



Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

First and foremost, we pray that you and your family are doing well and that the God of hope is filling you with all joy and peace, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you are overflowing with hope. (Romans 15:13)

The month of August has flown by and much has taken place at Stanwood, as you may already know. If you recall our letter in July, the elder's were led to turn our focus on the local church body and it's membership. We asked, if it was in your capacities, to join us throughout the month of August. We opened the Word for five Sundays and gleaned from the truth of the New Testament church and it's structure. We would like to

say that the Spirit has brought clarity and purpose to our salvation, calling, and gathering as a people of God. The last Sunday, August 30th, each person over 18 years of age that represented the current membership of Stanwood was offered an opportunity. This was an opportunity to recommit themselves. This 'recommittal service' included scriptural grounding for membership in a local body, a time of questions to be vocally answered before the congregation, an opportunity to sign a newly updated Member Log, and prayer from the elder leadership. You are receiving this letter because we care about your walk with Jesus Christ and your involvement in His church. You (and possibly someone in your family) are listed as a 'member' of Stanwood Community Church. We would like to share our understanding of membership in a church and give you the same opportunity to recommit yourself to Stanwood.

Below you will find outlined sermon notes from each Sunday in August. This is an effort to show you where we have traveled in this short journey. We remind you that all of the sermons are also posted online at stanwoodchurch.org. It is best to follow the notes along with the sermons. If you are unable to access the Internet, please call Gail Combs in the office (330-832-6000) to request a CD free of charge. Secondly, you will find a page containing the questions asked of all members who desire to recommit themselves to Stanwood as their local church body. Please review these carefully and pray over this decision. Our desire is that we are actively gathering together as a local body in submission to Christ and one-another to carry out His renewing work in a broken world. This is no small task and therefore no small decision. After contemplation and prayer, if you would like to recommit yourself to Stanwood as a member please sign, date, and **return the questionnaire by October 6th** (Envelope Provided)

If you have any questions or comments do not hesitate to contact our elders (Pastor Matt, Steve Mullins, Matt Frantz, Craig Hewitt, Broc Bidlack). You can call the office for contact information or send an email to stanwoodchurch@gmail.com or pastormatt.scc@gmail.com. If you feel that you have received this letter in error and that you are not a current member of Stanwood Community Church, then we'd like to make you aware of our New Member Class starting October 11th at 9:00 a.m. during our Sunday school hour. This is a great opportunity to gain clarity on the direction that Christ is leading Stanwood and commit to a local body of Christ-followers. May Christ be praised and may He *establish the work of our hands*.

The Elder leadership of Stanwood

August Sermon Notes

Sunday, August 2nd - The Gospel: Membership in the Universal Church

- This month is NOT:
 - A membership drive - A way to get tithe - A reprimand for lack of attendance - Pastor Matt's Agenda
- The cultural mindset on the Church continues to shift.
 - Many think the church is irrelevant in our current day. There is a growing perspective that views the church as hypocritical, judgmental, arrogant towards other religions, male-dominated, fundamental, homophobic, too political, etc.¹ The list could go on.
 - So where does that leave us? Should we talk about our church building, programs offered, reaching out to the community in new ways, hiring another pastor, or asking more people to serve? NO, that is not even close to where we should start.
- We start with the foundation that has already been laid, Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- It doesn't matter how long you have been at Stanwood. It could be 50 years or 50 minutes. It doesn't matter the last name that you have or how long it's been in our member log. It doesn't matter what your great accomplishments are or your most horrible mistakes. The **ONLY** thing that matters is Jesus Christ in your life.
- Jesus Christ tells us:
 - He came to, "seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) & "Give life abundantly!" (John 10:10)
- **One should not even be concerned with local church membership if they have not first surrendered their life to Jesus Christ and accepted His lordship over their life.** If Jesus is not the cornerstone of our lives and the cornerstone of Stanwood Church then everything will fail. Before we can talk about the intricacies of church life we must ensure that Jesus Christ is at the core.
 - "To believe the gospel is not only to accept the awesome truths that **1)** God is holy, **2)** we are hopeless sinners, **3)** Christ died and rose again for sinners, and **4)** this great salvation is enjoyed by faith in Christ-but believing the gospel is also to treasure Jesus Christ as your unsearchable riches. What makes the Gospel is that it brings a person into the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of Jesus Christ." – John Piper
 - *For a concise and understandable explanation of accepting Christ, look up these references in the book of Romans in order. (6th book of the New Testament) – Rom. 3:10; 3:23; 5:12; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 10:13
 - Before you commit or recommit yourself to Stanwood you need to commit or recommit yourself to Christ!
- An altar call was given at the end of service and many came forward for prayer and to pour their hearts out to God.

