

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mrs. Calvert, Mrs. Douglas, Mr. Douglas' mother, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Kelly Hall, Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Ms. Kim (Ashley Law's mother), Mrs. Lowery, Lamar Mathis, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mrs. Siota, Mr. Winns.

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com.
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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Cooperation Among Churches

By Derek Long

One of the departures from the faith which took place in the days following the first century is a centralizing of local churches. The Roman Catholic Church is an example of where such centralization led to. Many denominations around us have some sort of centralized structure. Things like conventions, councils, governing bodies, etc. all are attempts to centralize local churches. Even denominations which claim to respect local church autonomy often still seek to establish some form of association among churches. The Southern Baptist churches for example say, "Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner" (*The Baptist Faith and Message*. Retrieved from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm200/bfm200.asp>). Some local churches calling themselves churches of Christ have also sought to work together in ways we do not read of in the New Testament. Let's examine some New Testament principles regarding cooperation among local churches.

God's word teaches each local congregation is autonomous. God expects each congregation to strive to have a plurality of elders appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) who shepherd the flock of God which they are members of (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). If each congregation is overseen by its own elders and each congregation is to have its own elders, we see God's design of local churches directing their own work. Efforts to activate the universal church in some sort of collective function end up violating the self-governance of local congregations.

God's word teaches multiple local churches may support a preacher in a certain place. Paul describes his actions in 2 Corinthians 11:8, "I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you." Paul was being supported by several different congregations at the same time with God's approval. They did not have to form a missionary society, a cooperative program, a sponsoring church, or any other arrangement to do this. Each local congregation was able to send its support directly to Paul and thus many different congregations were playing a part in supporting the work of Paul. Today, we should follow the same pattern in seeking to support those who preach the gospel in different places.

God's word teaches multiple local churches may respond to a benevolent need among needy saints in a particular location. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 saying, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by

your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. And if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me." God expects each local congregation to have a collection on the first day of the week. Here we find churches of Galatia as well as the church at Corinth were going to use money from this collection to help needy saints in Jerusalem. Romans 15; 2 Corinthians 8-9 are other passages showing how many different congregations each individually sent money to the needy saints in Jerusalem. There was no need to create a disaster relief fund or some other association so the need could be taken care of.

God's word teaches the benevolent work of local churches is limited to needy saints. 1 Corinthians 16:1 says the collection was "for the saints." Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 6:1; 11:28-30 show how benevolence which was taken care of collectively by a local church was limited to needy saints. Many denominations and some churches claiming to be churches of Christ are involved in relieving the benevolent needs of not just saints but anyone. When local churches form associations to carry out benevolence toward unbelievers, they are stepping outside of the pattern we find revealed in the New Testament. It is important we remain within the doctrine of Christ. It is important we make sure we have authority for the things we do as individuals and those things which are practiced by the local churches we are members of. 2 John 9-11 says, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."