

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Worship 10:00 A.M.
Training Class 5:00 P.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.



Weekly Bulletin

April 8, 2018

Back to the Beginning: A Study of Local Churches in the New Testament (Part 2)

by Bryan Gibson

New Testament churches were not tied together to form any larger organization—no conventions, associations, councils, etc. We find nothing even resembling the organizational structure found in denominations today. Each local church was designed to be under the oversight of its own elders (1 Peter 5:1-2). Local churches functioning independently of each other, without any “outside” supervision—it’s hard for most folks to imagine that in today’s religious world, but that’s exactly what you find in the New Testament.

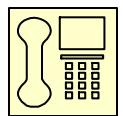
New Testament churches never gave control to some other organization or institution to do the work God perfectly equipped them to do (Ephesians 4:11-16). Not only is the New Testament silent on this, but to do so would also violate the principle of local oversight, mentioned in the previous point.

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New Testament churches never did their work through what is sometimes called a “sponsoring church,” where a number of churches may send money or aid to one church, who may then conduct an evangelistic campaign, or perhaps some benevolence program. Again, when this is done, one church is surrendering oversight to another, and we know better than that (1 Peter 5:1-2).

New Testament churches did not recognize “floating memberships,” where a person simply “became” a member wherever he happened to show up. Individual Christians **joined** a local church (Acts 9:26), and each church had a recognizable membership (they could know who constituted “the whole church”—1 Corinthians 14:23). “Shepherd the flock the God which is among you” (1 Peter 5:2)—that’s the charge given to elders, and it’s awful hard for them to do that if they don’t know who’s in the flock.

New Testament churches were not obligated to receive as members everyone who wanted to join. Two examples to illustrate this point: First, it took some persuading by Barnabas to convince the church at Jerusalem to receive Paul (Acts 9:26-28). They were afraid of him, because he had been zealous in persecuting Christians, and they didn’t know he had been converted. Secondly, the church at Ephesus wrote a letter to the church at Corinth, urging the brethren there to receive Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). What that implies, of course, is that they did not have to receive him, if they felt there was reason for concern. Would there be anything wrong with a church doing the opposite, writing to another church to warn them **not** to receive someone? That’s essentially what you have in

some of Paul’s epistles, when he warned brethren about certain individuals who were teaching false doctrine or who had gone astray (e.g. 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17-18; 4:10, 14).

New Testament churches disciplined their own members, when efforts to get them to repent had failed (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:10-11). It was done with two chief purposes in mind: (1) to save the soul of the disciplined individual (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:14); (2) to keep the church pure—to keep this sin from spreading to others (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Next week: Part 3—conclusion

A Broken and Contrite Heart

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a **broken and contrite** heart—these, O God, you will not despise” (Psalms 51:17).

What is a broken and contrite heart?

1. A heart that hates sin, just like God does, because it understands both the nature (Psa. 51:1-4) and the consequences of sin (Psa. 32:4; 38:1-2).
2. A heart broken, crushed, or shattered to pieces by sin (Psa. 34:18; 31:10; 38:4-8), a heart weighed down by the burden of guilt, a heart from which all joy has been removed.
3. A heart that wants to be mended, wants to feel joy again, wants to be restored to God again (Psa. 51:7-9, 12, 14-15).
4. A heart willing to repent, a heart that doesn’t want to break God’s heart again, a heart that wants to learn and do better (Psa. 51:10, 12-13; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10).