

The Universal Church

I believe there is one universal and spiritual body of Christ (Eph. 4:4-6), which is composed of all those who have been elected by God the Father, (Eph. 1:4-5), regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and forgiven of their sins by Christ Jesus (Matt. 26:28; Acts 10:43). Christ is the builder, (Mt. 16:18), head (Col. 1:18) and savior (Eph. 5:23) of the church. The church was the mystery spoken about in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28), prophesied by Christ (Acts 1:5) and created on Pentecost by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) to exalt Jesus Christ as Lord of all (Eph. 1:12). Christ loves (Eph. 5:25), nourishes (Eph. 5:29) and grows (Acts 2:47) the church.

I believe the purpose of the church is to exalt Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:12) through worship (Col. 3:16-17), prayer (Acts 2:42), proclamation of the Word (Col. 1:28) and service to everyone (Eph. 2:10; Lk. 10:25-37).

I believe the church is a part of the people of God from all ages who have been graciously saved by sheer grace from Jesus (Gal. 3:29), at the same time, the church is distinguished from Israel, which has a separate and primary role in the redemptive purposes of God (Rom. 11:23-27)!

The Local Church

I believe the local church is the visible manifestation of the universal church in a specific locale (1 Thess. 1:1; Eph. 1:1) and carries out the purposes of the universal church in its local context. The local church is an organized (1 Cor. 14:40), autonomous (Phil. 4:5) local body, composed of regenerated believers who are diverse, yet unified in

the person and work of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-27), and given gifts by the Holy Spirit to strengthen and build up the church through service (1 Cor. 12:4-7; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10). Believers are commanded to be a contributing member of a local church and encourage others believers to be as well (Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:10).

I believe God has ordained two offices for the benefit of the local church: Elders or overseers (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and deacons (Acts 6:1-7). They are chosen by the church and appointed by the elders after having been examined and found to meet the qualifications of the office (1 Tim. 3:1-18; Titus 1:5-9). Elders are men who have spiritual oversight for the body, including teaching (1 Tim. 3:2), protecting (Titus 1:9), shepherding (Acts 20) setting an example to follow (1 Pet. 5:3) and by equipping others for lives of service (Eph. 4:11). Deacons are men *and* women who provide administrative service to the body and free the elders to provide spiritual oversight (Acts 6:1-7).

I believe the local church was given two ordinances by Christ in which to participate (Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-29). One is believers' baptism, which is a public declaration, and identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper, which is a continuing ordinance (1 Cor. 11:23-25) that symbolizes Christ's redeeming work (Lk. 22:17-20), and causes Believers to reflect upon Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:23-25), rejoice in His resurrection and our union with Him (1 Cor. 11:25; Jer. 31:31-34) and look forward to His soon return (1 Cor. 11:26)!

