

we often invite members of other churches to attend special services we are offering whether lessons, lectures, singings, etc. We often encourage members of our congregation to attend the functions of other churches, even posting invitations on our bulletin board. Additionally, we often invite men who preach for other congregations to come and teach for us. Does this mean we are a denomination?

No. In fact, it just means we do the same things the Christians and churches did in the New Testament. Though we are not associated together in some kind of governmental organization, we do have interaction with other congregations. In fact, it would be ridiculous for us not to. Notice in 2 Corinthians 8:18, Paul talked about sending the brother who was famous among all the churches for his preaching. Here was a brother that preached in many different churches. That didn't make the churches part of an organizational hierarchy. It just meant many of them let this one fellow preach to them. In Acts 15, the church in Antioch sent men to Jerusalem to find out why the error about circumcision was originating there. That didn't mean they had a denominational structure just because they interacted with one another. When Paul came to Derbe on his second mission trip, he decided to have Timothy travel with them. The text in Acts 16:1-2 says he was well spoken of by the Christians in Lystra and Iconium as well. These churches had interaction. That doesn't mean they were in a denomination together.

### **Wrapping Up**

Despite the accusations made that we are part of a denomination, it just isn't true. Are there other churches like us? Sure. Do we interact? Definitely. Is there a governmental hierarchy over us? No.

This article looked at some of the mistaken concepts about our congregation and denominationalism. Come back next week in which I'll share some of the mistakes I hear Christians make about denominationalism.



↪ Chiefland Church of Christ ↪

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# 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 ] —

September 6, 2009  Vol. 5, No. 25

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## Are We Part of the “Church of Christ” Denomination?

By Edwin Crozier • via *Lifelines* (Vol. 11, No. 34)

**D**enominationalism has governed churches since the time of Martin Luther. So much so that few people can even comprehend just being a Christian without thinking we must be a certain *kind* of Christian — *Lutheran* Christian, *Catholic* Christian, *Baptist* Christian, etc. In fact, when you hear of a non-denominational church they rarely mean they are opposed to denominationalism, rather they mean they don't care what denomination you are part of. Sadly, some congregations present themselves as non-denominational but are still part of a denomination.

What about us? Are we part of a denomination called “The Church of Christ?” No, we are not. I want to share three common mistakes people make in claiming we are a denomination.

### ***Denominate Means to Name***

Commonly folks will say that the word “denominate” means to name, so if you name the congregation you have become part of a denomination by that name. Thus, if we call ourselves the Franklin Church of Christ then we are part of the Church of Christ denomination. Of course, I ask folks to look at that whole name. The whole name is “Franklin Church of Christ.” Why don’t they ask if we are part of the “Franklin Church of Christ” denomination. Even the assertion demonstrates a problem with this definition.

What we really need to note is a common mistake is made with this argument. No doubt one of the most basic definitions of the word “denominate” is “to name.” However, simply finding one definition of a term does not mean that is how it is being used in every context. For instance, the word “butterfly” does not refer to airborne dairy products.

Consider the following definitions as applied directly to the issues of churches and denominations:

- ◆ “Denominations are associations of congregations — though sometimes it might be said that congregations are localized subdivisions of denominations — that have a common heritage. Moreover, a true denomination does not claim to be the only legitimate expression of the church” (Donald G. Tinder, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984, p. 310).
- ◆ “Denominationalism — A term for the continuation of the organizations and emphasis on the divisions and distinctions of Protestantism” (Donald T. Kauffman, *The Dictionary of Religious Terms*, 1967, p. 147).

In the context of churches, a denomination does not equal a church that has a name. A denomination equals a group of churches that are associated together in an organized way. Notice, it does not simply refer to a group of churches that have a similar name. Consider the fact that Southern Baptist and Missionary Baptist are two separate denominations.

The question is not — *Does the name on the sign in front of our church’s building have a name similar to other congregations?* The question is — *Are organizationally associated with other churches?* We are not. In fact, we believe the Scripture does not authorize such organizational association. In the New Testament we find the universal church (Matthew 16:18). We see local churches (Romans 16:16). We see that local churches are to be governed by their own group of shepherds (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 14:23). That is how we are organized. We are an independent, autonomous group of Christians striving to glorify God as best we can by surrendering to the pattern established in the New Testament.

### ***Your Teaching Is the Same as Other Churches***

Because there are other churches that teach very similarly to us does not mean we are in a denominational arrangement with them. We have no offices or roles for people who are telling us along with other congregations what to teach. If another congregation teaches similarly to us it’s because when they study the Bible they have come to similar conclusions.

According to 1 Corinthians 4:17 the apostle Paul taught the same thing in every church. If those churches practiced what Paul taught them, did they suddenly become a denomination with each other? There is no evidence for that. In 1 Corinthians 16:1–4, Paul claimed he gave the Corinthian church the exact same instruction he gave the churches in Galatia regarding the collection. If all those churches followed those directions, they would be teaching and practicing the same thing. That did not make them a denomination.

The fact is, if we believe God has provided a clear revelation for us, we would expect all churches who are following the Bible to teach and practice similar things. That won’t mean they are a denomination. It will mean they are following the same standard.

### ***You Interact with Other Congregations***

Since there are other churches that teach and practice similar things to us, we often interact with them. What I mean by that is