

People Are Different

Yes they are, and joining hands in the Lord's service does not remove all differences. Occupations, hobbies, financial status, regional customs, age, and many other personal differences will dictate friendships and associations. There is no reason to expect these differences to vanish when we become members of the same local church. But if we will concentrate on what we have in common — on our love for the Lord, and desire to do His will; we will not allow personal differences to destroy our more noble purpose. We may, in fact, learn to share with one another to such an extent that our differences only expand the field of our church work. We can help one another "fill out" what is lacking in each of us, so that our differences become our balance and our strength.

A very few, who "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), will be a mighty force for good. Remember the church at Smyrna, rich in God's sight (Rev. 2:8–11); and determine to do all possible to make the church where you are a member, a Christ-approved church.



Announcements

"Pray for one another, that you may be healed"

(JAMES 5:16)

Carrell Arrington * Jo Byrnes * Betty Cannon * Joyce Coones *
Sleatha Gore * Faye Kilpatrick

New Directories

We are going to begin working on a new congregational photo directory. If you noticed changes that need to be made from our last directory, please tell or write them down for Jamey.

Chiefland Church of Christ

Meeting at 211 NE 2nd Street in *beautiful* Chiefland, Florida
PO Box 2539 • Chiefland FL 32644 • (352) 493-1242

THINGS ABOVE

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"

—[Colossians 3:1–2]—

June 21, 2009  Vol. 5, No. 14

www.ChieflandChurchofChrist.com

Membership in a Local Church

by Robert F. Turner

You became a member of the church that belongs to Christ when you were baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). The Lord added you to the number of His followers, metaphorically assembled, when you became obedient to the faith (Acts 2:36-41, 47). As a member of the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) you accepted certain obligations — to submit to His leadership revealed in His word; and to give yourself freely to the service of your Lord (Rom. 6:17-18; 1 Pet. 3:15). This is your status whether you become a member of a local church or not. But the Scriptures clearly teach you to work and worship with other brethren (Heb. 10:25). Their presence and accessibility, present both privilege and obligation to all who would be faithful to Christ.

Saints who have agreed to function as a team, under overseers and through servants, become a "church" in the local organized

sense (Phil. 1:1; 4:15). This “church” is made up of members of the universal body of Christ, yet has some distinctive roles — is not to be confused with the whole body of Christ, nor with individual members thereof. Believers are to care for their widows, “and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:16). A distinction is made between a plurality of saints engaged in a spiritual work, and “the church” (Matt. 18:17). Elders are to shepherd the flock “which is among you” — they have local church obligations (1 Pet. 5:1–3; Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23). Letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2:3) show clearly the distinctive nature of local churches. In becoming a member of a local church you accept obligations there also. You should not enter into local church membership without understanding the obligations and responsibilities that go with that relationship.

Team Responsibilities

This means you give up some independence to function collectively. There could be no effective team work if each member operated with his own judgment, with no regard for the team effort. A local church must operate with a common mind, i.e., agreement in judgment. The elders lead in forming this judgment, and as a sheep you are to follow your shepherds (1 Thess. 5:12ff). For a more current illustration: to play football as a team, each player must act in keeping with the play called by the quarterback or coach.

As much of the work done will be via some medium of exchange (money), you are obligated to bear your share of this load. The collection on the First Day of the week is a means of pooling resources so that team work can be done. When a planned program is announced, and you help finance that program, you are doing some share of that work — pulling with the team. But your participation also means you share in the responsibility for what is done. If you cannot conscientiously support your local church

program you had better change it, or join a team you believe is serving the Lord faithfully (Rom. 14:22–23).

Mutual Assistance

Church members sometimes seem to think their presence at service and their contribution to the treasury is the whole of their relationship to the local church. This ignores a most vital reason for collective work. Hebrews 10:25 gives “exhorting one another” (encouraging) as the basic purpose for assembling. We must learn to think of the local church as a mutual encouragement society: brethren banded together to help one another go to heaven. In public worship we “teach and admonish” by our singing (Col. 3:16). We edify one another even as we pray (1 Cor. 14:14–17). The Lord’s Supper recalls Christ’s sacrifice in our behalf and we “show the Lord’s death till he come” (11:23-26). Every member is told: “comfort yourselves together, and edify one another . . .” (1 Thess. 5:11).

And mutual assistance goes far beyond public worship. Fellow Christians enter into a pact to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). This involves seeking to correct the errors of one another (v. 1). When you enter into covenant relationship with other brethren, you accept the obligation to correct and encourage others; and agree that they should correct and encourage you. You are to love your brethren, not in word only, but in deed and truth (1 Jn. 3:16–19). True love removes the chips from our shoulders. It suffers long and is kind, envies not, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, etc (*see* 1 Cor. 13). These things need to be remembered when correcting, and when being corrected. If you have missed this aspect of fellowship in a local church, you are depriving others, and yourself, of help every saint needs and has a right to expect.