



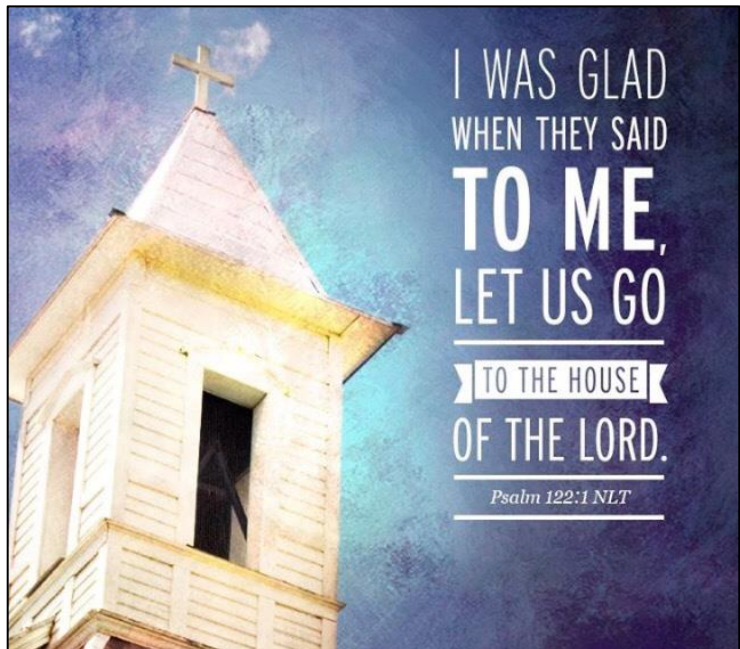
Northland Reformed

Monthly

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Why Church Attendance Matters

There was a time, in this country, when it would have been thought odd if a person did not attend church every Sunday. But times have changed. According to statistics from the Barna Group¹, seventy-three percent of Americans self-identify as “Christian.” At the same time, only thirty-one percent of Americans regularly attend church. The difference in these numbers is staggering and demonstrates that over half of all professing Christians, in the United States, do not believe that being a Christian requires one to participate in the worship of a local Christian Church.



Does it matter, then, if we go to church? Is church attendance optional for the Christian, or is it required? Why do we go to church, and what harm is there if we choose not to go? To answer these questions, we must go to God’s Word, for there is no other source of knowledge given to us by which we may learn how we are to live as Christians. What this article aims to demonstrate is that church attendance is not optional for a Christian, but required, and any person who neglects to participate in a local church can possess no firm assurance that he or she is truly converted.

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/>

The primary reason that regular church attendance is required is because it brings glory to God, which is the highest purpose of man. We are created to be worshipers of God. Jesus said, in John 4:23, that “the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” Notice, Jesus doesn’t say that true worshipers *might* worship, but that they *will* worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Second, regular church attendance is required because God commands it in his Word. Since God desires to receive glory, and worship is the primary means by which he is glorified, he commands that believers gather together for worship. The fourth commandment instructs believers to remember the Sabbath Day (the day of worship) and keep it holy (set it apart for the worship of God) (Exod. 20:8). Psalm 96:3 instructs God’s people to “Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.” This is hardly a private act. Rather this worship is to be done together with other believers. In the same way, the author of Hebrews exhorts believers not to “forsake 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” (Heb. 10:25). Failure to worship God in the local church is to walk in direct disobedience to God’s Word. Therefore, a specific time is to be set aside, one day in seven, as a day holy to the Lord, in which God’s people gather together to worship him. An individual who does not desire to worship God together with the saints now, on earth, will certainly not desire to worship him together with the saints forever, in heaven.

Third, regular church attendance is required because the church alone possesses the means by which God will work in our lives, by his Spirit, to bring us to glory. The Belgic Confession of Faith, part of the Three Forms of Unity, states that outside the church there is no salvation (Belgic Confession Q. 28). This does not mean that the church saves, but rather that those who are being saved by God will be members of a true church. A true church may be defined as one “in which the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached, the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and church discipline is exercised in chastening of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church” (Belgic Confession Q. 29). Since the means of grace—particularly preaching and the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper)—are found only in the true church, if one is going to be sanctified and prepared for the life to come, he or she must make use of these means through regular church attendance.

Fourth, regular church attendance is required for the exercise of Christian service. Scripture commands believers to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) and to be equipped “for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). The church is the body of Christ, and each part of that body is a critical instrument set apart to be used for the good of the whole body (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). However, if the burdens of others are not known, we cannot bear them. And if the needs of others are not known, we cannot serve them accordingly. Only by the faithful gathering together of the saints are these commands, given by God, able to be properly fulfilled.

Finally, regular church attendance is required for the future health of God’s church. Parents, especially fathers, have a duty to raise up children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). One of the primary ways for parents to fulfill this command is to ensure that their children are present at every worship service. This is true especially during the impressionable years at home, when children are learning what is important in life. When a child sees a parent take the worship of God seriously, he or she will most likely do the same. However, the opposite is true. When a child sees a parent neglect church attendance, he or she receives the message that church attendance is not that important at all. And as we have seen, church attendance is vital for Christian growth in grace. The preaching of the Word and the sacraments are the primary means by which God communicates his grace to us, by his Spirit, and these are found in the church alone. Therefore, children who are absent from church are not able to use the means God has provided, to their spiritual detriment. The sad reality is that parents who neglect attending church regularly with their family will normally raise children, and grandchildren, who reject attending church at all.

Does church attendance matter? Absolutely. God desires and thus commands those who are being saved to gather together and worship him in spirit and in truth. God promises to pour out his grace, through the preaching of his Word and the administration of the Sacraments on those, who by faith, receive them. But just as it is impossible to get wet if one never stands in the rain, so also it is impossible to receive grace if one never sits under the means that God has provided. Let us therefore make every effort, by God’s grace, to not forsake the gathering of ourselves together. And let us do so, not only for God’s glory and our good, but for the salvation of our children, grandchildren, and as many as the Lord our God will call (Acts. 2:39).

Rev. Christopher Campbell

Congregational News

RCUS Covenant Church Camp 2018 Camp Sinawa, Valders, WI

Church Camp this year was a great success! We had 45 campers from many of the eight churches in our



Classis. The camp theme this year was on the fourth petition of the



Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day, our daily bread." Five lessons were taught as follows:

- God's Providential Care for His Creation
- Trusting in God's Spiritual Provision
- Trusting in God's Physical Provision
- Praying for God's Provision
- The Means of God's Provision

In addition to the lessons, the campers enjoyed participating in many outdoor activities and competing throughout the week for the covenant cup title. As always, the final night culminated with a talent show and skits put on by the campers. If you have not yet participated in church camp, please consider doing so next year.



August Schedule

REGULAR MEETINGS

- Sunday Worship | August 5, 12, 19, 26 | 9:30AM & 5:00PM
- Men's Study Group | August 11 | 7:00AM | The Men's Study Group, led by Gary Duffey, will continue to study the book *Devoted to God* by Sinclair Ferguson.
- Prayer Meeting | August 15 | 6:15PM | A meal will be served at 6:15 followed by prayer at 7PM

SPECIAL EVENTS

- August Consistory | August 14 | 6:30PM
- Rev. Mark Vander Hart | August 19 | Rev. Vander Hart will be our guest preacher on August 19th.
- Church Picnic | August 26 | The end of summer picnic will be held after the evening service.



Scripture Memorization

“Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.” – Psalm 119:11

August 5

Philippians 1:21

August 12

Jeremiah 29:11-14

August 19

Proverbs 22:1

August 26

Psalm 30:4-5