

RECONCILIATION

We are ruled by Christ's love for us. We are certain that, if one person died for everyone else, then all of us have died. Christ did die for all of us. He died so we would no longer live for ourselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for us.

We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be.... Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgiven, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us and has given us the work of making peace between himself and others.

God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. He has given us the work of sharing this message about peace. We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner so that Christ could make us acceptable to God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

This is the gift and ministry of reconciliation to which we all have been called as Christians. God loved the people of the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! No one who has faith in God's Son will be condemned. (John 3:16-18a).

The element that brings about reconciliation, healing, and restoration in the world is Jesus Christ, our common Head, and *his love* as we allow it to be ministered through us. He is the only true Foundation upon which we can be successfully established. Jesus alone is the center and foundation of what it means to be a Christian and part of God's Family in the fullest sense. He alone shows us the Father and what it means to be and to live as a child of God, spiritually begotten of the Father through baptism and the holy Spirit. With the Father, Jesus sends the holy Spirit to bring to our minds all that he taught us and to empower us for his ministry *through* us to the world *around* us. We, the Family of God, the Church, are called to *be* and to *be seen as* the Ministering Body of Christ, first to one another as brothers and sisters in God's Family and then to the world around us. It is because we have forgotten this *central truth* that the Body of Christ is so divided. Listen to how John the Apostle puts it:

We belong to God, and everyone who knows God will listen to us. But the people who don't know God won't listen to us. My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life. Real love isn't our love for God but his love for us. Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we must love each other.

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is truly in our hearts. God has given us his Spirit. That is how we know that we are one with him (reconciled), just as he is one with us.

God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and he will stay one with us.

We love because God loved us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God if we don't love the people we can see? The commandment that God has given us is: Love God and love each other! (1 John 4:6-21)

The key to the ministry of reconciliation, healing, and restoration of all things in Christ is to be "Christ where we are". "Christ where we are" means **CHRist In Service To** where we are.

Jesus said, "You cannot be the slave of two masters! You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)

If you love your life, you will lose it. If you give it up, you will be given eternal life. If you serve me, you must go with me. My servant will be with me wherever I am. If you serve me, my Father will honor you." (John 12:26)

Christ was sinless and offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. This is why his blood is much more powerful and makes our conscience clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death. (Hebrews 9:14)

"Christ where we are" means repenting of and giving up any racial, ethnic, denominational, or other religious prejudices, suspicions, and hostilities.

Through the Son, God the Father has decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through the Son's death on the cross and brought back to himself all things both on earth and in heaven. (Colossians 1:19 & 20)

Christ himself has brought you peace by making Jews and non-Jews one people. With his own body, he broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies. By his death on the cross, Christ destroyed their enmity. By means of the cross, he united all races into one Body and brought them back to God. It is through Christ that all, Jews and non-Jews, are able to come in the one Spirit into the presence of the Father. (Ephesians 2:14,16, 18)

It is through faith that you are God's child in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ and now are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So, in Christ there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews, between slaves and free men, between men and women; all are one in union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendant of Abraham and will receive what God has promised. (Galatians 3:27-29)

"Christ where we are" means taking a God's-eye view of people and situations rather than seeing them from our limited human perspective. If we function with this attitude and on this foundation, we will see more and more of the Family of God coming together in unity as the sign of hope that the world can believe and accept. The world needs to know that Jesus is not an **ism** or a **label** or a **denomination** but is a **Person** who is alive and active today in those of us who bear his name and are **Christened** and anointed with the same anointing of the holy Spirit as he was. What a call! What a challenge! Old foundations are crumbling around us, but God is laying a new and surer foundation in each of us who will let him.

The blood of our natural family flows through us and gives us the *right* to reconciliation, healing, and restoration with the members of our own family. Stronger than that is the Blood of Jesus Christ that flows through all of us who have been reconciled to the Father and have become his Family because Jesus shed his blood for us. It is this Blood relationship that makes us truly one in Christ. We do not always agree with our natural family members, nor do they with us. We do not always understand each other. But what is important is that *we are family!* This is more so with God's Family, the Church.

God is a Family - Father, Son, and holy Spirit. The Trinity reflects diversity of relationships but unity in action. What the world needs to see is that, beneath all the labels that Christians use to distinguish and sometimes isolate one another, there is a Family, diverse in relationships but moving and ministering together in unity as the Family of God, reconciled with and made one under God our Father, in Jesus our Brother, and through the holy Spirit, the Bond of Love, Power, and Unity that holds us together.

Jesus began his life and ministry in and through a family. May we work together to become the Family of God that he came to establish and that he empowered to continue his work until he returns in glory. We must be about our Father's business.