

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other material are also available on our local website at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Session 11-15 on the study of the book of Acts by Mr. Gary Deddo is now available on our local website under "Members Only". It is an excellent Bible Study. You are encouraged to take the time to study it.

Bible study: Thursday, March 11, 2021 7:30 PM. Continuing to study in the book of James.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org – under "Members Only" and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

- Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: "1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)

Prayers of Thanksgiving

- That Jesus is the head of his universal church and that we have been called to be members of his body, the Church.
- That God the Father so loved us that He gave us His Son not to condemn but to save all those who would place their faith in His faithfulness.
- That we, and all humanity, have been forgiven by the shedding of the blood of Jesus as he died on a Roman cross counted among the criminals, even if he was guiltless.
- That we have been given the grace and revelation to accept that gift.
- That Jesus is our life (Col. 3:4). Abiding in him by faith, and he, abiding in us, we are never left alone in our Christian walk towards eternity whatever our circumstances maybe.
- That God has given us spiritual brothers and sisters who are united to Jesus, to love, as he commands us. Let us thank God for one another as we are united in Christ.
- That he gives us the strength to love our enemies.
- Let us be thankful that God corrects and disciplines us in love, as we need, to mold us in the likeness of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.
- Let us thank God for the Halifax congregation for all those who have stayed faithful to Jesus over many years!
- Let us thank Him that although the wrong seems often so strong, God is the ruler yet. His will and purpose will prevail.
- Let us thank God and worship him for who He is!

Offerings: (Paraphrase of some information given by Mr. Hall, GCI Canadian Director): Just a reminder that any donations we receive via either Credit Card or Canada Helps are subject to about a 3-3.5% fee which means any donations we receive for your congregation, are reduced by that amount. Direct Debit (Pre-authorized Payment) or E-Transfers have much lower transaction fees, that we do not back charge to the local congregation. (Cheques do not have a transaction fee). **A person can send E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca (her full name is Kathleen Horwood) if their bank uses INTERACT. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number.** There is no need for a password as your offering will directly immediately in the GCI church bank account. Most bank send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.

You can send your offering directly by cheque to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.**

You can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7735> . All donations received via "Canada Helps" are credited to the members local congregation. It is therefore important that you include your address and other information Canada Helps asks.

T4 FYI some may ask about donations they gave via Canada Helps. As a registered Canada Helps issues tax receipts for donations to the church given through their portal (website). (From Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director Feb. 6, 2021)

Important Notice: if you have and are giving your offerings directly to GCI either by regular post, telephone or automatic withdrawal from your bank account, credit card or e-transfers, you will receive a tax receipt directly from the GCI head office in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The God Who Makes Everything Complete

From the President February 24, 2021

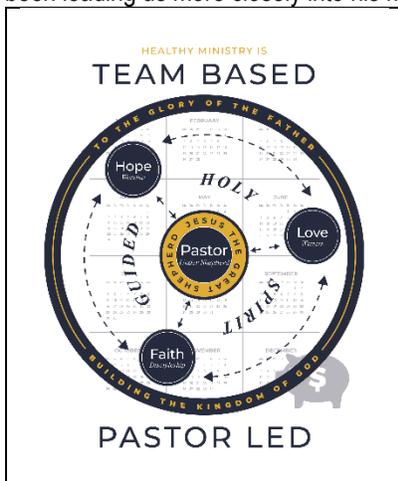
Dear GCI Family and Friends,

The writer of Hebrews in his benediction provides great encouragement to the church for all ages.

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.
(Hebrews 13:20-21 NRSVA)

The entire book of Hebrews points to Jesus. He is Creator and the perfect reflection of the Father, his sacrifice alone is effective for the salvation of humanity, he is the eternal High Priest between God and humanity, and he is the Shepherd of the church. This is great news!

So, how has the Great Shepherd been shepherding GCI? Personally, I have been amazed and humbled by how Jesus has been leading us more closely into his ministry, both in style and purpose.



In 2014 I was asked by Grace Communion Seminary to create the class CM510: Polity of Grace Communion International. It was during the creation of this class that I introduced the concept of Team-Based, Pastor-Led. As I taught the course, I had wonderful discussions with students about this ministry concept, especially with regard to how it matched with our Incarnational Trinitarian theology and reflected the way that Jesus worked with and through his original disciples.

