

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)

February 8, 2009

The mission of the church

by David King

Every organization has a mission, a work that defines its reason for being. In the corporate world, most companies have a mission statement that helps the employees stay focused on their objectives.

What is the mission of the Lord's church? To answer that question, we must first recognize a critical distinction that is lost among those who claim to follow Christ. Even those of us who claim to follow more perfectly the New Testament model often struggle to grasp this difference. It is the difference between **the Lord's body** — the sum total of all God's people throughout the world — and **the local congregation** — a group of believers in a given location who have banded together for mutual encouragement and action. For brevity, we refer to the former as the **universal church**, and the latter as the **local church**.

While both of these entities are comprised of believers (in theory, anyway), they have different functions. The universal church has no organizational or institutional identity, other than Christ directing His people through His word. The work of this church is the aggregate behavior of all genuine believers throughout the world serving Christ in their daily lives. As these individuals perform their good works in their families, their workplaces, their neighborhoods, and their civic relations, they glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12; Eph. 3:21). This distributed activity is the mission of the universal church.

The local church, however, has a more restricted objective. Local congregations are given explicit instructions to provide edification

for their members, through teaching and worship (Heb. 1:24-25; 1 Cor. 14), to support the preaching of the gospel (Phil. 4:14-18), and to take care of the physical needs of their own (1 Cor. 16:1; Ac. 4:34-35).

The distinction between these two entities is taught often in the New Testament, but one example will suffice: Note Paul's instruction regarding the care of believing widows: "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows" (1 Tim. 5:16). The universal church, acting through individual believers, has the broad responsibility to care for their own widows, while the local church is restricted to the care of those who are truly destitute.

So what is the mission of the church? It depends on which church you are speaking of, universal or local. Each has a unique function, and that difference must be respected.

Unfortunately, most people fail to respect that difference, and end up confusing the two missions. This error is usually manifested in attempts to bring local churches under some kind of worldwide harness — a hierarchy, a conference, a synod, a missionary society, a sponsoring church, a "brotherhood" monitor, etc. The intention is noble, but the end result is almost always the same: political power struggles that hurt the image of local churches and the Lord's body in general.

The common element in both entities, of course, is individual believers, whose actions make both successful.