

*January 1, 2017*

## **Get Connected in 2017**

By Patrick Swayne

It is such a blessing to finally be here at South Anchorage! God answered our hearts' desire as well as our prayers in bringing us here, and we are so thankful to Him. However, we are also thankful to each of you for your prayers and especially thankful to those who had a hand in making our arrival special. Thank you to all who came out to the airport to greet us, to those who gave gifts and helped to get our house ready, and to those who sacrificed time and effort to help make our transition into life here smooth. We appreciate you very much!

It is our hope and prayer going forward to get to know each of you and to learn both how we can help you and how you can help us as we strive together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). This is in keeping with the will of our God. God's desire for the church, the body of Christ, is for "the whole body" to be held together by every joint with which it is equipped." Since the joints, or parts of the body, are members, each of us at South Anchorage need the rest of us. The body can only grow when "each part is working properly," holding the rest together and building up the entire body in love (Ephesians 4:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27).

It is truly important for us to know our place in the body of Christ and for each of us to do our part. As individual Christians, we are built with "gaps" that no one can fill but fellow Christians in the church. Human beings are very adaptable though; it is all too easy for us to stuff worldly friends, cares, and concerns in the gaps where other Christians should go—making work and friendships the center of our lives. However, these adaptations never result in an exact fit—all the worldly relationships in the world will never bring me closer to God or bring me closer to accomplishing God's work on this earth. What's even sadder is that while each individual Christian has gaps, he also has the means to fill another Christian's gaps—if only two of them would connect, as each member of the body should.

To help us connect and work together as a church family, I've decided to make "Get Connected" the focus unifying most of my Sunday morning sermons in 2017,

based on the above text in Ephesians 4:16. Over the course of the year, we will be examining the kingdom parables in which Jesus teaches us about the church and our relationship to it. After that, we will examine the values God expects each member of His church family to have. Further, we will examine the book of Nehemiah and through it gain courage to “rise up and build” together as God’s people did in the past (Nehemiah 2:18). Through these and other studies as time and opportunity permit, it is my hope that we’ll see the importance of the church, our roles in the church, and how we can work together to build up the church.

Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family enjoyed your holidays together. I am excited about the possibilities here at South Anchorage and hope you are as well.

