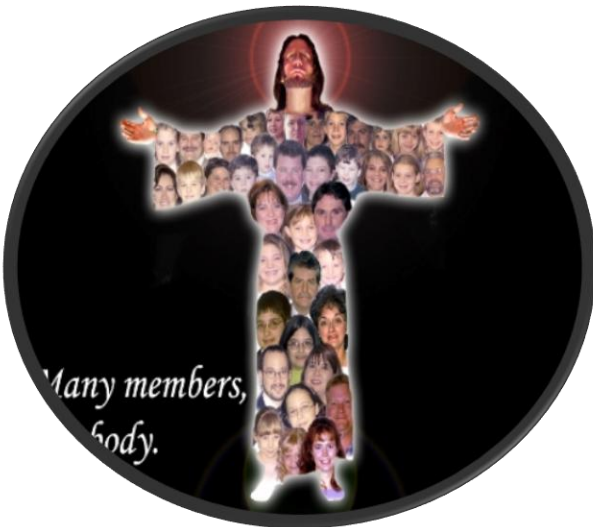


MY ROLE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Body of Christ is made up of Christians from 2 major areas: 1) The Spiritual Body of Christ (often called the Universal Church from the Greek “ekklesia” meaning the called out ones – Colossians 1:24), and 2) the Local Church. **The Spiritual Body of Christ** consists of Christians around the world from different nationalities, ethnicities, and locations. These are believers who have professed saving faith in Christ, His finished work on the cross, and have been spiritually baptized into His body (family).



For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

The **Local Church** is composed of individual churches. This includes the church you attend. It is composed of Christians who fellowship and serve Christ together at the same building on a weekly basis. “It is a place where believers meet together for worship, fellowship, teaching and refueling to go out and reach the lost for Christ.” **1**

Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25



WHEN DID THE LOCAL CHURCH START?

The Local Church started on the Day of Pentecost. After Peter preached a spirit-filled message, 3,000 people were convicted, converted, and water baptized (Acts 2:41). These believers made up the first local churches. These churches first met in the homes of believers. (Acts 2:44-47) As the gospel began to spread, individual churches were started in various locations throughout Asia Minor.

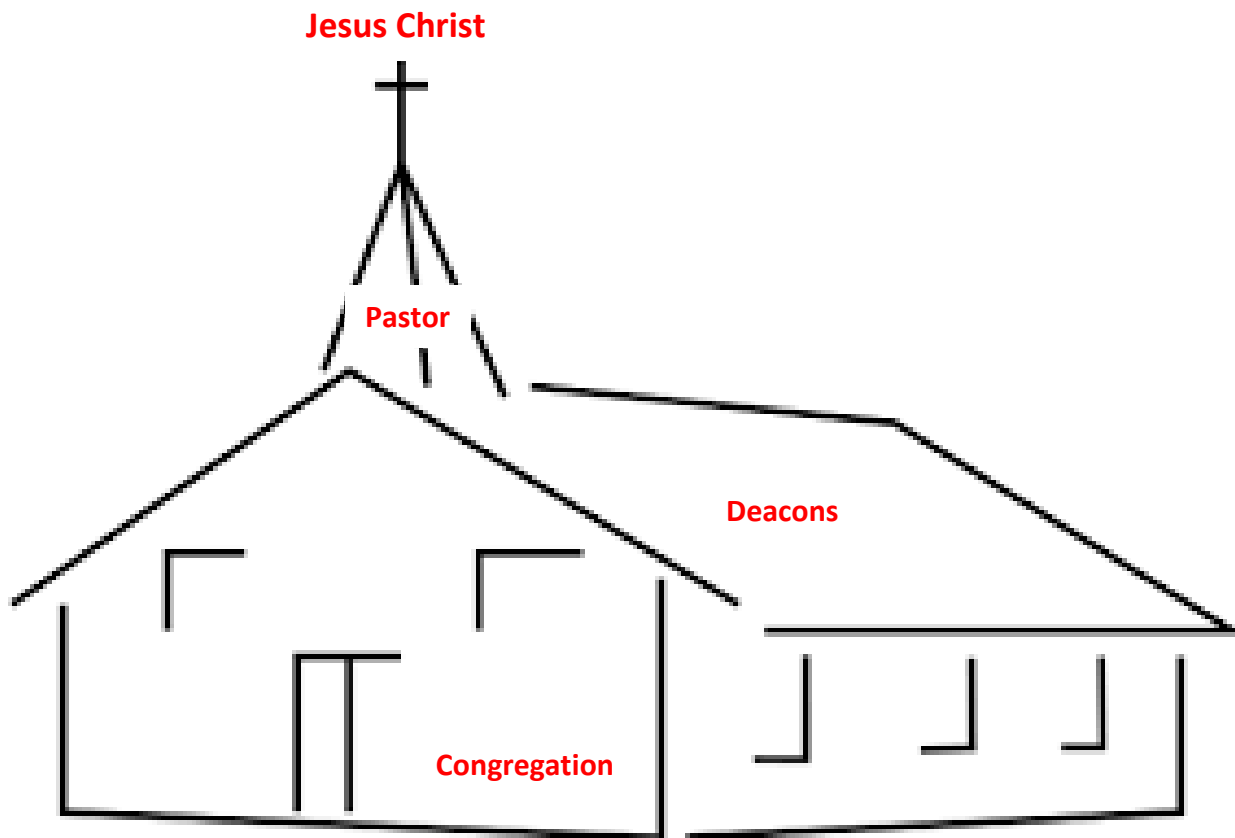
HOW WAS THE LOCAL CHURCH ORGANIZED?

