

What is a church?

- The church is the body of Christ, and the local church is the body of Christ manifesting in one place and all saints are living members of the body;
- The church has the life of Christ, such life has organic orders;
- A healthy church is a living body of Christ in beautiful and sweet orders;
- In a church, all saints fulfill their functions in such orders, and the church will be built up organically and healthily.

Please refer to the Bible homework “church”

1st Corinthian 12: 13-27

we are the body of Christ and all living members can function

- 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.
- 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.
- 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?
- 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.
- 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?
- 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.
- 21 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.”
- 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
- 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,
- 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,
- 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
- 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
- 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Three organic orders in a church

1. Order in Church administration,
2. Order in life of Christ,
3. Order in burdens of Christ.

Order in Church administration

Every local church is administratively led by the elders and is under their overseeing. Therefore, the local church has its administration and administrative order.

Acts 20:17 Now from Miletus he (Paul) sent to **Ephesus** and called the **elders of the church** to come to him.

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.

Order in Church administration

- Every local church is led by the elders and is under their governance. Therefore, the local church has its administration and administrative order.
- There are only two administrative positions in the church: one is to be **a deacon** and the other is to be **an elder (overseer)**.
- The elders were revealed by the Holy Spirit and **appointed by the apostles**.

Titus 1:5 This is why I (Paul) left you (Timothy) in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and **appoint elders in every town as I directed you.**

Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the **overseers** and **deacons (Acts 6:3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men (deacons)** of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.)

What are the constitutions of an apostle?

- Manifested gospel preaching (proclaiming and holding Christ as the preeminent one in the universe);
- Raising up many churches (building up the churches as the process and goal);
- Appointing elders (having insights of the work of the Spirit on men);
- Cutting straight the word of truth (having fresh and rich revelations and visions, and the constitution of the truth);
- Perfecting the saints in the churches (having maturity in life of Christ);
- Leading the churches into the fellowship of the oneness in the Body of Christ.

Who is an apostle of a church? (An example: Church in Corinth)

1st Cor. 4:15 For though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

1st Cor. 9:2 If to others I am not an apostle, yet surely I am to you; for you in the Lord are the seal of my apostleship.

1st Cor. 4:15 and 9:2 indicated that Paul was an apostle to the church in Corinth, because he firstly preached gospel in Corinth to raise up the saints there instead of just being a teacher.

How do we learn from an apostle?

2nd Tim. 3:10 You (**Timothy**), however, have followed my (**Paul**) **teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,**

2nd Tim. 3:11 **my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me** at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Order in life of Christ

- The essence and the content of the church is Christ as life. The saints have different levels of subjective experience of Christ, different levels of access and use, and different constitutions of richness, which form the order of life.
- The order of life, in principle, is higher than the order of administration.
- But no matter how high you are in life, you must abide in the administrative order.
- The mutual respect of these two orders bless much the church.

What is the level of life of Christ?

To live out of the life of Christ, the subjective knowledge and experience of the Lord Himself , the living word of the Lord, the organic church life and various burdens and services to people (children, teenagers, university, young working, families and older saints) including gospel preaching, accompanying and shepherding people, the germination of the spiritual companions, small and large church teams, pillar families and pillars, fellowship among the saints and churches in different languages, etc.

Three organic order in a church

- Who will lead the church? Administrative leaders. Who really leads the church? Life of Christ. Who really leads the operations of the church? Burdens.
- When the church needs to operate, those saints who have actual burdens, **have clearly defined burdens** and are readily prepared saints must rise up to become leaders, promoters, and main forces of the operation.
- Therefore, when the Holy Spirit rises up the true burdens, the order of administration and life must learn to respect and cooperate.

Order in burdens of Christ

- Therefore, the beauty of the church life lies in the orders of these three aspects. Moreover, the orders of these three aspects is mutually respectful, obedient and coordinated with each other.
- We should learn not to passively wait for the "leadership" or "command" of the "older brothers", but to actively seek and receive fresh burdens in the Lord.
- Not "arranged" but "the Lord clearly told us and/or me
“ with clear written plans and associated pros and cons.

Order in burdens of Christ

- The direction of the church is linked to the administrative order-elders;
- The stability of the church is connected to the corporate life level of the saints;
- The vitality of the church is connected with the burdened saints;
- To know the needs of the saints (to ask questions is crucial) will produce burdens;
- To know the word of the Lord (revelations and visions) (to ask questions is crucial) is the source and drive of the burdens;
- Any burden must come after the many prayers and fellowship among the saints (companions, teams and church),
- Creativity will lead the burden to be fresh and energetic.
- Effective burdens must be with a clear and detailed written plan together with its initial pros and cons analyses.

What is a burden?

There is a load coming from the Lord on me. This load makes me feel that if this burden is not realized, I will not be in peace. If a burden comes to me, I am willing to pay high price to realize this burden.

Such a burden can be prayers in fixed time every day, Bible studies in groups, gospel preaching every week, accompanying and shepherding people weekly, children, young people, university age services, fruitful church gatherings, church outings, hymn singings, etc.

Order in burdens of Christ

What is a proper burden?

