

## News & Notes

Sunday, January 11, 2010

**Remember in Prayer:** Jaunita Akin; Arland Anderson; Mary Baily; Johnny Car; Sherri Fewels; Grady Gowdy; James Grogan; Jackie Hampton; Calprettina Judge; David Judge; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Judy Massey; Carl Perkins; Lowell Poff; Ann Ray; Curtis Ray; Katherine Shaw; Calvin Ursery; Joan Wilkerson; Alvie Williford;

**Sympathy** is extended to the Isem family.

**Pantry item** for the month of January is trash bags.

There are **daily Bible reading schedules** in the foyer for those who would like to read the Bible through in 2010.

**Ashland Events:** Today: Elder's meeting at 4:00 PM; January 16: Men's breakfast at 9:00 AM; January 30: Ashland Youth Rally 2010;

**Area Events:** January 23: Bible Bowl at the Coffeeville congregation;

### Sermon in Preview:

AM: How Do We Know the Bible is from God?

PM: The Bible's Indestructibility

### For the Record (January 3, 2010):

Attendance: 81      Contribution: \$1481.00      Budget: \$1459.00

### *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  
Jeff Roberson  
Carrol Street

# ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

A YEAR OF REMEMBRANCE

*"Remind them of these things..." (2Timothy 2:14)*

## The Purpose of the Church

Jeremy Northrop

There are so many aspects of Christianity which are very personal or individual in nature. Salvation is personal. No one can be saved for or on behalf of another. "All men everywhere" (each individual person) are exhorted to repent (Acts 17:11). If a person is saved, it is because of the individual effort of that person. Worship is a very personal matter. No one can worship for another person. Worship is governed in that it must be "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Yet the same verse shows the personal nature of worship — "those who worship Him..." Service is a very personal matter. Again, no one person can serve on behalf of another. Matthew 25:43-44 outlines some specific things which Jesus commands His disciples. Each individual Christian must engage in these acts of service. Judgment will be a very personal affair. No groups of people or congregations will be judged together as a group. Each person will stand before judgment individually and give an account of the things they have done (Romans 14:12; 2Timothy 4:1; 1Peter 4:5). With so much of Christianity being personal, it is easy to wonder why God would design and create the concept of the universal church. *What is the purpose of the church?*

There are many things about the church which easily show its significance. The church is not something that was developed by a man or a group of men. The idea was created and fostered in the mind of God. In fact, it is the means of salvation which God offers mankind. In Acts 2:38, Peter exhorted the people to repent and be baptized. Later in verse 47, the text says that those who were baptized (saved) were added to the church by God. Jesus promised that He would build the church (Matthew 16:18). The church was

created and nurtured by God. Entrance into the church is dependent on God. The concept of the church was fostered by God before time even began (Ephesians 1:3-6). Though some may try to argue that the church is some afterthought of God, the scriptures simply deny such. God purposed for there to be the church before time began. In order for the church to be established, the shedding of the blood of God's Son was required. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures..." (1Corinthians 15:3). Acts 20:28 says that Christ bought the church with His blood. The church is a foreordained purposed organization by the God of Heaven. It is definitely important. Yet, *what is the purpose of the church?*

One of the purposes of the church is the evangelization of the lost. Jesus gave the great commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus commanded His disciples to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Before each of these instances, Jesus gave the apostles the responsibility to preach concerning the kingdom of Heaven and its coming (Matthew 10:7). The book of Acts continues as a model showing how evangelism is to be done. Succinctly, it should be done, "publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Legions of people were converted to New Testament Christianity throughout the book of Acts. Jesus expects His church today to teach the lost so they might have the opportunity to be saved. One of the purposes of the church is to evangelize the lost.

Another purpose of the church is the edification or maturation of the saved. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and commanded, "Let all things be done for edification" (1Corinthians 14:26). The context of this passage concerns the use of miracles. However, Paul was very concerned that the members of the church edify one another as he mentions it again in 2Corinthians 10:8 and 12:19. In principle, this concept is not difficult. The church serves as a medium through which her members can exhort, encourage, and uplift one another. Some people however, while they may have this understanding, do not practice such as they do not regularly attend the services of the saints or meet with and encourage fellow members. This kind of behavior is warned against in the Bible (Hebrews 10:25). It also simply stands to reason that if the members of the church do not come together and have fellowship with one another, then the work or purpose of the church cannot be accomplished.

Still, another purpose of the church is benevolence. Because of life's circumstances, there have been and will always be those who are less fortunate than others. James tells the people of God to look after or visit the widows and orphans (James 1:27). Jesus exhorted that when Christians do acts of kindness toward others, it is the same as doing the act toward Him (Matthew 25:23-24). Paul instructed Timothy to "Honor the widows who are really widows" (1Timothy 5:3). In fact, Paul goes on to show that using the money out of the church treasury to help these women is acceptable and right. This work is not only for the members of the church but for anyone who is truly in need. Galatians 6:10 says, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Helping those who are less fortunate has always been in the mind of God. The Old Testament book of Ruth shows how Boaz, a righteous man, cared for two widows. Benevolence is one of the purposes of the church.

One final purpose of the church is the worship of God Almighty. Worship is regulated in John 4:24 but verse 23 reveals some interesting truths. Jesus informed the woman of Samaria that the time was coming (is) when the "true worshippers" will worship God as regulated in John 4:24. Who are the true worshippers? The text says those who worship in spirit and in truth. That is those who worship sincerely (without hypocrisy) and biblically (as God has commanded He be worshiped). To worship in truth would be to only worship as God has allowed or through prayer, instruction, singing, communion, and giving. James 5:16 says the righteous man's prayer will be effective. Ephesians 1:11-12 says it is Christians (the recipients of the letter) who should be worshipping God. The non-Christian (the person who is not a member of the church) cannot worship God acceptably. Thus, one purpose of the church is worship.

As individual as so many things about Christianity are, there are still things which must be done collectively. The church is still commanded to come together as seen in Acts 20:6-7. The church exists as the universal body of Christ. The church exists for a purpose or reason. The church is responsible for the evangelization of the lost, the edification of the saved, the help of the poor or less fortunate, and the worship of God Almighty.