Sunday, August 9th – "Christ, Baptism, & the Lord's Supper"

- How do we go from last week to this week? From the atoning work of Christ and the movement of the Spirit, to acts in the physical realm, with physical things, among flesh and blood of men & women?
 - We **MUST** realize that the physical realm has worth and is worth our day-to-day efforts. God cares about what we do with and in our bodies on this earth.
 - "For the believer, the universe is a sacramental place where everything, from the flash of lightning and the crash of thunder (Ps 29) to the industry of the ant (Prov 6:6), from the passionate embrace of a husband and wife (Eph 5:31-32), to the sun's slow arc through the sky (Ps 19), shows God's glory and love, and is further hallowed by Christ's own embodiment. As the beloved hymn sings, "He speaks to me everywhere."²
- **The World has a natural sacramentality.** All aspects of life are given an opportunity to glorify & praise God. They can point beyond themselves to their Creator. They have the potentiality of lighting up for us the mystery of God Himself. A sacramental potentiality is in virtually everything.
- Just because all things can be sacramental to our Lord, what makes Baptism & The Lord's Supper so unique or different? There is a difference between sacramental & sacraments
 - Sacrament – (Latin term sacramentum)
 - Oath of allegiance and obedience a soldier had for his commander

¹ Why We Love Church DeYoung & Kluck, Moody Publishers 2009.

² Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship, Vander Zee, IVP Academic, 2014.

- “A sacrament is “an outward sign by which the Lord seals to our consciences the promise of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we, in turn, attest our piety toward Him in the presence of the Lord and of His angels and before men.”³
- A sacrament is a particular created thing to which God attaches a word of promise, like the rainbow to Noah. **There are two gospel sacraments, baptism & the Lord’s Supper.**
- A sacrament proclaims and seals divine forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, justification, and sanctification. Nothing other than Word, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are given this place by God as a means of grace.”⁴
- Baptism & The Lord’s Supper - **Visible forms of invisible grace**
 - “In our baptism God unites us with Christ, human and divine, dead and risen, ascended and sitting at God’s right hand. In the Lord’s supper, Christ feeds us with His glorious grace. Christ is the sacrament because there is nothing in them that is not already in Him.”⁵
 - Baptism
 - Baptism Is Ordained by the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - Baptism Expresses Union with Christ (Romans 6:3-4)
 - “In the wider context of Romans, I think it would be a mistake to say that water-baptism is the means of our being united to Christ. In Romans faith is the means by which we are united to Christ and justified. But we *show* this faith—we *say* this faith and *signify* this faith and *symbolize* this faith—with the act of baptism. Faith unites to Christ; baptism symbolizes the union.” – John Piper
 - Baptism Is Immersion in Water but let’s not get too caught up the mode!
 - Baptism Is for Believers Only (Colossians 2:11-12 & Galatians 3:26,27)
 - The Lord’s Supper
 - Proclamation (1 Corinthians 11:26)
 - Remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25)
 - Unification for those who Believe (John 6:35 & 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

August 16th – “The Local Church”⁶

- The local church is NOT
 - A building
 - “Let’s go to church.” “I can’t walk into the doors of a church or I might get struck by lightning.” Don’t say that in church.” “I can’t act this way in church.” ALL refer to a physical building
 - 1 Corinthians 3:16,17 - Ephesians 1:22,23 - Ephesians 2:19-22
 - Seeing the church as a building begins to deteriorate discipleship. It becomes the sole place where you “do church.” You become detached from the identifying truths that call you to action. You may invite someone to church so that someone else can tell him or her the gospel and their need for it.
 - We compartmentalize of faith attached to location. We look at Sunday as the totality of the Church experience. When we see Church as a building or place, our relationship with God tends to be something that only really takes place in that particular location. It’s easy to follow Christ in a place where everyone around you thinks you should follow Christ.⁷
 - A Club / Order / Lodge (The Moose, K of C, Elk Club, Boys & Girls, Brookside, etc.)
 - The Club Mentality
 - A Service Provider
 - Walking into the doors on a Sunday morning with the thought of, “what do ‘they’ have for me today?”
 - Volunteer Opportunity
 - Express love to the Father at one’s will and leisure

³Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship, Vander Zee, IVP Academic, 2014.

