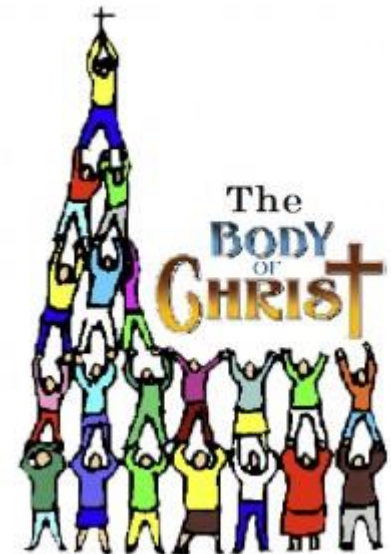


“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”


(1 Corinthians 12:26)

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually...”

(1 Corinthians 12:27)



iii) All believers are given a unique mix of spiritual gifts to fulfil God's plan for their life

- Jesus Himself gives to some believers one or more of the five-fold ministry gifts  Spiritual Gifts
- The Holy Spirit distributes to believers who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit as He wills the gifts of the Spirit (There are nine gifts of the Spirit)
- There are other unique gifts that believers can have such as **helps and administrations** that are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and other gifts that are sometimes referred to as the Father's creational gifts in Romans 12:6-8

iv) The importance of all that we do when using our gifts being motivated by genuine LOVE

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” **(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)**



In the book of Romans the Apostle Paul wrote on the importance of using our spiritual gifts.

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” **(Romans 12:3)**



“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” **(Romans 12:4-5)**

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **(Romans 12:6-8)**

Working together as a team we can make a great difference as a fellowship of believers in our local community and BEYOND



Together

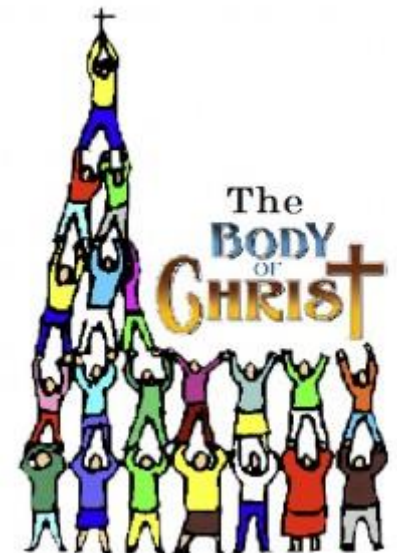
Everyone

Adds to

Making a local church a community
and world changing church



- It is good to emphasise again that the church is not the building but the people that gather together – The living stones
- So when we go our respective ways at the end of each fellowship meeting, we take the goodness of God and the message of the gospel into our respective workplaces, neighbourhoods and friendship and family circles.



- Being part of a HEALTHY team (local church fellowship) and being connected to ministry teams within the fellowship helps us to receive ENCOURAGEMENT and SUPPORT from others
- **Being part of a team also helps us to gain greater courage to fulfil our God given destiny as we receive encouragement from others**
- There is a greater synergy when we do things together with other people – One will put a thousand to flight but two can put ten thousand to flight



- As healthy teams and local church fellowships have the potential to make such a great difference in our world, I will now be looking at some aspects of what it takes to have a:
 - i. **healthy local church fellowship and**
 - ii. **strong ministry teams in our churches**



1) The importance of love and encouragement in our teams and church fellowship

- People thrive in an atmosphere of love and encouragement
- For this reason we need to purposely look to creating a culture of love and acceptance in our teams and church
- This needs to be a priority for all team members



A primary reason why we gather together as believers is to love and encourage one another to be all that God has planned for our lives

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)



The bible is full of wisdom that can help us to create an atmosphere of love and acceptance in which all team members can receive great encouragement

In the book of Proverbs we read,



“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!” (Proverbs 15:23)

We need to purposely look for opportunities to speak words of encouragement into the lives of others

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

(Philippians 2:3)



Preferring others over ourselves helps to create an atmosphere of genuine love and acceptance within our church fellowships and ministry teams

Jesus Himself said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” **(Matthew 7:1-5)**



We must ALL refuse to be fault finding and continually critical and judgemental about others – WE ARE ALL WORKS IN PROGRESS

- We need to continually look for the best in others
 - Every person is so precious to God
- Rather than exposing the faults in others we need to be actively helping those who may be struggling to become all that God has planned for their life



The Apostle Peter wrote,

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” (1 Peter 4:7-9)

- The Apostle Paul outlined what true love really was – It is this type of love that will help to create healthy teams and church fellowships.



The Apostle Paul wrote

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” **(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)**

2) That the DNA of the church fellowship (or team) is one of serving others

Jesus Himself said,

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. *Yet is shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.* And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - **just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**” *(Matthew 20:25-28)*





The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” **(1 Corinthians 14:12)**

It is so important that we use our spiritual gifts to help serve and to build up the Body of Christ

The Apostle Paul also wrote,



“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:” **(1 Corinthians 12:4-7)**

3) That the team or church fellowship has a clear God given vision and purpose

- In the secular world corporations have vision statements
- As a church we too need to have a clear shared vision – The “why we meet together” with other Christians throughout the week. The “why we exist” as a church here in Blacktown
- Having a clear God given vision for our church helps in the prayerful planning of what meetings to run and what ministry initiatives to adopt



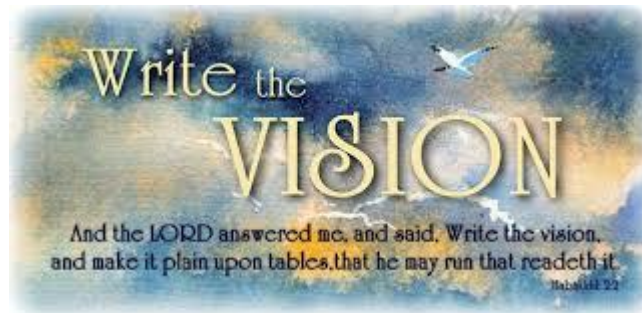
The reason that we exist here as a church in Blacktown and meet together is:

Write the vision,
and make it plain,
so that he
who reads it
may
run.
Habakkuk 2:2

- i. To help bring God's love into our city and to encourage those in our church to share the love of Christ and the gospel message with those in our community and BEYOND
- ii. To help create loving Christian community both within our church meetings and in our community
- iii. To help encourage all believers to become **mature disciples who fulfil God's destiny and plan for their lives**

The Overall Vision for our church here in Blacktown is:

“To be an evangelism outreach, disciple making, training and sending focused church which has a heart to see the community transformed by the love of Jesus Christ.”

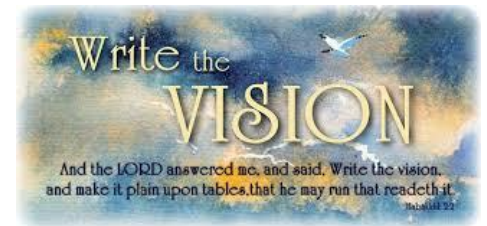


THE CORE OBJECTIVES FOR CHURCH OF HOPE ARE:

- i. To bring hope to those who live in the Blacktown community
- ii. To help bring Kingdom values into the community
- iii. To impact the community with the good news of the gospel



- iv. To provide a place of fellowship and belonging in which people can grow in their Christian faith
- v. To make mature disciples who will help to transform the community with the love of God **(Raising up small connect groups will be a key focus in 2017)**
- vi. To be a missions focused church, both locally and abroad, and
- vii. To be a training and sending church



4) The importance of team members being loyal and committed to one another and the vision of the team or church fellowship

- Each member needs to have a sense of commitment to and ownership of the vision of the team or church fellowship
- When we are planted in a local church fellowship, our life can make a great difference in the lives of many others as we flow in our own unique gifts and callings
- Often other people's destinies are linked to us faithfully being where God would have us planted



- Commitment to what God has called us to do and to being where He has called us to be is a great key to our lives bearing much fruit
- God will connect us with people of like vision who are part of God's unfolding plan for our life

The Psalmist wrote,

“Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing. **(Psalm 92:13-14)**



- Being planted in a local church fellowship helps to give us stability in our walk with the Lord and enables us to develop a support network

In the book of Proverbs we read,

**“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”
(Proverbs 11:14)**



- Being connected to the life of a healthy loving church fellowship also enables us to develop good and healthy friendships

