So, who makes up the church? Normal people with normal lives with everyday problems. Many who have felt abandoned, lost, hurt, lonely, angry, afraid, depressed, abused, unworthy, controlled, and manipulated.
Unknown

ROMANS CHAPTER 16
Prayer Study # 456
First Love Ministries, Inc., Perry, Georgia USA

Romans 16 Amplified Bible (AMP)

16 *Now I introduce and commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae,*
2 *That you may receive her in the Lord [with a Christian welcome], as saints (God's people) ought to receive one another. And help her in whatever matter she may require assistance from you, for she has been a helper of many including myself [shielding us from suffering].*

Here we have a woman who seemingly had a position in the church at Corinth. Many will argue that women are not suppose to have positions in churches, but the Bible seems to refute this over and over. Many Biblical scholars say that Phoebe was one who served, but that she had no official position in the Church. That brings us to the place of women in the Bible. We know full well from the Bible that in the Christian home, the husband is the head, and the woman is to submit and love and honor and reverence her husband, and the husband is to love the wife as Christ loves the Church. I do not see anything, however, in New Testament scripture that says that women are 2nd class citizens in the Body of Christ, and cannot minister in any and all of the 5 fold ministry gifts. I believe there is Biblical evidence that Phoebe was a minister and deaconess of the church. Women who served in church hierarchy positions include the following members of the Five Fold Ministry:

a. Teacher: Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26)
b. Pastor: Mary, mother of Mark (Acts 12:2); Nympha (Colossians 4:15); Elect Lady of 2nd John 1
c. Evangelist: Euodia & Syntyche (Philippians 4:1-3)
d. Prophetess: Philip, the evangelist's, 4 daughters (Acts 21:9); Joel 2:28-*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh: Your sons and your DAUGHTERS shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*
e. Apostle: Junia (Romans 16:7)

This is not a complete list. In addition, there were deaconesses, such as Phoebe, here in Romans 16:1, and female missionaries, such as Dorcas (Acts 9:36-39) and Lydia (Acts 16:14-15).

In Christ there is neither male nor female. Galatians 3:28 reads: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

The duties of a deaconess, according to Kevin Connor are as follows:

a. To take care of the sick and the poor
b. To minister to the martyrs and confessors in prison
c. To instruct in the catechism
d. To assist in the baptism of women
e. To exercise general supervision over the female church members (1st Timothy 5:3-16)

3 *Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,*
4 *Who risked their lives [endangering their very necks] for my life. To them not only I but also all the churches among the Gentiles give thanks.*

Putting the name of the wife before that of the husband was a radical thing to do. It was so radical that the translators of the Greek into English for the King James Bible reversed the order that Paul had written. By putting Priscilla first, Paul is indicating that she had the greater ministry. Paul and Priscilla and Aquila were all tent-makers by trade. Priscilla and Aquilla had met Paul in Corinth and had travelled with him to Ephesus. They had been driven from Rome under Claudius' decree in AD 52. The decree had banished all Jews from Rome. In this period of time, when Paul is writing the book of Romans, they had returned to Rome.

Here Paul is thanking Priscilla and Aquilla and the Gentile Church for all they did for him in Asia Minor. Apparently, they had saved his life from all the threats by both Jew and Gentile in the cities Paul visited on his missionary journeys.

5 *[Remember me] also to the church [that meets] in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was a firstfruit (first convert) to Christ in Asia.*
6 *Greet Mary, who has worked so hard among you.*
7 *Remember me to Andronicus and Junias, my tribal kinsmen and once my fellow prisoners. They are men held in high esteem among the apostles, who also were in Christ before I was.*
8 *Remember me to Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.*
9 *Salute Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear Stachys.*
10 *Greet Apelles, that one tried and approved in Christ (the Messiah). Remember me to those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.*

11 *Greet my tribal kinsman Herodion, and those in the Lord who belong to the household of Narcissus.*
12 *Salute those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet my dear Persis, who has worked so hard in the Lord.*
13 *Remember me to Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also to his mother [who has been] a mother to me as well.*
14 *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren who are with them.*
15 *Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.*
16 *Greet one another with a holy (consecrated) kiss. All the churches of Christ (the Messiah) wish to be remembered to you.*

During this time, many of the believers, who had larger homes, opened their homes for church meetings. Apparently, this is what Priscilla and Aquilla had done. Many believe we are seeing a revival of the house church ministry in these days, a revival which most likely will increase as we approach the end of the age.

The rest of this passage is a list of the believers whom Paul wants to name and salute. He mentions 24 names with 6 being women. Also 13 of the names are also names of people who worked at the emperor's palace in Rome. We are not sure if the ones named here were people of the emperor's household or work staff, but we do know that Paul in Philippians 4:27 speaks of the saints of Caesar's household. Most likely most of this staff were slaves.