⁴Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship, Vander Zee, IVP Academic, 2014.

⁵(p.47 Vander Zee [John Macquarrie])

⁶Much credit is due to Jonathan Leeman & his book *Church Membership* (Given to the elders and deacons weeks ago)

⁷Read more at <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/when-we-think-church-building#Q9A7791W6mMwzbST.99>

- All this leaves us with what we might call a *locale anemia*. “To feel at home in a place,” writes Wendell Berry, “you have to have some prospect of staying there” — which explains part of our problem. It’s hard to feel committed to any *here* because it’s so insanely easy to go *there*, or there or there or there. And many of us have. Some estimates claim, one author says, that the average American moves fourteen times throughout his or her life. We’re homesick then. We’re suffering from a loss of headquarters, and without doubt, it’s hard to calculate the “what” and “how” of mission if we lack a sense of where we are.
- Ultimately each of these things stems from a general assumption that we have the authority to conduct our own Christian lives. This gets to the deeper & broader issue of a basic assumption that we are our own authority. That each of us individually has the power to conduct our own Christian lives.
 - Let me REMIND YOU of the GOSPEL you were called to Christian
 - Galatians 2:20-21 – “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Phil. 3:7-11)
 - Let me ask you a question this morning, “Who do you belong to?”
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.”
 - Our biblical understanding of church and subsequent action is directly related to our comprehension of the redemptive work of Christ in our lives and the complete surrender of His Gospel.
- So... what is Church – *ekklesia*
 - *Ek* – out of, from, by, away from
 - *kaleo* - to call, to call aloud, utter in a loud voice, to invite
 - We have been ‘called out to assemble’ as a people.
- What are we called out of?
 - The World
 - John 15:18-19 - “but I chose you out of the world”
 - 1 Peter 2:9a - “But you are a chosen race, a people for His own possession...”
 - One of the key distinctions of the church is to NOT look/act/live as the world.
- What are we called to?
 - Submit to Christ as our head (Colossians 1:17-18 – “The head of the Body”)
 - Gather as a local people United by the Spirit in the body of Peace
 - For example, Acts 11:22 refers to the "church in Jerusalem," 1 Corinthians 1:2 refers to the "church of God which is at Corinth," 1 Thessalonians is addressed (in 1:1) "to the church of the Thessalonians," and so on. 1 Corinthians 16:19 says, "The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord." In Colossians 4:15 Paul sends greetings "to Nympha and the church in her house." And Paul's letter to Philemon is also addressed to "the church in your house."
 - Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world (Matthew 28:18-20 – “make Disciples”)
 - “These are people of places, and the gospel must go to them. And the aim of the gospel *going* to them — the aim of discipleship — isn’t to sign people up for an amorphous club that shares theology and faith.” Jonathan Parnell (Desiringgod.org)
 - **THE CHURCH IS**
 - **A local church is a gathered group of confessing (Baptizing) believers in Jesus Christ striving to live consistent lives of worship to God under the guidance of biblically appointed leaders, nourished from the Word, and living out unity in celebrating the Lord's Supper and proclaiming the gospel in which they have life.**
- What does the church do?
 - **Worships** (1 Chronicles 29:20)
 - **Celebrates in the Sacraments** (Last Week)
 - **Proclaims the gospel** (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:15, 4:2)
 - **Preserves the gospel** (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:9)
 - **Displays the gospel.** (Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 12:12-26)

August 23rd: “Local Church Leadership”

