



February 13, 2022

OPEN

Today is a townhall for us to consider a **Proposed Partnership Agreement** with Wildwood Fellowship Church. So, it is a good time for us to have a “mission minute” and think about what it takes to stay on track with the mission that God has given to Cornerstone.

Cornerstone is called
to impact our world
by living and sharing
the life of Jesus!



DIG

Today we are going to talk about “**support structures**” which are needed for the Body of Christ to thrive. **Tensegrity** is a term which I learned this week. It is created from the terms “tension + integrity”. It refers to the strength and stability which a structure can achieve, though it looks impossible.



However, seemingly independent parts can be arranged in a balance of tension and compression, by means of cables or tendons. [READ MORE](#)

In our November townhall we considered the image of the Vine and branches from John 15. Jesus is the true Vine, God is the Gardner, and followers of Jesus are the branches. As followers of Jesus abide or remain in the Vine, they will realize God’s design and bear fruit. Now, consider the challenge of growing a vine without any trellis support...it would be difficult, wouldn’t it?



Let’s be clear, as you can see in this photo, the trellis wire is an external support structure to the grapevine. It is **essential**, but not the **essence** of fruit bearing.

In **The Trellis And The Vine** (Mattias Media, 2009), authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne seize on this picture of an organic, life giving Vine which is served by certain supports. For example, for the “Vine-word” of teaching a Bible study we need the “trellis-support” of a budget for curriculum.

Just as some sort of framework is needed to help a vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support...What’s the state of the trellis and vine at your church? (8) And that’s the thing about trellis work: it tends to take over from vine work (9)...structures don’t grow ministry any more than trellises grow vines...most churches need to make a conscious shift – away from erecting and maintaining structures, and towards *growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ.*” (17)

What is God’s design? He has also designed internal support structures for ministry. **Ephesians 4:11-16** tells us about these. We will focus on verse 16 as it is found in the NASB:

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Consider four factors involved in the organic, internal support structure that God has created for the Body of Christ, His Church.

1. **Christ & His Body** – Jesus is the source for all His body. Bishop Moule wrote, “the limb does not live, ultimately, by its contact with other limbs.” (*Ephesian Studies*, Pickering & Inglis, 1915?, 205) Jesus brings together the whole body into unity or “integrality” which is the state of being total and complete.
2. **Fitted & Fastened** – This verse refers to stabilizing “bands” or “ligaments” which unite all parts of the Body of Christ. There is a *fitting* together (compare with Ephesians 2:21) and a *holding* together. Here is an example of a knee brace, providing an external replacement for an *Anterior Cruciate Ligament*.



However, what the human knee requires to fully thrive is an *internal* support structure – that is why some of us have had operations to repair our ACL after it has been torn. The same is true of the Church. We can be “propped up” by external supports. But what God has designed is an inner renewal and organic functioning of the various parts (people) which make up the Body of Christ.

3. **Operating & Measure** – Each part of the body is individual, yet it functions “according to the proper working”. We get our term, metronome from this word “working” or better, “measure” combined with the term for “lead”. Each person that makes up the Body of Christ must contribute as per God’s calling and design – His measure/pace for their service, if you will. Do you know His measure to serve?

4. **Growing & Building** – The growth and the building (see this same term used in Ephesians 2:22) of the Church is an organic process. Notice the phrase “of itself”. This does not mean we rely on human schemes and strategies. Rather, it means that we grow according to the process God has designed – our union with Christ, that is, abiding in the Vine. “From Him” connects us to verse 15: “...the Head, that is, Christ”.

REFLECT

Here are some cautions about unhelpful ways we think about our contribution to the Body of Christ.

- ☹ **Isolation** – there are many factors that fight against us being together, not just covid conditions
- ☹ **Individualism** – completely contrary thinking to being a branch that remains in the Vine
- ☹ **Irrelevance** – thinking that one does not have the resources or gifting to contribute

Here are some related corrections that get us back on track with the design that God has for the functioning and thriving of the Body of Christ.

- 😊 **Integrity** – having a structural strength and unity...tensegrity applies to the human body also
- 😊 **Interdependence** – every believer’s contribution is essential
- 😊 **Identity** – it is Jesus, and our new life in Him, which brings us together

How are the support structures at Cornerstone? Healthy? Haphazard?

Are we propped up or being renewed by the Holy Spirit for the work of making disciples who make disciples?

God has designed organic growth for us!