



The Special Work of Local Churches

The church is assigned the special work of making known "the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10-11). We must recognize that the term church refers to the people God purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). Failure to recognize this fact has led to many institutional concepts leading men to burden local churches with projects the Lord has not assigned.

Sadly, the well-meaning "service-oriented" mindset has led local churches to be laden down with feeding halls, "Adopt-A-Mile" cleanups and car washes for various benevolent institutions. Many have tried to activate the local church as a "Family Life Center" designed to provide for the social and recreational needs of children, parents, and the elderly. The God-given purpose of local churches is frustrated and thwarted by this social agenda.

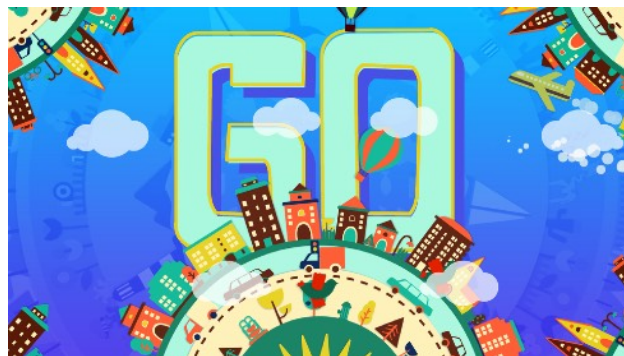
We must endeavor to learn what obligations the Lord has assigned His church (Phil. 4:9). We are not free to place upon the church any responsibility the Lord has not assigned. Jesus built His church and He has all authority (Matthew 16:18; 28:18). Paul claimed that his ways were "in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17). What he wrote to local churches was "the Lord's

commandment" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Desiring to please God in our collective work, we will look to the patterns and commands revealed in the New Testament.

Each Christian has responsibilities domestically, socially, and economically (Ephesians 5-6). The work of the local congregation is not determined by what the individual can do.

The distinction between responsibilities God has assigned individuals and those that are the obligations of the church is clearly delineated in 1 Timothy 5:8-16. Failure to recognize this distinction results in a shift of duties from the individual Christian to the local church.

The term "local church" is used to refer



to Christians who live at the same time

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WORSHIP TIMES

Sunday Worship:

- 9:30 AM - Sermon
- 10:30 AM - Bible Class
- 11:30 AM - Lord's Supper

Wednesday Worship:

- 7:00 PM - All ages

Friday Bible Study:

- 10:15 AM @ Annex

Bible Class Topics:

- Selected Psalms
- Prison Epistles
- Apologetics
- Children: Sacred Hearts
- Check with deacons for workbooks

Shepherds

- Amos Rowe
- Roger James
- Keith Parks
- Don Burleson

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Feel free to stop by the preachers' offices for Bible studies, prayers, talks, or a meeting.

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and same place. They have agreed to work and worship together under common oversight. Examples of this working relationship of believers are the churches at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26) and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1-8).

Each local church is equipped by God to accomplish all that He has assigned (Ephesians 4:11-16). The primary task of local churches is to function as a "family school" to bring each member to spiritual maturity in Christ. We observe this being accomplished by a local church in Acts 2:42. The strengthening power of God comes to those who feed on His Word and worship Him (Ephesians 3:14-21). New Testament churches produced teachers (Acts 6:3-5; 13:1). These teachers taught other faithful men (2 Timothy 1:1-2). Women, too, served in local churches (Romans 16:1). Today churches can and should be busy producing "... evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," (Ephesians 4:12).

The edification of members will have as its purpose the saving of souls. As local churches focus on spiritual maturity, each member, like Christ, will "come to seek ... that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Churches will sound forth the word of God (1 Thessalonians 1:8). They will send out teachers (Acts 13:1-3). They will support them prayerfully (2 Corinthians 1:11) and financially (Philippians 4:15-16).

They will welcome their return with the report of what God has done (Acts 15:27). They will encourage and train young men like Timothy to "preach the word" (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:2). Local churches will recognize the grand privilege of being "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

As God's family, local churches have special responsibilities for the physical welfare of one another. We learn by careful reading of the New Testament that local churches, in contrast to individuals, have limited responsibility in the realm of providing physical needs. A person is responsible to provide for "his own" (1 Timothy 5:8). Strict requirements must be met before a church is to place a widow on a permanent list for benevolence (1 Timothy 5:9-16). God does not permit the shifting of personal obligation onto the local assembly of Christians. When families could not, churches did and should provide the physical needs of saints in the local assembly and in other places (Acts 6:1-6; Romans 15:25-27; and 1 Corinthians 16:1-3).

When we realize the great privilege and responsibility God has enjoined upon His people as we work together in local churches, we will not permit ourselves to be burdened with activities that are unauthorized and lead men away from God. - Yeater, Alan

Missionary Spotlight: Larry Vinson

Brother Larry preaches several months of the year in Africa. He will be with us during our PM service and share his experiences in Africa. Please make plans to be present and support his efforts.

From brother Vinson: "This work began organically after meeting a fellow Christian from Malawi. He was a highly educated and respected brother who ran for President of the Republic in 2014. He passed from this world in 2015. I have been involved with this work since the Spring of 2016.

During that period (2016-2022), we have been blessed to assist more than 6,500 persons in finding the Church of our Lord and being added to His Kingdom. We have learned many important lessons that has helped us in the advancement of the Kingdom of God in that part of the world. We gladly share this knowledge with our brethren."