- Terms used in the local church context
 - Disciples, Brothers, Saints, Elders & Deacons
- Elders (Meaning)
 - Episkopos
 - An Overseer, bishop (Acts 20:28)
 - See over or watch over – Refers to the position of spiritual AUTHORITY
 - Presbyteros (1 Peter 5:1 & Acts 20)
 - Priest is a short form of presbyter
 - Refers to the position of spiritual MATURITY
 - Poimean (1 Peter 5:2 & Ephesians 4:11)
 - Shepherd / Pastor
 - Refers to a position of spiritual RESPONSIBILITY
- ALL refer to the same function
 - John Piper (“Biblical Eldership”)
 - “Elder” and “pastor” are not two different offices. They are simply two different words for the same office. He gives three reasons. First, in Acts 20:28, elders are encouraged in the “pastoral” duties of overseeing and shepherding. Second, in 1 Peter 5:1–2, elders are exhorted to “shepherd” the flock of God that is in their charge, which is the role of a pastor. Third, in Ephesians 4:11, the one time that the word pastor occurs in the NT, pastors are treated as one group with teachers. This suggests that the chief role of the pastor is to feed the flock through teaching, which is a primary role of elders (Titus 1:9). Hence, the NT seems to indicate that “pastor” is another name for “elder.” An elder is a pastor, and a pastor is an elder.⁸
- Elders (Qualification) 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1
 - Not a matter of giftedness but character!
 - About Service not status
- Elders (Function)
 - Speak Truth, Call Out, convict, speak truth, DON’T do it all! (Acts 6:2,3)
 - “Elders lead the church [1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1–2], teach and preach the Word [1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9], protect the church from false teachers [Acts 20:17, 28–31], exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13–17; Titus 1:9], visit the sick and pray [James 5:14; Acts 6:4], and judge doctrinal issues [Acts 15:6]. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church.”⁹
- Application
 - As the Leadership goes, so goes the church
 - The church cannot go any further than it’s Leadership!!
 - The kind of dad & mom the family has is as far as the family goes!
 - Who are you allowing to speak into your life in a guiding way?
- DEACONS (Meaning)
 - The word "deacon" comes from the Greek word *diakonos*. It usually has the general meaning, "servant," in a broad range of contexts. (John 2:5, 9)
- Deacons (Qualification) 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1
 - Not a matter of giftedness but character!
 - About Service not status
- Deacons (Function)
 - Matthew 20:26 - Whoever would be great among you must be your *servant*
 - Jesus came to *serve* not be served (Matthew 20:28)
 - Therefore he taught that a good leader is one who *serves* (Luke 22:26)
 - Jesus said that if anyone *serves* him, the Father would honor him (John 12:26).

⁸ The Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith - Revised November 11, 2003

- But there is a strong tendency of this verb (*diakoneo*) to refer to the kind of serving that involves very practical acts of supplying material needs for the church
 - If the church is not a building but a people and the deacons are to serve the church, then it would only make sense that the deacons are to serve the committed and submitted people of a congregation.
- Matthew 25:44 - hunger, thirst, alienation, nakedness, sickness, imprisonment. That would imply that the basic notion of "serving" in the sense of being a deacon is to help meet needs for: Food, Water, Welcome (acceptance and hospitality), Clothing, Health, and emergency situations.
- Women as deacons at Stanwood Community Church
 - The Greek word for deacon can be masculine or feminine in the same form.
 - In the middle of the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 Paul says, "The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things." As your pastor, I hold that this is simply a transition to those women who are holding positions of service in the church have a high standard to be held to as well.
 - The deacons were distinguished from the elders in that they were not the governing body in the church nor were they charged with the duty of authoritative teaching. So the role of deacon seems not to involve anything that Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:12 (or anywhere else) which is inappropriate for women to perform in the church.
 - In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is called a deacon.
 - It appears then that the role of deacon is of such a nature that nothing stands in the way of women's full participation in it. Within the deaconate itself, the way the men and women relate to each other would be guided by the sense of appropriateness, growing out of the Biblical teaching of male and female complementarity. – John Piper
 - Please contact Pastor Matt with any other concerns or questions regarding this issue.

August 30th – “Local Church Membership”

