

News & Notes

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Remember in Prayer: Daryl Alberson; Tommy Alberson; Venetta Alberson; Mary Bailey; Johnny Carr; Vikie Cobb; Melba Cox; Mary Ann Duke; Lettie Mae Hunt; Charles Johnson; Faith Johnson; Shirley Judge; Dot Ketchum; Sam Kidd; Wayne Kidd; James Luna; John and Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Willie Mae Needham; Kaylee Northrop; Larry Price; Ann Ray; Jerry Ray; Bobby Russum; Jonell Rutledge; Katherine Shaw; Chris Spence; Jamie Spence; Calvin Ursery; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of May is pasta.

We are in need of the **cardboard cylinders** from paper towel rolls and **boxes** for Vacation Bible School projects.

Ashland Events: Today: Prayer meeting at 4:00 PM; June 8-11: Vacation Bible School;

Area Events: June 21: Youth rally at the Booneville church of Christ;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Who Are We Working For?

PM: Why Work?

For the Record (May 11, 2008):

Attendance: 82 Contribution: \$1363.00 Budget: \$1452.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Carrol Street

Romans 11:33

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

Increasing in the Knowledge of God



Are You A Member Of The Church

Nathan Brewer

If you are like most people, your initial response to this question is, "Which church?" But when we examine the New Testament we find that Jesus promised to build only one church. (Matthew 16:18). When Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," he assured Peter and the other apostles that not even his own death would prevent its establishment. With that statement, Christ also pronounced an oft-missed eternal truth—he was going to build only one church. Jesus made good on His promise in Acts 2 when the church or kingdom was inaugurated and those who obeyed the gospel were added to it. (Acts 2:41)

When we ask the question, "Are You A Member Of The Church?" we are asking if you are a member of the same church Jesus established. Now, of course, we know you don't live in Jerusalem where the church was founded. The New Testament speaks of the Lord's church in different places, such as the church at Philippi and the church at Ephesus. One does not have to live in Jerusalem to be a member of the church Jesus built. So, "are you a member of Christ's church?"

Many Different Churches

There are many different churches in the United States, all claiming to exist by Christ's authority and to follow him. These denominations wear different names, teach different things, and worship differently, yet they all claim to be Biblical. This causes a great deal of confusion. Didn't Jesus promise to build only one church? Indeed, he did. Yet, most people today think that belonging to a denomination is the only way to be a Christian. For example, a couple of years ago my family and I were in a waiting room during my sister's surgery. As we

waited, my father read a book of sermons. This caused a woman sitting beside him to ask if he was a preacher. When he answered that he was, she asked, "Which denomination?" Her only conception of Christianity was denominationalism. It occurred to me that if this woman had lived back in the first century when the apostles were still alive and teaching, she never would have asked that question. Do you know why? Because back then denominations didn't exist! So, why do they exist now?

Why Denominations?

Paul the apostle predicted a falling away by the Lord's church in some of his New Testament writings. Passages such as 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 bear this out. The falling away did come in the form of the Catholic Church. In the 15th and 16th centuries men began to go to the Bible and see that the teaching and practices of the Catholic Church were opposed to the teaching of God's word. Out of this came what was known as the Reformation. Men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin tried to reform the Catholic Church by taking out false Catholic doctrines and inserting doctrines they deemed appropriate.

This was a noble effort, but it did not go far enough. Instead of simply going to the New Testament and restoring the church contained therein, they attempted to reform something that was never right to begin with. By stopping short, they still did not have the church of Christ. Their efforts resulted in the confusion we know today as denominationalism. These man-made churches plague the world and are a great hindrance to the cause of Christ.

Which One Is Right?

With all the different churches floating around today, how do we know which one Jesus built? The church of Jesus Christ also has its identifying marks. They are as follows:

- **Worship:** The New Testament church engaged in a very simple worship, which consisted of five acts. Those are preaching, or teaching, (Acts 2:42), partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), praying (Acts 2:42), and singing without the accompaniment of instrumental music (Ephesians 5:19). These five things were done each first day of the week without addition or subtraction.

- **Teaching On Salvation:** Many false doctrines abound concerning the soul's salvation, but the Bible plainly teaches acts of obedience must be performed to please God (Matthew 7:21-23). These things are belief (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of Jesus Christ as God's Son (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and baptism in water (Mark 16:16). When these commands are obeyed from an honest heart, one is saved from his sins and added to the church Jesus built. (Acts 2:41, 47).
- **Name Worn:** Have you ever stopped to think that the names "Methodist," "Presbyterian," and "Lutheran" are never used in the New Testament to describe the followers of Christ? The term "Baptist" was used of John because he came preaching and baptizing, but that name was never applied to a follower of Christ. Man-made names such as these denominational titles are not appropriate to wear as a true disciple of the Saviour. Peter stated in Acts 4:12 that, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Those who are the saved do not wear man-made names such as Lutheran, Baptist, or Methodist. They wear Christ's name. This is why disciples of Jesus in the New Testament and today are known simply as "Christians." (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:15-16).
- **Church Government:** Local congregations of churches of Christ are to be overseen by a plurality of men known as elders or bishops. (1 Timothy 3:1-7). They may also have men serving as deacons or servants under their oversight. The elders are the shepherds who keep watch over Christ's flock while he is in heaven. If congregations do not have men who are qualified to be elders (see also Titus 1:6-9) then they must work to develop men who are qualified and able to fill that void.

With these identifying marks, one can locate the church of the Bible today. If a congregation worships as the church of the first century did, if it teaches what the New Testament teaches, if its members wear the name of Christ to the exclusion of men's names, and if it is organized as the church found in the Scriptures, then you have found the church Jesus established. If you are a member of some other religious body, we beg you to locate the church of the Bible and be simply a Christian who worships and works according to the New Testament pattern.