Becoming All Things to All Men

What responsible airline would consider recruiting Col. Qaddafi to promote to the American public the safety of their transatlantic flights? Such would defy reason. Yet, it probably seemed equally unthinkable to Ananias for the Lord to instruct him to seek out Paul in Damascus as the Lord's chosen vessel to bear His name to both Jew and Gentile (Acts 9:15). Paul, whose proud Jewish heritage and attainments led him to persecute his brethren who had become the Lord's disciples, hardly seemed the candidate to rub shoulders with the Gentiles and mingle with the Jewish brethren he had scattered by persecution throughout Judea and Samaria. However, Paul's faithful stewardship bears witness to the wisdom of God's choice.

One reason Paul succeeded in his ministry was his willingness to "become all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:23). In doing so, Paul described himself as under bondage to the Jew, those under law, those without law and the weak. He evidenced such concern by his refusal to accept from the Corinthians the material support to which he was entitled as a preacher of the gospel.

Living in a place like London, England, where the attitudes, customs and habits of people differ so markedly from ours, accentuates the wisdom of applying such a principle. It is truly a cosmopolitan city of eight million souls, most of whom live beyond the sights and sounds so familiar to the visiting tourist. Those to whom the gospel has been taken by means of correspondence course distribution live in the inner city of London, most in housing built by the government. It is a population diverse in its cultures and backgrounds, reflecting in part the flood of immigration from other parts of the Commonwealth after the last world war.

The church with whom I work here demonstrates this variety. It is not uncommon to be present in an assembly composed of Nigerians, Ghanians, Filipinos, West Indians, Malaysians, Italians, Americans and English, all residents of London. Many in the congregation are new converts, who initially have little more in common with their brethren than their conversion. Nora Cole, an Irish woman in her 70's, studied her way out of Catholicism aided by a correspondence course. Clive Wilson, whose parents come from the West Indies, was baptized in his bathtub when a teenager after learning the truth. Barbara Williams, whose husband is not a member, is an English housewife who has attended faithfully since her

conversion several years ago, even though it now means a two-hour train ride each way with her two-year-old daughter.

A "new work" in the U.S. is often comprised of a nucleus of members who have developed maturity through years of capable teaching at home and with the church. Although new converts may be included, they would share a background of middle class American beliefs and values. However, the "new work" here is composed primarily of individuals whose conversions have been in the past five years. This means the simple first principles that are second nature to us are still new concepts to them. A lack of common culture, along with English being a second language for some, complicates the process of teaching these concepts. They must also rely on others like themselves for encouragement rather than a core of mature Christians to whom they can turn for spiritual guidance.

Many "new works" in the U.S. result from a group of Christians deciding to meet in their own vicinity rather than drive a distance across town. Our membership is spread throughout the London area and beyond, in many cases miles from each other. The dependence of many on public transportation means that we need a meeting place that is both centralized and accessible to all. Rented accommodations, though sometimes unreliable, are preferable under present circumstances to buying a place in which to meet. Property in a centralized location is inordinately high, placing such well beyond the means of the congregation. This means the stability of the church cannot be measured by the progress being made in securing a permanent place in which to meet. The distances traveled by some also make it advantageous to have one extended meeting on Sunday as opposed to two shorter meetings, one in the morning and one in the evening.

Even though we are far removed from the first century, the gospel is best served when we exemplify Paul's attitude. This is true when taking the gospel to others and when seeking to encourage those who have been won for Christ. It is all too easy to assume that the expedient means by which we are accustomed to doing things is necessarily the best for others regardless of the circumstance. Let us accept the challenge of our own unique situation and discern how we, within our own environment, can best carry out the commands of God. -Matt Qualls, England

Member News and Prayer Requests

- Greg Dotson, Brandy's dad, was possibly bitten by a snake. He has been very sick. Luckily they did not have to amputate as was feared. He is septic however. His CT scan was good. He will have to stay in hospital for several days on IV antibiotics. He has recently gone through an amputation so we can imagine his anxiety with all of this. Please pray for his complete healing. Jerry and Hilda Johnson both have COVID. Thankfully they have a mild case and are both feeling better. Prayers please.
- Billy Birtley's dad has passed away. No arrangements yet. Please keep Billy, his siblings, Jonathan, Eric, and Shayna in your prayers.
- Carol is better but is still recuperating from a bad fall she had several days ago. She got a good report from the doctor today and is doing good with therapy as it continues.
- Norma Armstrong had a bad fall recently and has been in St. Vincent's Hospital for several days. She has a small fracture in the same leg that she had a knee replacement several years ago. They did not have to do surgery but have put it in some kind of a splint. She cannot put any weight on it. She was moving to Aspire in Hoover today where she will be having rehab. Prayers for a speedy recovery. Norma's room number is 117 and the phone number is 205-578-4059. Norma's son, Harold, had back surgery last week. Prayers please.
- William Pearce is a 35 year old young man married and living in Dallas, Texas who is a Christian. Back in August he found out that he had late stage aggressive and rare esophageal cancer. The treatments they have tried have not worked and the cancer has spread. He is not doing well at this time. Please pray for this young man and his family that the Lord will heal him.
- Sister Mary has covid and is resting at home. Pray for full recovery.
- Wayne Rogers was on stand by today for a new liver. However, the liver came in damaged and was unusable. He is still waiting. In the mean time, Linda had to get an Xray on her foot. Her GOOD foot is in really bad shape. The bones are breaking down and she has cellulitis and possible infection in her bones. She has to see an orthopedic. The ER already sent an order to be seen. When they were discussing the other issue in the other foot, they though they x-rayed the wrong foot. When she told them no, it gave them more concerns. Please keep Linda in your prayers as she's concerned she will have to be immobilized again.
- Janet Ethridge had a surgical procedure on February surgeon determined she still has an infection in the target area. Her vitals were off the charts. She was in a lot of pain and was sent home. Please continue to pray for her.
- **We will have a Gospel Meeting with Bro. Joseph Casimier beginning Sunday, March 5 - 8.**