

<i>In search of</i> Truth and Right Tim Henderson, Editor		
Vol. 01 No. 45 06/10/ 2007	<i>"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."</i> Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)	A publication of the Wellsburg church of Christ

Placing Membership

By: James Dennison

The word "church" in our English Bibles is translated from the Greek word "ekklesia". This word is also translated as "assembly" in Acts 19:32, 39, and 41; Acts 7:38, R. V.; and as "congregation" in Hebrews 2:12, R. V., as well as an alternate reading in Matthew 18:17, R. V.

In relation to Christians, the word "church" is given two different applications in the New Testament.

- 1) The totality of all the saved (redeemed, saints, etc.) of the whole world. Such usage is found in Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 1:18. We generally speak of this usage as the "universal church".
- 2) A group of Christians who have united together to work and worship as a single unit. Such usage is found in Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:1. We usually speak of this as the "local church".

In Acts 14:23, and Philippians 1:1, we find that the "local church" is given a plurality of elders whose task is:

- 1) to "oversee" (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2) ; literally, "to look over — or after — a flock".
- 2) To "feed (or tend) the flock" (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2).
- 3) Teaching (1 Timothy 3:2).
- 4) Protect (Titus 1:9).
- 5) "Rule" (1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17); literally, "To stand be-fore" or "To be at the head as leader".
- 6) To be an example, or pattern (1 Peter 5:3).
- 7) To watch after, and give an account to God for, souls in their charge (Hebrews 13:17).

If elders adequately perform their God-given tasks, and discharge their responsibilities to the flock, they must know who are members of the "local flock — church", which they

TIMES OF SERVICES	
SUNDAY	
Bible Classes*	10:00 AM
AM Worship	10:45 AM
PM Worship	6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY	
Bible Classes*	7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)	
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oversee. This necessitates what is generally called “being identified” or “placing membership”. By this process the elders know that you are not “just a visitor” but that you intend to “work and worship” as a member of that congregation, and to be under their oversight.

The scriptures indicate that Christians should be not only a part of the “universal church”, but also a part of a “local church”. When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, he endeavored to “join himself” to the disciples there (Acts 9:26). Paul and Barnabas later became “identified” with the church at Antioch (Acts 11:26, 13:1).

Though it is conceivable that conditions may exist, where for a time one is a member only of the “universal church” (Acts 8:35-39), he should, as soon as possible, become “identified” with a “local church”, as did Paul and Barnabas (Philippians 4:9). If there is not a faithful congregation of the Lord’s people meeting in that area, he should begin one. Thus, the idea that one can be a member of a “local church” where he has not worshipped for weeks, months, and sometimes years, is denominational in origin and unscriptural in concept.

Some, to avoid responsibilities and discipline will become “floating members”; just visiting around from place to place, never “identifying” with any one congregation. If these people become needful of discipline, and are approached by the elders of any of the congregations where they attend, their immediate reply is; “but, we’re not members of your congregation!” Therefore, to eliminate this, when we move to another town, or permanently sever our connection with a congregation, we should find another faithful congregation of the Lord’s people and “join” our-selves to them; settle down and go to work.

Also, we should not lightly sever our connection with one congregation and “place membership” with another. Naturally, if we move from one town to another, it becomes essential that we do so at once. Sometime we may deem it necessary to become part of another “local church” within the same general area where we have previously worked and worshipped because:

- 1) We feel it necessary for our own spiritual growth.
- 2) We feel that such will enable us to be more effective and useful for the Lord.
- 3) There are unscriptural doctrines and/or practices in the former congregation which we are unable to correct. However; let us be sure that we can sub-ststantiate our claim of such.
- 4) There is such a strong difference of opinion as to the advisability — not scripturalness — of a particular work or activity that we feel it is better for peace and harmony that we work and worship elsewhere (Acts 15:36-41). If this is the reason, when at all possible, we should “forbear” with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- 5) We have been unscripturally and unjustifiably “withdrawn” from and are unable to get the mistake corrected. This sometimes happens. But let’s be positive it is they that are wrong, and not us! Also, that we have done ALL in our power to rectify the error!

When we leave one congregation and become “joined” to another, we should be ENTIRELY POSITIVE that our motives are honest and justifiable. It should never be done:

- 1) To put pressure on the former congregation to honor our particular whim.
- 2) Because the truth has been preached and our toes thereby stepped on.
- 3) To escape discipline or re-sponsibilities.
- 4) Through jealousy and envy because we have been passed over for some particular work.

If it be for such reasons as these, we will soon be dissatisfied with the new congregation!

When one “identifies” himself with a congregation, he should be admitted into the fellowship of that “local church”. If there seems any reason to doubt or question his previous faithfulness, the elders should exert every effort possible to satisfy themselves that this person is faithful and not in need of restoration. If it is found that he has not been faithful, or transferred membership to escape needed discipline, then the church should institute disciplinary action against this new member just as they would against any other. Likewise, if we seek to sever our connection with one congregation that we may be “joined” to a religious body in error, the elders have no course open but to begin disciplinary procedure.

What kind of church was it?

Selected

A lady approached a business man and asked for a donation on a church building.

"Yes, I will give \$100," replied the man, "if you will erect a sign saying, This is a church of Christ."

"Oh, no! We couldn't do that because it is not a church of Christ," answered the woman.

"Very well," replied the man, "I will still give you \$100 if you will put up a sign saying, "This is not a church of Christ."

"Oh, no, sir. You know we could not do that because it is a church of Christ."

Wonder what kind of church it was!?

This illustrates the confusion that exists when people think in denominational terms. People reject the Lord's name for men's and then still claim to be His. "church of Christ" is not a denominational title, but a description of Christ.

Incidentally, see what some churches who call themselves "of Christ" are practicing and teaching and we are still led to wonder: ***what kind of church is it? THINK.***

News N Notes

\Traveling:

- The Henderson's are in Alabama
- The Isinghood's and Dorothy Lancaster are in Iowa

Sick:

- Dorothy Sams, Linda Marshall's mother
- Susan and Scott Swanson, Dorothy Lancaster's daughter, and their baby.
- **Continue to remember**
 - Blake Headen, Alberta's husband
 - Amanda Dowdy
 - Vicki Renshaw
 - Terry Smith's brother George
 - Faith Kress, Linda Marshall's niece
 - Ed Roberts father
 - Ila Marshall, Harold Marshall's mother
 - Marie Roberts
 - Cindy North
 - Grace Lancaster

Nursing Home:

- Hazel Carroll
- Pauline Sellers

Shut-ins:

- Rhea Henthorn
- Ethel Mahan
- Josephine Clow
- Mabel Fleming
- Pauline Midcap