

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

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Elders:

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This Week's Question:

What sinister creature came in droves and killed the people of Israel in the wilderness?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Song of Solomon 8:6

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The Local Church

Lynn D. Headrick

GOD DOES EVERYTHING PERFECTLY. HE devised a simple and sufficient organizational structure for His church. His plan calls for elders in every church (Acts 14:23) who oversee, feed, and tend the flock of God which is among them (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). God intends that the congregation be served by deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). **The original pattern is thus succinctly stated.**

But now it is different, as even the casual observer can see. Priests, rectors, and other clerics control congregations. Above the congregational level, hierarchal systems, powerful councils, conventions, synods, and conferences dictate the activities of local churches. **The original pattern is obscured by human additions.**

Why this departure from scriptural simplicity?

Perhaps the faith of some has weakened to the extent that they feel that God's first century organizational plan is inadequate for present-day churches. That bent is strengthened by the nature of the society in which we live.

Americans are given to organizing. We must have line and staff charts and identify the chain of command. Indeed, the word organize is the badge of politicians, the hallmark of corporations and educational systems, and the distinctive feature of institutional religion. We organize, methodize, and systematize until we anathematize simplicity! Human organizational concepts are so constantly promulgated, so prominent, and so pervasive in our lifestyle as to make it appear incredible or ludicrous to say that God could outline the entire organizational structure of His church in one short statement. But He did! “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1). Philippi is God’s model for congregational organization. **Our task is to restore this simplicity.**

Pioneer preacher E. A. Elam wrote, “A simple church at a place—with its elders, deacons and other members—is all the organizing and centralizing God has ever done for his church” (Elam’s Notes, 1923, p. 127). Has not man’s penchant for devising complicated organizational systems all but obliterated from the minds of professed Christians the simplicity of God’s order? How great is the need for restoration!

The skilled artist can restore the masterpiece of art that has been defaced, obscured or mutilated. So, too, can faithful Bible students restore God’s masterpiece of local church organization.

Restoration can be effected only when we use words in the same way that they are used in the New

Testament. The words elders or presbyters, bishops or overseers, and pastors or shepherds all refer to the same group of men (Acts 20:17, 28). These men are equal in rank. Bishops, elders or pastors are to be the husbands of one wife having children that believe (Titus 1:6). The vocabulary of the New Testament does not mention a presiding elder, general overseer, vicar general nor yet a rural dean! Bible words are to be used in the way the Bible uses them if restoration is to be effected.

Restoration can be accomplished only by reading and following the original blueprint. The New Testament is the blueprint and we must follow it as the faithful builder follows the architect’s plans. The blueprint calls for more than one bishop, elder, or pastor to be responsible for the oversight of one congregation. Bishops, deacons and saints constituted a complete body of Christ at Philippi. It functioned independently of all other local congregations such as Thessalonica, Jerusalem or Rome. The New Testament is silent about shepherds overseeing work outside the flock among them. All local churches are equal, governing themselves in obedience to the Will of Christ. Following the blueprint without addition or subtraction not only is a giant step for man in the restoration of local church organization, but it is the only step required of him.