- “There has never been anything like the Body of Christ.”¹⁰ We can see transferrable concepts, but there is no exact comparison to the local church in this world. Scripture is our only true guide.
- We all have a desire to belong and feel a need to be a part of something bigger than ourselves (‘in the know’)
 - This is expressed in social media, sports teams, gossip, vocational identity, etc. ALL of these efforts combined can never fulfill the longing of the human soul. The soul is satisfied in Christ alone and belonging to Him is felt, expressed, and lived out in the local church.
- 1 Corinthians 12:14-20
 - Church membership is seen in the metaphor of the *body*. Just as we have physical bodies with many *members*, so too is the body of Christ a compilation of many members in One Body. (v. 12)
 - To be in Christ is to have a place in His body. Not just a place, but an active role to play.
 - There is no neutrality in the Body of Christ. **A passive representative of Jesus Christ is one of the most detrimental things to the Kingdom of God. A passive member is a paralyzing member.**
 - Being a member of a local church is not simply having friends in the congregation. Many people have left churches because they have not gained friends. There is a much greater depth in the family of God than just finding someone who has the same interests as you do. Friendship will come, but it isn’t to be the sole reason to be in the life of Stanwood. Our relationship in Christ is much greater than friendship.
 - No son or daughter of God can ever say, “There is not a place for me in the body”
 - God’s children are never on an island! The Christian call is not to individualism.
 - Stop trying to be the body when you are just a finger. You cannot do it all!
 - Don’t play the comparison game!
 - “I can’t do what he/she does.” “I wish that I could do what they do.”
 - That might be the function that God has given that person in our body and not you.
 - Don’t force your service in an area of Stanwood either
 - “No one else will do it”
 - I have done (Blank) for a certain amount of years, I *must* continue on.

¹⁰ Body Dynamics – John MacArthur, Victor Books 1982, p.17

- You quite possibly are limiting a brother or sister who is gifted to serve in this capacity.
 - Never say that you *have* to fulfill a role. In doing so you place yourself as the head of the body and ultimately are saying, “God cannot do this without me.”
- Membership in the local body automatically means that you will be alongside of people that would not naturally be your friends. Regardless of differing opinions, giftedness, or mentalities we can gather at the table (Lord’s Supper) in the unity of Jesus Christ.
- Romans 12:1-5
 - Submission in the local body of Christ works when every member humbles himself/herself.
 - Humility is a necessity to the local body of Christ and essential for every member.
 - “He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial. God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own laws, and judges the brethren and God himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of the brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself. God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients. We thank God for giving us brethren who live by his call, by his forgiveness, and his promise. We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what he does give us daily.¹¹
- Membership is about a church taking specific responsibility for you and you taking responsibility for a church.
- **Membership Matters Because:**
 - The Body of Jesus Christ is essential to this world
 - It is Biblically Founded
 - It is how you can represent Jesus Christ in a local body of believers
 - It is how you can serve other Christians & love
 - It communicates to church leadership that you are committed
 - It enables us to grow (Eph. 4:11)
 - It enables discipline to take place (Matthew 18:15-20)
- **At this time in the Service Pastor Matt asked current members to stand. *Please see Recommittal Sheet

¹¹ *Life Together* Dietrich Bonhoeffer HarperOne, 2009

This Recombitment is for:

- Those 18 years of age and older
 - Pastor Matt and Pastor Nate are working through a means to bring our youth into membership at the culmination of their high school career.
- Those that currently consider themselves members of Stanwood
 - Even if you took a class, talked with a pastor, or transferred your membership, this is for you.
- If you are unsure if you are currently a member or unsure of making this decision, please wait.
 - October 11th starts a new member class during the Sunday school hour that the elders and Pastor Matt will be leading. Please let us know if you plan on attending.
- Each individual member of Stanwood.
 - Husbands & wives cannot do this for each other.
 - Families cannot do this under a single representative.
- If you consider yourself a current member, then we *implore you* to reaffirm your faith and commitment to the Body of Christ.

Member Recombitment to Stanwood Community Church

First Name _____ Last Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Cell Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

*Please place your initials at the end of each question in affirmation, sign and date, and return in the provided envelope.

1. Do you this day confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, giving you forgiveness of your sins and a new life? I Do _____
2. Do you this day confess that God the Father has adopted you into His universal (Church) body, but also called you as a member of the local Body called Stanwood Community Church?
I Do _____
3. Do you this day wholeheartedly support the doctrinal positions of the church as outlined in the Constitution? (See Attached) I Do _____
4. Do you this day resolve, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in humility among your brothers and sisters at Stanwood Community Church? I Do _____
5. Do you promise to submit yourself to the God-given leaders (Elders & Deacons) of Stanwood Community Church to follow their direction and vision? I Do _____
6. Do you this day resolve to support Stanwood in consistent prayer, consistent worship, consistent attendance, and consistent tithe to the best of your ability? I Do _____
7. Do you promise to actively serve in your God-ordained capacity as a member of Stanwood Community Church? I Do _____
8. Do you promise to preserve and proclaim the Gospel as the pillar of Truth in this community?
I Do _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____