1. The goal is to advance the testimony of the church,
2. The living is in the church life,
3. The operation is for the benefits of the saints,
4. The burden produces profitable “fields” for the saints, in particular young, to grow.

Order in burdens of Christ

How to fulfill a burden?

1. Have prayers and fellowship with the companions, teams, the elder saints, and the elders;
2. Search and find companions who have the same burden,
3. Write down a written plan of operations and list pros and cons, and schedule, after the prayers and fellowship and some period of operations, the written plan may be updated,
4. Recruit relatively young saints to join.

Order in burdens of Christ

In the process to prepare and operate a burden, please pay attention to

1. People is more important than the burdened “operation thing”;
2. Spiritual means (prayers and fellowship) are more important than the methods and solutions;
3. To experience and gain Christ in the process is more important than the “results”;
4. To be built up together is more important than the operation methods.

Order in burdens of Christ

There are many “fields” in the church life, and we should cherish them. It is an alarm if we consider each of these “fields” being one “thing” to do. Please renew our concept on this.

Any of these “field” is in fact a spiritual growth garden. One uses this “field” to pursue, one uses this “field” to group brothers and/or sisters, and one uses this “field” to accompany and shepherd people. Then the saints in the church will grow, love and support one another. In this way, the church life will become living and the church will become vital.

Order in burdens of Christ

What will be the results of a burden?

1. The saints are grouped together in love via the operations in this burden,
2. It will bless the church or the churches in the advancement of its testimony including the growth of life. Many saints, in particular young, being served by the burden have more oral or written testimonies to themselves and/or to the saints around them;
3. It will produce more burdened saints and new “fields” may be produced for the burdened saints.

Order in burdens of Christ

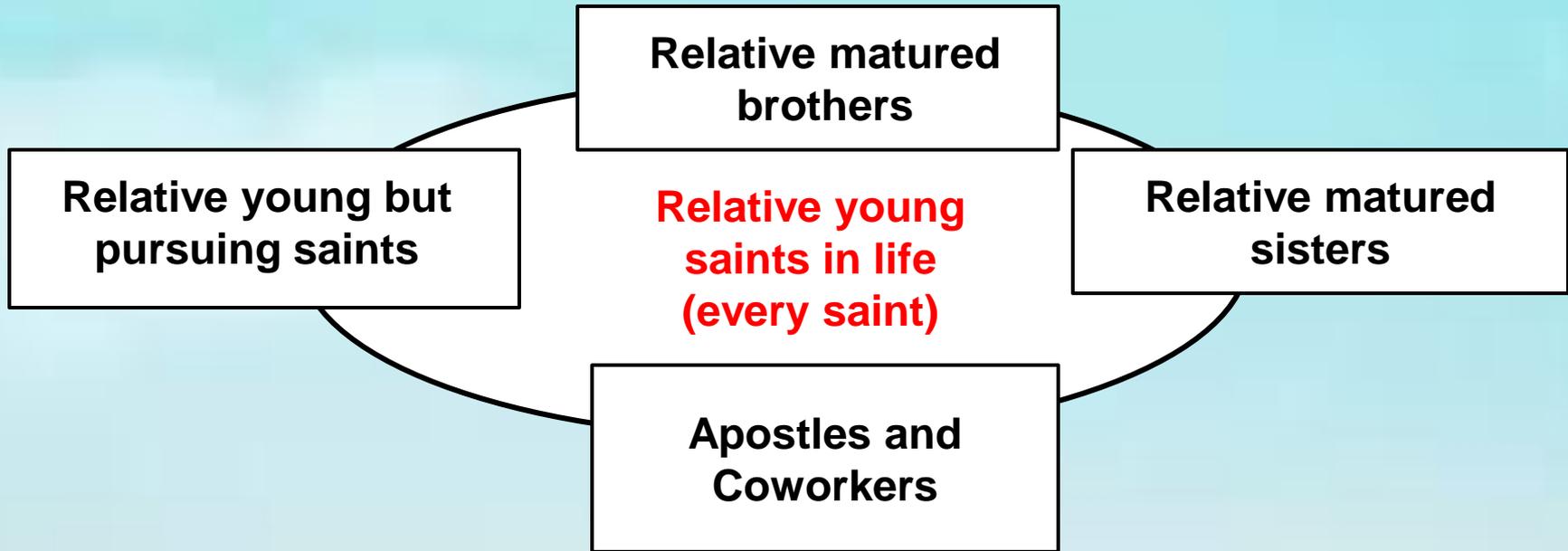
We can all tell the Lord: "Lord, I want to be a healthy and functional member of the body of Christ in the church! I may not have a portion in the church administration, and may not be constituted of much life of Christ, but I can have a burden! I can continue to receive from the burden from the Lord! I can execute my burden properly with the church teams! I can carry out my burden together with constant fellowship with the saints!

I refuse to become spiritually old, refuse to withdraw in the church life, I desire to grow, and grow healthily in the church life via various burdens (mine or other team members' !"