5) That all believers minister in their area of gifting and flow in their own unique gifts and calling

- We are the most anointed and greatest blessing to others when we flow in our own unique gifts and calling



- For this reason we need to be sensitive to the leading of the Lord as to *what areas of ministry we are to focus on* in our walk with the Lord and what ministry roles that we are to take on

- We are most fruitful and the greatest blessing to the Body of Christ when we are flowing in the will of God for our life
- This is why the Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of knowing the will of God for our life.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” **(Ephesians 5:15-17)**



Jesus Himself said,

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:34)



It is as all believers work together in love and unity, flowing in their own individual unique gifts and callings, that the church makes a great difference in our world



The Apostle Paul wrote, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself **IN LOVE.” (Ephesians 4:16)**

6) That all those in our church fellowship and ministry teams have a heart to promote unity

- God commands a blessing where brethren dwell together in unity
- Where there is unity we see God's favour and blessing upon all that we do
- For this reason the Devil will continually try and sow strife and discord amongst Christians to DIVIDE and conquer. For this reason we need to purposely continually choose to strive for the unity in our Church fellowships and teams



The Psalmist wrote,

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; **For there the LORD commanded the blessing – Life forevermore.**” (Psalm 133:1-3)



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceable with all men.” (Romans 12:18)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”
(Romans 13:8)



- **A chain is only as strong as it's weakest link**
- So too a team is only as strong as it's weakest member. It only takes one person to introduce strife into our meetings to see an entire church fellowship or ministry team negatively impacted
- **For this reason every member of a church fellowship or ministry team needs to appreciate the importance of continually promoting unity amongst all of the members**

7) That we look out for and reach out to those who might be going through personal trials

- We all at times will go through struggles where we need the support and encouragement of other believers – We all need to be others focused
- We need to look at going out of our way at times to reach out to those in our fellowship who may be going through trials and challenges
- Jesus Himself went out of His way to reach out to the woman at Samaria who had experienced five broken marriages (John Chapter Four)



Jesus clearly emphasised the importance of reaching out to the lost and hurting and the importance of caring for the individual in the Parable of the Lost Sheep.



Jesus said, “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which is lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. **(Luke 15:4-7)**

8) As a team (church fellowship) we need to have a shared belief that with God's hand of favour upon our church that we can help to bring transformation to our community

- When we look at the early church multitudes came to faith and daily people were added to the church **(Acts 4:32) (Acts 2:46-47)**
- Miracles were common place – As believers we can lay hands on the sick in the Name of Jesus and believe for the same miracles today **(Mark 16:17-18)**
- We need to believe in the power of the message of the gospel to transform lives in our community



- We see the power of the gospel message to transform communities when we look at Philip preaching in Samaria in the book of Acts.



“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralysed and lame were healed. AND THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY” **(Acts 8:4-8)**

WE ALL HAVE A MISSION FIELD

9) That every church (team) member has a wholehearted commitment to doing what God has called them to do



- In the sports arena it is when all team members give their best and work together that we see a team distinguishing itself and winning
- On the other hand if several team members fail to give their best the team will invariably lose
- In Christian circles we all need one another – Working together in unity we can make a great difference in our world for eternity

- Just believe that your life can make a great difference in the lives of many if you simply commit to wholeheartedly following God's plan for your life



- It is in pursuing God's plan for our life that we are the greatest blessing to others and that we experience the life and life more abundantly that Jesus spoke of (John 10:10)
- It is when all members of a local church have a commitment to living for the Lord that they begin to see God transforming their community

The Apostle Paul,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” **(1 Corinthians 15:58)**

AND



10) A healthy church fellowship or ministry team, will see its members growing spiritually mature and flourishing in their gifts and callings



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. **(Ephesians 5:17-21)**

- With the world getting more and more lawless, how important it is that our church fellowship meetings *help all believers to grow strong in their walk with the Lord* so that they can:

- i) fulfil God's plan for their life, and
- ii) finish their Christian walk strongly



- Encouraging all Christians to grow strong in their faith is crucial, especially when we look at the words of Jesus in relation to the times that we are now living in. Jesus Himself said,

Jesus Himself said, “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13)