



church may relieve a need (Acts 11:29), but it is not to be burdened with providing for them in general (1 Tim. 5:16). Here we see an overlap, and a limitation. The same is true in spiritual training. As a father I am to bring up my children **“in the training and admonition of the Lord”** (Eph. 6:4). The church is also to *equip* the saints (Eph. 4:12). Can I surrender to the church my responsibility? No. Is the church usurping my role when it helps in this? No. I have an individual responsibility, and the church has a collective responsibility.

Are there responsibilities that the church does not share with the individual? Yes. A husband and wife have responsibilities to each other that involve no one outside of that relationship (1 Cor. 7:3-5). We understand in this case

that the church cannot involve itself in this responsibility, except to the degree that it must teach about marriage and its biblical regulation. There are many other good works that the individual may engage in that the church has no right to involve itself in. For example, we have the account that Christians in Jerusalem ate together with one another in their homes (Acts 2:46), but we are also told that this was not to be done “as a church” (1 Cor. 11:17-34). At Olsen Park we do not eat together “as a church” but it is not uncommon for individuals to get together in a home, a restaurant, or even at a private facility secured with individual funds. Last year some of the ladies had a study on singing with Glenda Schales who wrote some of the songs in our hymnal. It was not a work of the church—it was all done by individuals. It involved some singing and study (which are works of the church) but it also involved eating together (which is not a work of the church). By handling this as an individual effort, there was no conflict.

The problem in much of the world is, as modern churches have expanded the work of the church to involve everything from business ventures, to medical and psychological activities, social functions, and entertainment, they have confused the clear teaching of Scripture, and acted without Divine authority. We must understand and respect the work of the church as God has established it and demonstrated in Scripture. We must fulfill the responsibilities we have as individuals whether they overlap with the work of the church or not. We must, however, do all that we can to shun the influence of our society to expand the work of the church beyond what Scripture has authorized.



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THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

August 26
2012

Services

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

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Assembling “As a Church” and the Work of the Church: A Clarification

By Kyle Pope

Following the recent series we ran on the “Gender-Inclusive” Movement a question came up that I wanted to address. In discussing the distinction that exists between when the church assembles **“as a church”** (1 Cor. 11:18), and when some members of the congregation assemble for a Bible class, I may have given the impression that I was saying that a Bible class is not part of the work of the church. That was not what I intended to communicate.

Bible Classes are a Work of the Church

Paul taught Timothy that the church is the **“pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Tim. 3:15). He taught the Ephesians that different workers within the church have been set in place **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Eph. 4:12, NKJV). It is well within the authorized work of the church for elders to appoint teachers for different classes, whether divided by age or subject matter, and oversee and fund the teaching efforts they carry out. This could be done at the place where the church assembles, or in other locations. This fact, however, demonstrates one of the points I was trying to address in the se-

ries—not every work of the church is done by the congregation as a whole, or when the church is assembled “as a church.”

Works of the Church that Do Not Involve the Whole Congregation

Let’s note a couple of examples where Scripture shows works of the church being carried out without the whole church being assembled together. In Acts 20:17-38 Paul returned to the region of Ephesus where he had worked for two

years (Acts 19:10). Because of the danger he faced in Ephesus, he called the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him in the nearby city of Miletus. Did this concern the work of the church in Ephesus? Absolutely! (See Acts 20:28). Did it involve every member of the that congregation? No. Were Paul and the elders assembled “as a church”? No. Here at Olsen Park, every Sunday afternoon the elders here follow a similar procedure. We assemble at five o’clock for our weekly *elder’s meeting*. Usually it is just the three of us. Now, *is this a work of the church?* Absolutely. That is the entire focus of the meeting. However, could we say that Jeff, Patrick, and I are meeting “as a church” or “in the church”? No.

Let’s consider another example. In Acts chapter six, when a need arose for the church to supply food to the widows of the congregation in Jerusalem, was that considered an authorized work of the church? Yes, but seven men were appointed to address this need focused on a smaller part of the congregation as a whole (Acts 6:3-5). This was not carried out by the church as a whole. They were not “in church” (i.e., in the assembly) or assembled together “as a church” when it was done. This shows us that it is possible to engage in a *work* of the church but not to do so when the church is assembled as a whole, or when meeting “as a church.”

Bible Classes and Assemblies of the Church

From our series we considered carefully the restrictions and context that regulate when and how women may and may not speak and teach. We demonstrated that Scripture shows us that you can have a study outside of the assembly of the church in which a woman may speak with men about spiritual matters (Acts 18:24-26), although she may not teach over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-12). We found that Paul commands that a woman must be silent within the assembly of the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35), but

the question is, *does a Bible class constitute the church assembled “as a church”?* Not necessarily. At Olsen Park, when we have classes, there are generally no times when all of the members of the church are assembled all together. Some are teaching children. Some are teaching teenagers. Recently, we began on Wednesday night to have an additional adult class. So now some adults have a separate class. In these nine different classes are we “in the church” (i.e., in the assembly) or assembled “as a church”? No. If so, women would have to be silent. Are these nine separate assemblies of the church? No. If so, we have nine churches! Now, does this mean that these nine classes are not part of the work of the church? No. Just like the example in Acts chapter six, different members of the church have been appointed to carry out a specific work of the church directed towards a smaller segment of the congregation.

What if the whole church assembled for a Bible class. If the stated purpose of that assembly was to “come together as a church” then women would have to be silent. On the other hand, if a distinction was made and the stated purpose of the assembly was not to assemble “as a church,” even though every member of the local congregation might be present it would not necessarily be an assembly of the church, or “in the church.” This is where it often becomes complicated to us. We struggle with the question, *how could every member be present and it not constitute the church?* Let’s think of it this way—imagine a congregation of ten members. These ten members are from three families. Family A has five members. Family B has three members. Family C has two members. Are they assembled “as a church” any time all ten people are together? Are they “in the church” if they go out to eat to-

gether, or go shopping, or camping together? No. If they chose to study a topic with all three families in their home, would they be “in the church”? Not necessarily. Are they “in the church” whenever they all enter the place where they assemble? Not necessarily. If so, the minute they are in sight of each other, women would have to be silent. It is possible then, for every member of a local congregation to be together without being assembled “as a church.” What determines this distinction? The stated purpose of the assembly.

Individual versus Church Responsibilities

One final point is appropriate in this consideration. We have noted instances in which the work of the church does not demand that the entire church be assembled. Are there ever times when the responsibilities of the individual and the church differ? Absolutely! As a husband and father I am to provide for my family (1 Tim. 5:8). Is the church to provide for my family? The



Olsen Park church of Christ