

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule
of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)

September 30, 2007

Church organization

by David King

"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

The organization of churches in modern Christianity is a study in human ingenuity. Churches today are overseen by complex hierarchies of conferences, synods, councils, districts, and wards, staffed by a bewildering array of leaders with very ecclesiastical-sounding titles. Depending on the denomination, local congregations are allowed varying degrees of autonomy, but the mere existence of the extra-congregational offices indicates at least some measure of hierarchal control.

Even a casual reading of the New Testament, however, reveals a different picture. In our text, Paul provides us a brief outline:

- **Apostles and prophets** were the instruments through which God's word was originally revealed. As the "foundation" of the church (Eph. 2:20), their work has been completed, and is preserved today in the New Testament.
- **Evangelists** are those who proclaim the word of the apostles and prophets to others. They work with local churches, but are especially involved in reaching those outside the church. (See the books of 1-2 Timothy and Titus.)
- **Pastors** (also known as elders, bishops, overseers, presbyters) are the shepherds of the local church, tasked with the care and protection of the flock under their supervi-

sion. (See Ac. 20:17-38; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.)

- **Teachers** are those who are active in teaching the Word of God to others in the local church. (see Ac. 13:1; 2 Tim. 2:2.)

Notice the strong "local" flavor of these functions. This emphasis on the local church raises a disturbing question: Why would God give detailed instructions on the qualifications and duties of the leadership of local churches—involving at most a few hundred people—yet be utterly silent about the qualifications and duties of leaders overseeing hundreds of churches, hundreds of thousands of people, and millions of dollars?

The answer is glaringly obvious: God never intended there to be any organization above the local church.

Man's desire to add layers of control above the local level is a testament to human pride. Church organization is not a matter that God has left up to us to figure out. The arrangement that He gave us is ideally suited to the nature of Christianity as a religion of individual conscience, rather than bureaucratic coercion. History has demonstrated that apostasy begins with the corruption of church government. Even the churches of Christ have succumbed to this temptation to "improve" the local arrangement by devising inter-church schemes.

How we treat God's will on this subject is indicative of our attitude toward His will on everything else. Will we respect His limits, or will we arrogantly ignore them and do whatever we want?