We will not look at all of the names, but I do want to highlight a few. First, Epaenetus was one of Paul's first converts on his first missionary journey. The "firstfruits" are a special offering to God and are representative of the harvest to come.

Andronicus and Junia were apostles. Most likely Junia is a female name. The apostles were those sent out to tell the story of Jesus. These two were Christians before Paul's conversion so they must have a direct link to the earliest Church at Jerusalem.

Paul writes of Rufus and his mother. In Mark 15:21 we read of Simon of Cyren, who was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus. This verse tells us that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. It is thought that this is the same Rufus that Paul refers to here. Also, it was men from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. Perhaps it was this same Simon, touched by his unintended and unexpected encounter with Jesus, who, with his son Rufus, was one of those early missionaries for the cause of Christ. We cannot prove any of this, but it is an educated guess, and if true, Paul is saying that Simon's wife is like a mother to him.

There is one other name we will look at: Nereus. In 95 AD something happened in Rome that shocked the Roman world. Two of the most respected and prominent Romans, Flavius Clemens and his wife Domatilla, of the upper class and royal line, were

condemned because they had accepted the Christian faith. Flavius Clemens was executed and Domatilla was banished to the island of Pontia. They had a servant Nereus. Perhaps this same Nereus is spoken of here, and perhaps this slave had had something to do with the conversion of these two upper class Roman citizens.

17 *I appeal to you, brethren, to be on your guard concerning those who create dissensions and difficulties and cause divisions, in opposition to the doctrine (the teaching) which you have been taught. [I warn you to turn aside from them, to] avoid them.*
18 *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites and base desires, and by ingratiating and flattering speech, they beguile the hearts of the unsuspecting and simpleminded [people].*
19 *For while your loyalty and obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I would have you well versed and wise as to what is good and innocent and guileless as to what is evil.*
20 *And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) be with you.*

There are two kinds of divisions in the Body of Christ. There is the division caused by Satan and by the carnality of man. Remember where Paul told the Corinthians that they were carnal, and he tells them why he know this: Corinthians 3:3-…*for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?* Then there is the division caused by the separation of those who walk in Truth and those who walk in error. This latter division is a division caused by God. Here Paul is speaking of the former, i.e. those who cause divisions in the Body of Christ by opposing the true doctrines of the Word of God and walking in offense towards the brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who create these divisions should be both "marked" and "avoided." The author of division is Satan who caused division in heaven because of self-will, caused division on earth between God and man in the Garden of Eden through tempting man to sin, and caused division between the tribes of Israel over the plans and purposes of God. Jesus brought, but did not cause, division everywhere He went because people refused to accept His Truth and rebelled against it.

Paul goes on to give two characteristics of people who cause division. First, they don't serve and follow Jesus but serve and follow their own bellies or their flesh nature. Secondly, they cause division by deceiving, with nice words and good speeches, innocent people.

Paul encourages the Church at Rome, saying their faith and obedience was spoken of throughout the known world. He encourages them to know, through the study of the Word, what is good.

Verse 20 is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible. God is a God of peace-

how I wish the Moslems understood this characteristic of God. There is the peace of God, the peace with God, and the God of Peace. The peace with God was broken by the serpent in the garden. The ultimate fulfillment of this verse will be through the Church. The promise of the bruising of the head of Satan was given to the woman, Eve. Eve represents the Church. The head is the source of power and intelligence and governs the whole body. The bruising of Satan's head will destroy his power, pride, mind, and will. This is the final ministry of the church, and it is set forth in Revelation 12. The grace of God is the source of this final bruising. *Amen* means *so be it, let it, sure, true, verily, it shall come to pass.*

21 *Timothy, my fellow worker, wishes to be remembered to you, as do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my tribal kinsmen.*
22 *I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.*
23 *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church here, greets you. So do Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus.*
24 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) be with you all. Amen (so be it).*
25 *Now to Him Who is able to strengthen you in the faith which is in accordance with my Gospel and the preaching of (concerning) Jesus Christ (the Messiah), according to the revelation (the unveiling) of the mystery of the plan of redemption which was kept in silence and secret for long ages,*
26 *But is now disclosed and through the prophetic Scriptures is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, [to win them] to obedience to the faith,*
27 *To [the] only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One)! Amen (so be it).*

Paul ends his letter with the salutations of all the companions who are with Paul. Tertius is Paul's secretary and the one who wrote the letter as Paul spoke it.

Paul's final benediction is found in verses 25-27. Paul was telling the Roman church that they needed to be strengthened in faith so that they would not be carried about by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:9-16).

The mystery which Paul speaks of is his own revelation of the church, the Body of Christ, composed of both Jews and Gentiles. It was God's commandment that this mystery should be made known to all nations (Ephesians 3:1-20), not just to the Jews, as in times past.

The letter was written by Paul to the Romans. Paul was in Corinth. He sent the letter by Phoebe, the deaconess at the church at Cenchrea.