

Appendix K

The Church

From the Doctrinal Statement of Orwell Bible Church

We believe the body of Christ, the universal church, is made up of all believers in Christ (Col 1:18, 24). The church began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47), will continue until the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18), and is distinct from Israel (1 Cor 10:32). The church is the primary means through which God is working in this age (Eph 3:8-10; 1 Tim 3:15).

Members of Christ's body are instructed to associate with one another in local churches (1 Cor 11:18-20; Heb 10:25). A local church is the visible expression of Christ's body in any one place on earth (1 Cor 1:2, et al). It consists of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47; 5:14), who have been publicly immersed (Acts 2:41), share a common body of doctrine (Acts 2:42; Jude 3-4), and have an orderly walk (1 Cor 5:9-13; 2 Thess 3:6-14).

Local churches exist to glorify God (Eph 3:21) by winning the lost to Christ (Matt 28:19a; 1 Cor 9:14-23), building believers up in Christ (Matt 28:19b-20; Eph 4:11-16), and sending them out for Christ (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26). These purposes are fulfilled as the church meets regularly (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2) for worship, instruction, fellowship, ministry, and prayer (Acts 2:42, 47; Eph 4:11-16), as the gospel is spread (Acts 6:7; 8:4; 1 Pet 3:15) and new churches are established (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; et al).

The local church is an autonomous (self-governing) body. It alone has the authority to observe and guard the ordinances (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:23-24), elect its own officers, leaders, and messengers (Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 15:3; 1 Cor 16:3), ordain men to the ministry (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim 4:14), discipline its members (Matt 18:15-17; 2 Thess 3:6), settle its internal affairs (1 Cor 6:1-5), and determine its relationship to other religious groups (Acts 15).

The local church is congregationally governed and chooses biblically qualified men to serve in the offices of pastor (also called overseer and elder, Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-2) and deacon (1 Tim 3:1-13). Pastors shepherd, oversee, and lead the congregation (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:1-3) and deacons help the congregation primarily in their material and temporal needs (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13).

The ordinances of the local church are baptism (immersion of believers, Acts 2:41; 8:38) and the Lord's Supper (observing "close" communion, Acts 2:42; 20:7, 11). Every believer is to be baptized as a public portrayal and testimony of his identification with Christ (Matt 28:19). Every member is to observe the Lord's Supper as a public remembrance of Christ's death and anticipation of His imminent return, and they are to do so regularly, corporately, and meaningfully (1 Cor 11:17-34). No saving grace is present in or conferred through these ordinances.

Members of Christ's Body are to be like their Head, Jesus Christ, Who has the preeminence in all things (Col 1:18). They are to demonstrate their love for God by loving one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:14-16). Believers love by humbly giving preference to one another (Rom 12:10; Phil 2:1-8; 1 Pet 5:5), meeting one another's needs (Acts 2:44-45; 1 Cor 12:26; 1 John 3:17-18), supporting those who go out for the sake of the Name (Titus 3:13-14; 3 John 5-8), and helping sister churches in their need (Acts 11:28-30; 2 Cor 8-9).

Members of Christ's Body are also to be holy, separate from all that is sinful or morally unclean (Rom 12:1-2; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:15-16). A local church maintains its purity and testimony through the watch-care and discipline of its members (Matt 18:15-17; 2 Thess 3:6-15) and by separating from organizations or individuals that reject the Christian faith (2 Cor 6:14-18; 2 Tim 2:19; 2 John 10-11) or disobey clear Scriptural teaching (2 Thess 3:6, 14).