Whether a church is much blessed and has vitality, it does

- **Not depend on** the number because number may decrease;
- **Not depend on** the preaching of the leading brothers, because they will become old in age and maybe spiritually;
- **Not depend on** the saints who always listen and submit themselves to the leading ones or the older ones in the church, because the operations may become stale and ineffective;
- **Depend on the number of the saints (no matter young or old, brothers or sisters) who have the fresh burdens from the Lord through much more prayers and fellowship among the saints including servants of the Lord.**

Any church needs to build up an organic service team to serve every saint



Apostles: To determine the breadth, length, height and depth of a healthy church.

Coworkers: To provide and support churches with the teachings and fellowship of the apostles.

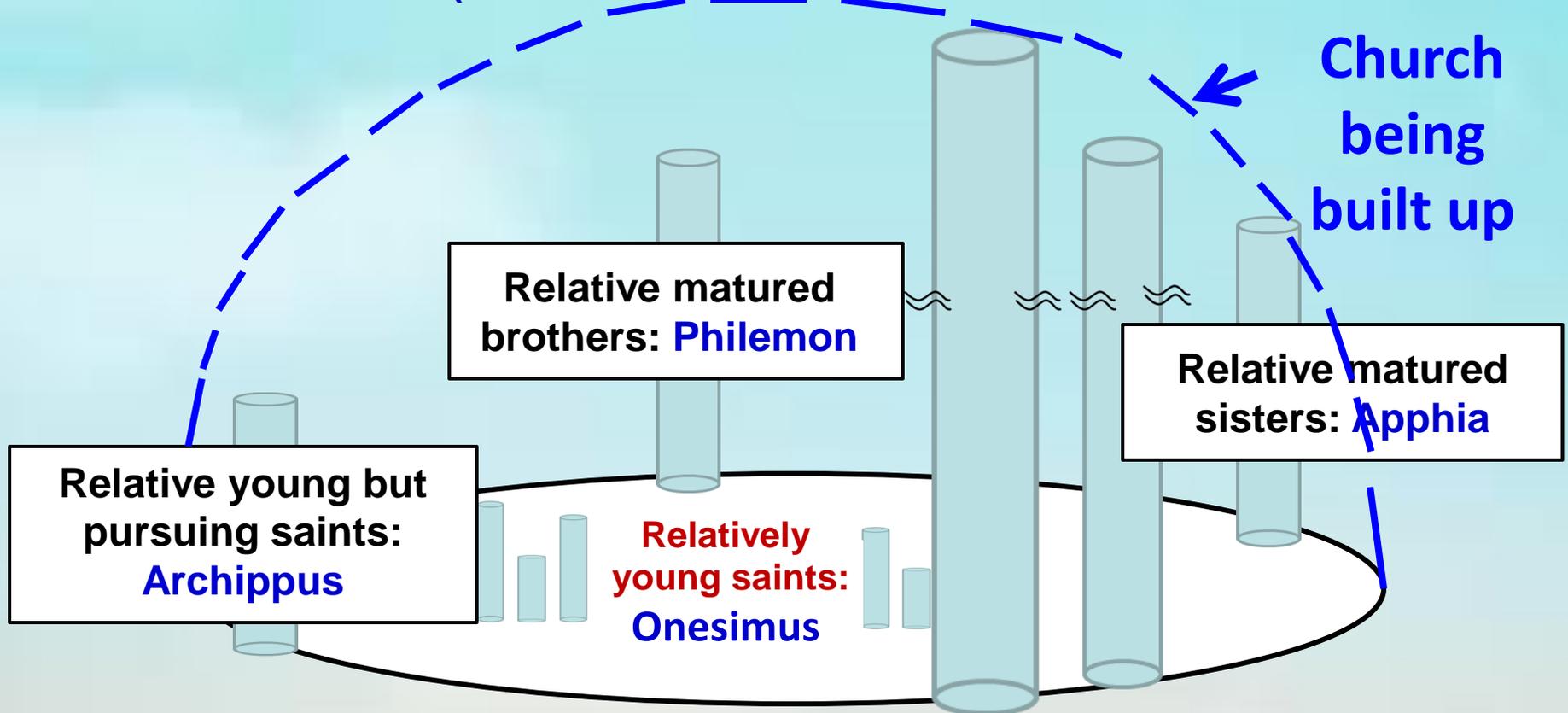
Relatively matured brothers: to fellowship with apostles and coworkers and obtain the fresh visions and revelations from the Lord so as to lead the church, and also fellowship with the nearby churches.

Relatively matured sisters: to support the relatively matured brothers to lead and operate the church .

Relatively young but pursuing saints: to be willing to grow in Christ life and fulfill the ministry received from the Lord to serve the saints.

Relative young saints in Christ life: every saint in the church life。 They are loved and shepherded by the organic service team (mentioned above), and then grow in Christ life.

An example of an organic service team (pillars) in a church (Church in Colossae) from the book of Philemon



The growth (length, breadth, height and depth) of life and ministries of the saints are closely related to the intimacy among this organic service team members and the degree of abiding in the teachings and fellowship of the servants of the Lord.

Please refer to the Bible homework “to accompany and shepherd saints”