Notice again verse 21 of Hebrews 13, which reminds us the God of peace will "make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will." Making us complete begins with justification and the process of sanctification in Jesus, and it moves forward to equipping us so that we can participate with him in his ministry to our neighbors. Certainly, the equipping from Jesus involves the calling and gifting that comes from the Holy Spirit, but how are we to be organized as a church? What structures help us to be the healthiest expression of church that we can be?

After having taught the Polity class three times and seeing the positive response from the students over Team-Based, Pastor-Led, it gave me the incentive to introduce this with greater confidence to our U.S. ministry leaders. We began sorting through the ramifications of this teaching with enthusiasm, and one of the greatest breakthroughs was when

the media team decided to join the cause by creating visuals. (Since 65 percent of the general population are visual learners, this step made good sense.)

I am also a visual learner, and in the early stages of explaining the concepts I found myself drawing sketches of faith, hope, and love circles on napkins while sitting in restaurants with key leaders. I believe my good friend Jeff Broadnax saved one of those napkins. Thank God for Charlotte Rakestraw, our GCI Graphic Designer, who cleaned up my elementary artwork.

The U.S. Regional Directors (RDs) fully embraced the model of Team-Based, Pastor-Led with its three ministry avenues. In 2019 we held Regional Celebrations across the U.S. I was so pleased and proud to sit in on the sessions while the RDs so clearly articulated the Team-Based, Pastor-Led model.

In the COVID year of 2020, I was thrilled to watch the GCI Superintendents host zoom meetings across the world for the training of what is rapidly becoming our new ministry model.

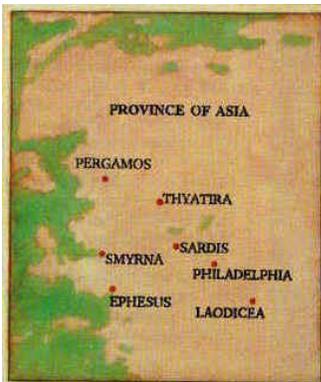
The power of the Team-Based, Pastor-Led approach is that it opens wide the gate for all believers to find their place of participation with Christ and his church. Pastors no longer carry the ministry load on their shoulders—instead they share the ministry with others. In community they experience the joys and sufferings of participating in Jesus' ministry, and thus more fully discover the presence of Jesus.

As our media team continues to create more tools around the Team-Based, Pastor-Led model, we continue to discover new depths. It is a lot like the more we get to know Jesus, the more we realize we have only begun to scratch the surface of this relationship, and likewise with his ministry. So, if you are just beginning to explore the Team-Based, Pastor-Led model of leadership, please don't think of this as akin to a "paint by numbers" project. It is a framework to get you started. As you find the right leaders to oversee the Faith, Hope, and Love Avenues, and as they add team members with their own unique mix of personalities and gifts, you will see this model of leadership play out in the context of your church neighborhood. I believe this will change the culture of your church and the church neighborhood in ways you probably have never imagined.

I get chills just thinking about how our Great Shepherd is equipping us and positioning us to join him more closely and personally as we yield to his lead.

To him be the glory! Greg Williams

REVELATION: SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES (From gci.org)



Revelation's seven letters to seven congregations in the Roman province of Asia provide us with a glimpse into the spiritual condition of the apostolic and post-apostolic church in a major crossroads area of the Roman world. It has generally been thought that Revelation was written around A.D. 100, though some scholars believe the book may have been written much earlier, in the mid-60s of the first century A.D.

In either case, the problems of faith found in some of the congregations should give us great pause. Since the church of the apostles and succeeding generation was beset by the spiritual crises described in Revelation 2-3, then we must also ask ourselves as Christians about our own faithfulness to the Savior. On the other hand, some of the congregations exhibited characteristics greatly praised by Jesus. This is a cause for much encouragement.

Thus, if we take to heart both the admonitions about the spiritual weaknesses and praise for the strengths of these congregations we can be both sobered and inspired. Finally, by meditating on the assurance of the promise of salvation given to each church by our Savior, we can receive comfort, joy and peace in our lives.

Message to the "seven angels" of the churches

The last verse of the first chapter provides an introduction to the messages of the seven churches, which were located in the Roman province of Asia (today, southwestern Turkey) (1:20). Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation contain seven letters to these church congregations. These were not the only churches in the area, but these seven letters give us a picture of the spiritual condition of the church in the Roman province of Asia at the time the book was written.

The fact that Revelation is written to real congregations of Christians places the book squarely in the real world of human beings. The letters were written to seven churches that existed at a particular time in history. Real people with strengths and problems like our own made up their congregations. These are letters, not prophecies of the future. Each of the seven letters begins with Jesus speaking to members of his church. One of several attributes of his majesty, given in the first chapter, is repeated and placed at the heading of each letter. The descriptive phrase chosen from the vision is appropriate to each specific church. When such phrases run out, other pertinent statements regarding Christ's attributes are used.

The letters respectively commend the churches for their strong spiritual works and reprimand them about their specific spiritual problems. Forceful warnings to repent are given to those who are spiritually weak, along with encouragement to persevere in the faith. The letters also contain promises to those who overcome – promises of great assurance about their eternal life in the kingdom of God. These promises are given in symbolic terms.



Each letter concludes with the same statement: **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...”** (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The word here is “churches,” in the plural. This implies that the words written to each congregation are meant to apply *to all seven churches*. This means that the seven individual church messages were meant for *all* the congregations in Asia of John's day – and, by extension, for the entire church of the time.

We could also infer that the spiritual condition of these seven congregations is characteristic of every group of Christians during the last 1900 years. Certainly,

God's people in all ages should be concerned about the spiritual problems described in each of the letters and take assurance in the promise that the overcomers will inherit all things with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Author: Paul Kroll

REVELATION: THE CHURCHES AT EPHESUS, SMYRNA, PERGAMUM AND THYATIRA (REVELATION 2)

Ephesus: The persevering church



In the opening letter to the church at Ephesus, Christ is pictured as walking among the seven lampstands, which represent the seven churches (1:20-2:1). This corresponds to the fact that he is the leader of the church and is its Savior ([John 10:28](#)). Perhaps there is an allusion here to [Genesis 3:8](#), where the Lord is walking in the Garden of Eden with the man and woman he had created. In each case, the Lord seeks a personal relationship with his people, and wants to interact with them and be their guide.

The statement about Jesus walking among the candlesticks recalls an Old Testament promise: **“I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people”** ([Leviticus 26:12](#)). This promise to ancient Israel is now made to the church, the new Israel ([Galatians 6:16](#)).

Each letter is introduced with Christ's assertion, **“I know...”** (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). Christ is aware of the distresses and persecution the church members may be suffering. He also knows what they have achieved and where they have fallen short.

Strengths of Ephesus (2:2-3)

The church at Ephesus had endured in the faith (2:2, 4). They had suffered for Christ's name and had not grown spiritually tired. The church had also suffered the assault of false prophets trying to foist off heretical teachings. The false teachers who tried to infiltrate the Ephesian church are identified under two categories. They are **“those who claim to be apostles but are not”** and the **Nicolaitans** (2:2, 6). Neither group's practices or teachings are specifically identified. The latter group will be mentioned again in the letter to the church at Pergamum (2:15).

The Ephesian church apparently was diligent to eliminate false teaching, before and after John's day. Assuming the late date for Revelation, about twenty years after the book was written, Ignatius praised the church in Ephesus for rejecting those who spread heretical doctrines (Ignatius, [Ephesians 9:1](#); cf. [6:2](#); [7:1](#); [8:1](#)).

Spiritual problems (2:4-6)

Ironically, the Ephesian church and its leadership may have gone too far in rooting out heresy. There was a spiritual problem in the church described as a forsaking of **“first love”** (2:4). This is usually taken to mean the church members’ love for one another. If this is correct, perhaps hatred of heresy had created suspicion and intolerance of each other’s differences and weaknesses. Theological orthodoxy and tests of loyalty may have been substituted for mercy and compassion. This could have led to an undue preoccupation with being “correct,” resulting in the proverbial “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.”



Amphitheater at Ephesus

This is an important lesson to all Christians. While doctrinal purity is important to the Christian faith, it can unintentionally lead to witch hunting and condemning spirit. We can defend the faith only if we first remember to defend love for one another ([John 13:34](#)). Since the Triune God is love in his essential being, Christians will reflect that love as they have been spiritually transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The Ephesians’ loss of love was no trivial matter. “It is treated as though it involved a fall from the Christian life,” wrote G. E. Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John, p. 39. If the Ephesians did not repent of their lack of love, Christ said he would remove their lampstand (2:5). This implies that they would cease to be the spiritual people of God, even though they may have claimed to do many mighty works in his name ([Matthew 7:22-23](#)). (See [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#).)

