



# The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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## The Local Church (II)

By Vernon Teagarden

As we have already learned, the New Testament provides no external organization for the universal church; therefore, no duty to do as a functional unit. It is simply comprised of individual Christians who have been called out of the world by the gospel and into a relationship with Christ. Conversely, the local church is a body of saved people in a given locality that have banded together to act as one in carrying out the will of God. To the local church God gave organization and work to do. Each congregation is to be governed only by the will of Christ as delivered by inspired men. Each local church is to carry out only the work that Christ has assigned them through His word in an autonomous or self-governing manner. However, what is the work that Christ has assigned the local church; and is the local church, as God designed it, sufficient to carry out that work?

### WHAT THE WORK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IS NOT

First, the work of the church is not social. This statement may come as a surprise to some, but nevertheless it is true. Although the gospel working in the lives of men and women will cause some social reform, it does so by reforming the individual's way of living and thinking. In New Testament days local

churches did not undertake the work of social reform or social guidance. Local churches did not wage campaigns for social reformation. If they did, where is the passage that so teaches?

The apostle Paul taught that the home is to be the center of social activity, not the church (1 Cor. 11:20-22). Today, many have socialized the services and work of the church with their "fellowship halls," dining rooms, etc. Furthermore, it is not the work of the church to provide recreational activities. Church sponsored baseball, softball, and basketball teams, church sponsored skating parties, and hayrides, the building of gymnasiums and the like are a perversion of the work that God has assigned local churches.

Second, making money is not a work of the church. God has provided a pattern for raising the funds necessary to carry out the work of the church (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Yet, churches all across this land have car washes, bake sales, yard sales, and other business undertakings to raise money. God's pattern needs to be respected, and all legitimate business enterprises should be kept in the realm of individual activity.

Third, secular education and the providing of such for its members is not a work that God has assigned local

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## The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

## SERVICES:

### Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

### Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

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churches. If so, where is the passage that teaches that He has? Furthermore, political issues do not belong in the church. God has provided civil government to take care of such matters (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Again, God's pattern should be respected.

Last of all, God has not assigned local churches to engage in the work of solving problems in the area of domestic relations. Commenting on this subject, Roy E. Cogdill said, "The church is not a court or school of domestic relations. Whatever the Bible teaches should be taught whenever

and wherever it is needed by any Christian and by the church. But parent education, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and such related subjects that are not taught in the Word of God are not the task of the church. Preachers who make a specialty of love, courtship, marriage, parent education, and counseling those who are having difficulty in domestic relations and in social problems should do the work in some other way than through the church and should not deceive themselves into thinking that such work is the work of a gospel preacher.” (*Walking By Faith*, pg., 8).

#### WHAT THE WORK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IS

The primary task or work of the church is to “go into the world and preach the gospel” (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20). The importance of this work can be seen in a number of ways. First, there is a universal need of salvation because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). The wages of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). Without God, those in such a state are without hope (Eph. 2:12). Second, the gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). It must be heard, believed, and obeyed; but, “how shall they hear” unless it is preached (Rom. 10:14)? The church is God’s instrument in this work of evangelism. It is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). In New Testament times local congregations were the means (apart from personal evangelism) through which this preaching was done. They were the only “missionary” organizations (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27, 28; Phil. 1:3-5; 2:25-30;

4:14-20). Again, the various local churches carried out this divine program or work in an autonomous fashion. They did not pool their resources by contributing to a human organization to do their work for them. Neither did they participate in a centralized project known as a “sponsoring church arrangement” by placing their resources under the oversight of the elders of a particular sponsoring church. Such a practice would have been in violation of local church autonomy. Moreover, it would have given elders more authority than what God allowed (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28).

Another aspect of the work God has assigned local churches is edification (Eph. 4:12). Christ wants all Christians to grow to maturity. Local churches, according to the divine pattern, play an important role in encouraging growth. Christians of local congregations are to take thought for one another (Phil. 2:1-4, 19-21). They are to exhort each other (Heb. 3:12-14). They are to provoke each other unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25). Incidentally, the assemblies of the local church provide an excellent avenue to fulfill this command as verse 25 of Hebrews 10 teaches. Elders of local congregations watch over our souls (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7-14). Christians of local churches are to encourage the faint hearted, support the weak, and admonish the unruly or disorderly (1 Thess. 5:12-14). Furthermore, the local church encourages spiritual growth

through its worship services and teaching program (Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 20:28).

The last phase of the work of the church is caring for needy Christians (Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 16:1; Rom. 12:13; 15:25-27). Each local church is responsible for taking care of its indigent members (1 Tim. 5:16; Eph. 4:12; Acts 2:43-45; 5:32-37). When, and only when, a local congregation does not possess the ability to take care of its own needy, can other congregations help by contributing funds to the congregation in need. However, this help is to be temporary, not ongoing. Neither are the funds of the contributing churches to be centralized in a human institution, such as an orphan home, etc., nor placed in the hands of the elders of a “sponsoring” church. The funds are, however, to be placed in the hands of the elders of the needy church (Acts 11:27-29). (Cf. 2 Cor. 8:12-14, 18-21; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:25-27).

Is the local church all-sufficient? In other words, is the church, as God has designed it, competent, or adequate to accomplish the work that God has assigned it? To say that it is not, and that some other organization or arrangement is necessary, is to impugn the wisdom and intelligence of the Designer. “The church as God designed it, as Christ built it, and as the Holy Spirit has revealed it represents God’s ways and they are always not only sufficient but they are best.” (Roy Cogdill, op cit., pg. 11).

(Next: “The Christian’s Responsibility To The Local Church)