



pews, gold-plated communion trays, or marble bathroom fixtures, if the church is charged to assemble, then the church is authorized to do what is needed to carry-out that charge.

The very command to assemble authorizes a congregation to secure a place to carry out that command. What if this requires spending money? How is the church authorized to secure money? Through the “collection for the saints” (1 Corinthians 16:1). While this might not authorize the church to buy Corinthian leather

Conclusion

The Bible grants the church liberty to meet in a variety of different settings. However, the very command to assemble authorizes the church to do what is necessary to fulfill that command. If a congregation through necessity or choice decides to secure a permanent place to assemble it is authorized by approved example and the generic authority of the command to assemble to do so. Given that the authority to secure a permanent place of assembly comes from the generic authority to assemble, it is imperative that a congregation limit its use of such a facility to only those things which the church itself is authorized to do.



Faithful Sayings Issue 11.27 July 5, 2009

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

11.27

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

July 5
2009

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Fred Perez
Rusty Scott

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“Let us consider
one another in
order to stir up love
and good works”
Hebrews 10:24

Does the Bible Authorize Building a Meeting House?

by Kyle Pope

Following the Bible as our sole pattern means that we as Christians must be willing to test all things we do by that pattern. Even in things that may be longstanding practices, it is fitting for us to test whether the Bible authorizes those practices. In that spirit, let’s consider a question that often arises in issues regarding what the church is authorized to do—*Is there Biblical authority for the church to build a building?*

New Testament Places of Assembly

The Bible tells us that the first Christians in Jerusalem assembled in the temple courts. Acts 2:46 describes them as—**“continuing daily with one accord in the temple”** (NKJV). This would not refer to the temple itself, where only priests could enter, but the courts and colonnades which surrounded it. As the church grew outside of Jerusalem, some Christians are described

as opening their homes to allow the church to assemble there. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome he told them to greet Aquila and Priscilla (16:3), adding later, **“greet the church that is in their house”** (16:5). When this same couple lived outside of Rome, they did the same elsewhere. Writing to the Corinthians Paul says—**“the churches of—Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord,**



Olsen Park church of Christ

with the church that is in their house” (1 Corinthians 16:19). In Laodicea a brother named Nymphas opened his home to the church. To the Colossians Paul charged—**“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house”** (Colossians 4:15). Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, a family in Colosse, hosted the church in their home (Philemon 2). Some think that Archippus may have preached for this congregation. Paul wrote, **“say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’”** (Colossians 4:17).

In addition to homes and the temple courts, the Bible records for us that churches also made other arrangements for places to meet. After Paul withdrew from the synagogue in the city of Ephesus, he met with the brethren in what was called **“the school of Tyrannus”** (Acts 19:9). It is unclear whether this was a building, a courtyard or some other type of place normally used for schooling. The text doesn’t tell us how the brethren secured this place to meet. Did they pay rent to use it? Was one of the members involved with the school? We do not know.

Finally there is one other text which adds to our understanding of this issue. In the epistle of James a word is used describing a Christian assembly which may tell us something about the place of the assembly. Teaching the brethren about the sin of partiality, James begins, **“if there should come into your assembly a man...”** (James 2:2). The word translated “assembly” is the Greek word *synagogue* translated elsewhere “synagogue.” By the time of the first century this term was used to refer to both the people

and the place of a Jewish assembly. The text in James is talking about a Christian assembly, but the use of this word may indicate that James is talking about a Christian meeting house. If so, once again, the text does not tell us how they secured the building, or even what it looked like or how it was built. What is clear, however is its existence. In all cases when the church assembled, there was some place where this assembly occurred.

The Command to Assemble

These texts show us the approved examples of the church meeting in a public place, private homes, a school and probably in a meeting house set up for that purpose. Are there any Scriptures which authorize setting up such a place of meeting? Hebrews 10:24,25 teaches—**“let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”** The word translated “assembling” is a verb related to the word *synagogue* noted above. The Hebrew writer, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, is not just commanding any type of gathering for any purpose. Rather, he is commanding continuing religious assemblies. If the Lord gives a command, it only follows that He is authorizing what is necessary to carry out that command. The church could meet in a



Reconstruction of a house used by Christians for worship from ca. 200 AD in Dura Europus, Syria with a baptismal font.

public park or marketplace, but what if none is available? The church could meet in the home of one of the members, but what if no member has a home large enough to accommodate a large congregation? Must the size of the congregation be restricted to a number small enough to fill the home of the wealthiest member? The church in Jerusalem grew to 5000 men alone (Acts 4:4).