Listen to the Spirit (2:7)

The church was admonished to listen to what the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ was saying to Ephesus (2:7). The fact that hearing rather than reading is emphasized infers that Revelation was designed to be read out loud in public worship. The churches were to listen to **“what the Spirit says to the churches”** (2:7). Yet, it is the glorified Christ who is pictured as speaking in these letters. Christ and the Spirit are equated. When the Spirit speaks, it is Christ speaking.

This recalls the words of Paul, who said, **“The Lord is the Spirit”** ([2 Corinthians 3:17](#)). That is not to imply a heretical modalism, where it is claimed that there is no permanent distinction between the three persons of the Trinity. The Persons of the Trinity are distinct, as the New Testament revelation of God’s nature makes clear. But each of the three persons has an intrinsic interpersonal relationship in trinity. Thus, there is one God whose three Persons are together involved in our salvation.

Promise to Ephesus (2:7)

As does each of the letters, the one to the Ephesian church concludes with a note of victory and a promise to those who overcome or conquer. The conquerors in Christ in these churches are not to overcome an earthly foe by human force or will. Their struggle is more cosmic and more personal ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). They overcome the world by conquering themselves in and through the overcoming victory that was Christ’s ([Revelation 2:26](#)). The church’s victory parallels his victory – the eternal victory of the Lamb of God who overcame by living and dying in faith (3:21).

The overcomers at Ephesus are promised the gift of eternal life. The symbolism of salvation for the Ephesians is **“the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”** (2:7). These symbols stand for eternal life in the kingdom of God. The tree of life symbol is used again at the end of Revelation (22:2). Both symbols go back to the beginning of the Old Testament. The centerpiece of the Garden of Eden was the tree of life, a symbol for eternal life (2:9).

This is an illustration of the unity of the two Testaments in their presentation of the gospel.

If [Genesis 2-3](#) describes a Paradise Lost to Adam and Eve because of sin, then the book of Revelation promises a Paradise Regained through the blood of the Lamb. The church resurrected to life (the New Jerusalem) will receive salvation (eat fruit from the tree of life) in the Lamb’s eternal kingdom (the Garden of Eden and Paradise of God).

Smyrna: The persecuted church

The church at Smyrna was a suffering church (2:8). It was warned about an impending persecution and that some of its members would experience martyrdom (2:10). The church in Smyrna would soon be persecuted and martyred by Jews and heathens. This would happen for “ten days” (2:10). Most commentators take that figure to mean a short but definitely limited period of time.

Christ’s introductory title as the **One “who died and came to life again”** would be encouraging to these potential martyrs (2:8). The church members at Smyrna could face martyrdom in full confidence. They would be resurrected to eternal life by the one who himself was victorious over death through a resurrection..



The members at Smyrna were poverty-stricken people. Yet, Christ says they were spiritually rich (2:9). The contrast with Laodicea is significant. The Laodicean church assumed it was rich, but it was spiritually impoverished (3:27).

Problems at Smyrna (2:9-10)

The church at Smyrna apparently suffered at the hands of a group “**who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan**” (2:9). These Jews thought they were the people of God but were actually the representatives of his adversary (John 8:31-47). The people referred to were probably Jewish citizens of Smyrna who opposed the church. They may have been pressing the local government to take action against the Christians.

Why are these people said not to be Jews? They were Jews by race and religion. But they were not spiritual Jews, in the sense that the New Testament defines a Jew. Paul made the point in his writings: “**A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit**” (Romans 2:29). The church saw itself as the Israel of God, the “true circumcision” who worshiped God in Spirit and put its faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:3).

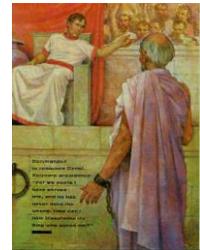
Promise to Smyrna (2:10-11)

The church at Smyrna would receive the “**crown of life**” (2:10). The crown here is stephanos in Greek, not the diadema, or royal crown. The stephanos was the victory wreath or trophy awarded to the winner of the games. A Roman magistrate who performed well also received a stephanos at the end of his term of office. In like manner, Christians who serve Christ will receive the victor’s crown in that they conquer the world in Christ, the Lamb, and the victory is modeled in their faithful service to him (1 Corinthians 9:24).

The overcomers in the Smyrna church will not be hurt by “**the second death**” (2:11). Revelation identifies the second death as the lake of fire (21:8). It is the second or eternal death. This death has no power over the faithful who have a part in the resurrection (20:6).

To be continued

Author: Paul Kroll



Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, faces his martyrdom in A.D. 155

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For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor’s contact information: email— evautour47@outlook.com