

44. The Congregation, the Body of Christ

Christ's work in the world continues in His congregation as the work of the Holy Spirit. In the congregation of Christ, we are in living fellowship with Christ and other Christians. For this reason, the Scripture calls the congregation the body of Christ.

"God has placed all things under Christ's feet and given Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body." (Eph. 1:22-23)

"I am the vine, ye are the branches." (John 15:5)

Luther's explanation of the third article of the Creed.

45. The Congregation Is One

The congregation of Christ is one because it has one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. It appears outwardly here on earth in different churches and local congregations.

"One Lord, one baptism, one faith." (Eph. 4:5)

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of another." (Rom. 12:5)

46. The Congregation Is Holy

The congregation is holy because the spirit of Christ works in it.

"Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it." (Eph. 5:25, 26)

47. The Congregation Is Mutual

The congregation is mutual because God wishes to gather all nations into it.

"There shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10: 16)

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." (John 17:21)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)

48. The Mutual Christian Confession concerning the Congregation

I believe in one, holy, mutual congregation, and fellowship of saints. All Christendom upon earth joins in this confession.

Together let Christendom everywhere / south, north, east, and west / already bring thanks to you, Christ / Praise to your name eternally, eternally. (Hymn 415:9)

49. Members of the Congregation

All who have been baptized have been taken as members of the congregation in baptism. Those members who have become estranged or who have abandoned Christ, the Holy Spirit wishes to make living members of Christ's congregation.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13)

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The gardener answered him and said: "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. (Luke 13:8, 9)

The Vine and the branches: John 15: 1-11.