Jesus Christ is the absolute Head of the Local Church (Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18). The leaders are selected by God Himself (Acts 20:28). The **Pastor/Elder** is the leader and he is called an “Under-Shepherd” – Jesus Christ being the Shepard. His job is to care for the flock (church body) and build his members up in the faith, equipping them to do the work of the ministry (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28).

Deacons serve underneath the Pastor and their qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-14. Their primary job is to tend to the needs of the local congregation (Acts 6:1-6).

The remaining believers in the Local Church consist of **lay people** who gather on a regular basis for the purpose of fellowship, obeying the Lord’s ordinances, being established in the word, and equipped to go out and perform ministry to a dying world (Acts 2:42-47).

God also chose and gifted other believers to further build up the Body of Christ and equip the saints for the work of ministry. These include apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers (Ephesians 4:7-13).



WHAT IS THE LAY PERSON'S ROLE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH?

To Fellowship With Other Believers



God has created us as inter-connected beings. In our local church, we need each other. We need the encouragement of others. We need the support of others. We need the love of others. We need the prayers of others. John MacArthur quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book titled *Life Together*: “*The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer, a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God. How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God’s will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians. Let him who has such a privilege thank God on his knees and declare it is grace, nothing but grace that we are allowed to live in fellowship with Christians.*”²

The Greek word used for fellowship in the bible is “Koinonia” It literally means a partnership, joint participation, sharing, or social intercourse. Collective and corporate worship is a vital part of the spiritual life and it was encouraged and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 2:9).

Fellowshipping with other believers is your role in the local church!

To Exercise Your Spiritual Gift(s) For The Lord’s Service

God has given at least one spiritual gift to every believer who is a part of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7,11). These gifts are to be used to build up and equip the church body to do ministry. Spiritual gifts are not to be used selfishly. They are not to be used to the exaltation on the one with the gift. Peter encouraged the believers in the churches of Asia Minor to use their gifts to minister to each other as good stewards of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Paul also encouraged believers in the church at Rome to use their spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8).

In the New Testament, spiritual gifts are listed in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; and Ephesians 4:11-14. The use of spiritual gifts should be bounded by love (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Some things you can do to discover your spiritual gift(s) are: 1) Pray; 2) Read and learn about the spiritual gifts; 3) Take a spiritual gifts inventory; 4) Try suspected gifts out; 5) Look and listen for feedback from others.



Exercising your spiritual gift(s) is your role in the local church!

To Share In The Burdens Of Other Believers



In Paul's letter to the Galatian church, he instructed them to **"bear"** the burdens of each other. The Greek word used for bear is "bastazo." According to Strong's, Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicons, Bastazo is used in the bible in 3 forms: to bear; to carry; to take up. It means to take up with the hands in order to carry. It also means to put upon yourself. In other words, Paul instructed them to literally pick up the burdens of others and help carry them. He preferences this instruction by saying that this action fulfills the Law of Christ. In introducing the word **"burdens"** in the same verse, Paul uses the Greek work "baros," meaning heaviness, weight, or trouble. In other words, as fellow church members go through difficult and trying times, others should come along side and offer support and do all they can to help the member get through it. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Solomon discusses the importance and power of having support. He ends this section of the chapter by stating that "a rope made from three strands of cord is hard to break." In other words, there is strength in numbers! As members help carry the burdens of others in the local congregation and support them through difficult times, the church body becomes and remains strong.

Sharing the burdens of others is your role in the local church!

To Join In With Other Members To Reach The Community For Christ

God equips members in the local church not to stay in the church building, but to go out and reach the unsaved for Christ. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation to go out as ambassadors for Christ and preach the Gospel to a dying world (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Sinners need to know that God has initiated the restoration of mankind and made a way for them to come back to Him. This is a precious privilege and opportunity that no Christian should take lightly. God is looking for laborers to go OUT into the fields because they are ripe for harvest (Matthew 9:35-38). Therefore the member of the local church should not only spread the Gospel as he goes about his day, but should also actively participate in the evangelistic outreach programs of his local church.



Reaching the community for Christ is your role in the local church!

To Support Your Local Church Financially

The local church is supported by the gifts and offerings of its members. Members give to support the ministry of the church to equip believers to reach the community for Christ.

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come

1 Corinthians 16:2, ESV



Giving in the local church should be done with a cheerful and generous heart (2 Corinthians 9:1-8). The Apostle Paul encouraged the church at Rome to contribute to the needs of its members and to show hospitality (Romans 12:13). He complemented and bragged about how the Macedonian churches gave abundantly to the relief of the saints even though they were in the midst of affliction and extreme poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). In Romans he acknowledged the churches in Macedonia and Achaia for making contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). In 2 Corinthians, the Philippian church was complimented for supporting Paul and his ministry (Philippians 4:10-19). Indeed giving was a major responsibility of the local church member's life and service in the 1st & 2nd centuries.

Giving financially is your role in the local church!

To Do Your Part To Help The Church Grow Strong Spiritually

In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul stated that Jesus gifted certain people - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of ministry, and for building up the body of Christ. He then goes on to explain the end goal of the utilization of these gifts: so that the members will grow to spiritual adulthood and each member will properly do their part. Paul states that this will cause the Body to grow and receive building up in the faith (Ephesians 4:11-15 ESV). It's important to note the challenge to each member to do their part to help the church grow. You might ask what does spiritual adulthood look like in a church? Paul answers this question in verses 1-3 of this same chapter: 1) Members are walking worthy of their calling (living to match one's position in Christ – John MacArthur); 2) Members are exercising humility, gentleness, and patience in dealing with each other; 3) Members are dealing with each other in love; and 4) Members are doing all they can to maintain unity in the local assembly. Gifted men and all members in a local church work together to make this happen.



Doing Your Part To Help The Church Grow Strong Spiritually Is Your Role In The Local Church!

1 Dr. Ron Ballard, Biblical Principles For Spiritual Children p. 28

2 <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-396/the-pattern-for-biblical-fellowship-part-2>