

WHAT WE BELIEVE

The Church

ARTICLE 6

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.

ARTICLE 6

VI. The Church (*continued*)

Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

ARTICLE 6

VI. The Church (*continued*)

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3

OUR BELIEFS

The Church

We believe that the church is comprised of all born again believers, primarily represented through a local body of baptized believers with the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head. The local body is an autonomous congregation covenanted together in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinances, exercising their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of one another, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

TWO WORDS FOR THE CHURCH

- The Hebrew word *qahal* means “assembly” or “gathered people.” It does not always refer to a religious assembly, but it does most often refer to the congregation of Israel.
- The Greek word *ekklesia* is the major sources of understanding for the New Testament concept of “church.”

TWO WORDS FOR THE CHURCH

- *Ekklesia* is used in two different ways in the New Testament in reference to the church.
- The primary use of the word denotes a physical assembly identified by a distinctly Christian unity, or what is now referred to as a local church. This is the way that the word is used most of the time in the Bible (90 times in all) (e.g., Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23; 15:41; 16:5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1).

TWO WORDS FOR THE CHURCH

- The metaphorical usage of *ekklesia* refers to the church in a universal aspect, a group typified not by physical assembly but by spiritual unity. This use of the term occurs 19 times in the Bible (e.g., Matthew 16:18; Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 5:25).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- People of God
 - The church as the people of God means we belong to him, we are his. This idea is based upon the Old Testament description of Israel as the people of God (Exodus 15:13, 16; Numbers 14:8; Deuteronomy 32:9-10; Isaiah 62:4; Jeremiah 12:7-10; Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- People of God
 - That the church is the people of God emphasizes that God takes pride in his church, he cares for us, he protects us, and that he has chosen us to be his people. The church, among all of humanity, is uniquely God's people.

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- People of God
 - 1 Peter 2:9-10 - But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Body of Christ
 - This image emphasizes that the church is the location of Christ's ministry now, just as Christ's physical body was during his earthly ministry. The church is the extension of Christ's ministry (Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:12). This imagery is used both of the universal church (Ephesians 1:22-23) and of the local church (1 Corinthians 12:27).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Body of Christ
 - 1 Corinthians 12:27 - Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.
 - Ephesians 1:22-23 - And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Body of Christ
 - The image also emphasizes the connection of the church with Christ. Individual believers are united with Christ in salvation. Christ is the head of the body (Colossians 1:18), of which believers are the individual parts, and believers are only in the body when they are connected to the head (Colossians 2:19).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Body of Christ
 - As the head of the body, Christ is the sole ruler of the church (Colossians 2:9-10). All authority in the church (pastoral, congregational) is delegated authority from Christ (e.g., 1 Peter 5:1-4).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Body of Christ
 - The image also means that all believers are apart of the same body and are therefore interconnected (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). As the body of Christ, the church should be characterized by genuine fellowship and unity.

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Temple of the Holy Spirit
 - The Spirit is the one who brought the church into being at Pentecost, and he indwells the church both individually (1 Corinthians 6:19) and collectively (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5).
 - 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Temple of the Holy Spirit
 - As the one dwelling in the church, the Holy Spirit imparts his life to it (Galatians 5:22-23), gives it its power (John 16:7-11; Acts 1:8), produces unity within it (Acts 4:32), makes it holy and pure (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and creates a sensitivity to the Lord's leading (Romans 8:9-10).

BIBLICAL PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

- Temple of the Holy Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit is the one who distributes gifts to each member of the church so that they can function in various offices and fulfill various ministries (1 Corinthians 12:11).

MARKS OF THE CHURCH

- **Traditional Marks:** one, holy, catholic, and apostolic
- **Reformation Marks:** preaching of the gospel, correct administration of the sacraments

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE'S OF THE CHURCH

- The Primacy of Scripture
- Individual Accountability Toward God
- Soul Competency
- Regenerate Church Membership
- Believer's Baptism

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE'S OF THE CHURCH

- Priesthood of Believers
- Religious Liberty
- Local Church Autonomy
- Congregational Church Government
- Commitment to Missions and Evangelism

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- Acts 2:43-47 - Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- **Worship** - Ephesians 1:12 - “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- **Discipleship** - Ephesians 4:11-13 - “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- **Fellowship** - 1 Corinthians 12:26 “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”
- **Evangelism/Missions** - Acts 1:8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- **Ministry/Service** – 1 John 3:17-18 “But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- The congregational form of church government stresses the role of the individual believer and understands the local congregation as the authority in church matters.
- There is no person or institution outside of the local church that can tell that church what to do or to believe. Each church is accountable only to Christ.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- While pastors have authority in local churches, this authority is invested in them by the churches, and they are accountable to the churches. Churches may be part of denominations, but they do so voluntarily.
- This form of church government follows the New Testament most closely.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- In and Acts and the Epistles, the focus is on the local church, and there is never reference to any structure outside of the local church. There is no instance of an individual or organization exercising control outside of the church. Even Paul had to convince his readers to follow his advice (e.g., Galatians 1:11-24).
- The pattern in the book of Acts is that the congregation as a whole chooses its leaders and determines its own policy (Acts 1; 6; 13:1-3; 14:27; 15:2-3, 22).

CHURCH OFFICES

- **Pastor/Elder/Bishop** (all three terms refer to the same office)
- The principal ministry of the pastor consists of leading and overseeing the work of the church in all its aspects (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:3), proclaiming and guarding the truth through teaching and preaching (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9), and prayer (Acts 6:4).

CHURCH OFFICES

- The qualifications of pastors are found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and are made up of certain character traits and patterns of godly living.
- Moral qualifications (so he would be a worthy example and someone who would command the respect of the outside world)

CHURCH OFFICES

- The qualifications of pastors are found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and are made up of certain character traits and patterns of godly living *(continued)*
- Marital and family qualifications (serve as an example and leader in marriage and family)
- Areas of giftedness (must be able to lead and teach)
- Spiritual maturity (cannot be a recent convert)

CHURCH OFFICES

- **Deacons** - The word “deacon” is a translation of the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “servant.” The precise areas of service are never spelled out in Scripture, indicating some degree of flexibility depending on the church and its needs.
- The qualifications for deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. This list is similar to the list for pastors, but deacons are never required in Scripture to be able to teach or rule.

CHURCH OFFICES

- They are to be Spirit and wisdom filled (Acts 6:3), men of good reputation, knowing sound doctrine, mature in the faith, and examples in marriage and family.
- This, along with the likelihood that Acts 6:1-6 refers to deacons, suggests that the main functions of deacons are ministry-oriented and administrative in nature. Deacons are called to assist the pastors in such a way that they can focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer.