

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church is a kingdom over which Christ rules as king (1 Timothy 6:15; John 18:37; John 19:19). Christians are citizens in this kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:9). The world is the territory of this kingdom (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The new birth is the way we enter this kingdom (John 3:5).

One Head/One King--Christ

The church is the body of Christ and Christ is its only head (Ephesians 1:22,23; 4:4). He has all authority (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:18). He has never given this authority to anyone else. Because Christ is the head, we take our instructions from Him. Because He is king, we must obey Him (Ephesians 5:24).

The church has no earthly headquarters. The headquarters of Christ's church is in Heaven. Each congregation of the Lord's body is independent and self-ruling. There is no pope, council, conference, or group of people controlling all the congregations of the Lord's body

Elders

Elders are to be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). In the New Testament, elders are also called presbyters-King James Version (1 Timothy 4:14); bishops (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1,2); overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2); pastors (Ephesians 4:11,12); and shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4). The word "pastor" is simply another word for "shepherd." Preachers are **never** called pastors in the New Testament. The elders of the local congregation are the pastors (shepherds) of each local church (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Qualifications for elders are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-13. In addition to being a faithful Christian, an elder must be a man with a wife and faithful children. He cannot be a new member and be qualified. Also, there must be more than one elder serving in the local congregation. The Bible says "elders" [plural] (Acts 14:23; 20:17,18,28). These elders are to guide, guard, feed, and rule the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17).

Deacons

Deacons are to be appointed in every church (Philippians 1:1). Their qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The work of deacons would include what was done as recorded in Acts 6:1-6. Again, deacons can only be men. Women are not qualified to be deacons because they cannot be a "**husband of one wife**" (1 Timothy 3:12).

Preachers

Preachers have the responsibility to "**preach the word**" (2 Timothy 4:1-5). As with elders and deacons, preachers are males (1 Timothy 2:8-15). They are evangelists, ministers of the Word of God (2 Timothy 4:5). In the New Testament, preachers are **never** called by titles such as "Pastor," "Reverend," "Doctor," or "Father" (Matthew 23:8-12).

Members

Anyone who has obeyed the Gospel is a member of the Lord's church (Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:3). Members of the church are to obey the elders (Hebrews 13:17). They are to teach the lost (Acts 8:4; 2 Timothy 2:24,25). They are to practice "*pure religion*" (James 1:27).

The leadership of the Lord's church is made up of qualified men. If a church does not have this kind of organization, it cannot be the church that Jesus built. Christ is the head only of the church which has a Scriptural organization. If the church of which you are a member has women elders, women deacons, and/or women preachers, that church cannot be the church Jesus built. Why not leave manmade churches and become a part of the church of Christ?