

of scripture gives elders in one church the authority to oversee the work of other (contributing) churches. Elders are to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pe 5:2). The sponsoring church’s elders have become, in effect, a brotherhood eldership. No passage of scripture speaks of a brotherhood treasury, or a district treasury, or an area-wide treasury yet this is exactly what the sponsoring church arrangement creates. No passage of scripture says anything about the ‘super church’ that the sponsoring church becomes.

Second, it violates local church autonomy. Each church must manage its own affairs in matters of judgment and expediency. The Corinthian church selected its own messengers (2 Co 8:19). Paul even said, “And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem” (1 Co 16:3). Each congregation must oversee its own work. Paul told the Ephesian elders to manage the flock in Ephesus (Ac 20:28), and no others. Peter told elders to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pe 5:2). How can elders in one state shepherd the work of a flock in another state? A local church cannot turn over control of its work, completely or partially, to another eldership in another congregation. To do so is to surrender and lose autonomy.

Third, it betrays a wrong concept of the church. Many conceive of the church as a group of congregations. Thus, it is only natural to try and activate that network or web of churches. But the term “church” is used in the Bible to refer to the group of all saved Christians of all time (the universal church), or it is used of local congregations. It never refers to an alliance or group of congregations that have banded together to do a work. The idea that the local church is part of a larger working unit is simply incorrect.

When we say the organizational structure of the church begins and ends with the independent congregation, we mean there is no divine authority

for a collective of Christians (an organized unit) larger, or smaller than the local church. There is no authority for a plurality of churches to act collectively” (Robert F. Turner, “Organizational Structure of the Church,” The Sinton Review, January 1962, page 1).

Until ‘book, chapter and verse’ can be produced showing that the sponsoring church arrangement is part of God’s will for His people we must resist it as an innovation. Yes, many see it as necessary and wise; but it can be neither if it is not authorized in scripture!

- MRoberts



We can only add our hearty ‘amen’ to Mark’s article. It’s a discussion that has been around for decades now and encompasses not only the ‘sponsoring church’ issue, but ‘institutionalism’ and the ‘social gospel’ as well.

People in the denominational world find such discussions foolish, or even legalistic. We are accused of ‘straining out gnats’ and advised to focus on love, grace, and the sincerity of one’s heart. But while we certainly agree with the importance of those things, we also know that the same God who gave us the church (Mt 16:18), gave us the guidelines for its administration. Its organizational structure is designed by God (Ph 1:1) for a reason, and we dare not ‘improve’ upon it. Its worship – from preaching to praying to singing and more – is designed by God, and we have no authority to change it. And its scope of work is given by God (as the article ably describes). Those who respect the authority of His Word will respect the work He has assigned His church.

In our efforts to restore New Testament Christianity in the modern age, such details matter. May God grant His servants the boldness to say so.

- WKing

ASSEMBLY TIMES

Sunday

Bible Class 9:30
Morning Assembly 10:30
Evening Assembly 5:00

Wednesday

Evening Bible Class 6:30

RADIO PROGRAM

The Bible Speaks



Sunday 9:00-9:30a.m.
KURM 790AM

Downtown Church of Christ

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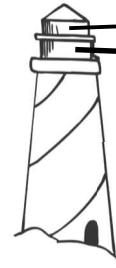
Hope – an anchor
of the soul (He 6:19).

ELDERS:

Otis Hardin
Perry Johnson
Ken Parker
Alan Revier
GW Walsh

DEACONS:

TJ Burleson
Scott Hale
Joel Heiligenthal
Jason Hill
Chris Johnson
Brock McKeel
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DOWNTOWN GOSPEL BEACON

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The Sponsoring Church Error

by Mark Roberts

It is extremely common today for one congregation, usually large, to ‘sponsor’ or oversee a work or campaign. Some churches sponsor the mission work in a particular foreign country, while others sponsor a city-wide campaign. Participating churches send their monetary contributions to the sponsoring church which then takes care of the work itself. This is almost totally accepted among brethren without thought or question, but I would argue there are three powerful reasons why it should be

seen as unscriptural. What is wrong with congregations participating in a sponsoring church arrangement?

First, it is unauthorized. There is no scriptural authority for one church to send money to another church unless the receiving church is in need (Ac 11:27-30). No passage of scripture speaks of congregations banding together to form a network or coalition of congregations, pooling money for evangelism, setting up a sponsoring church, or anything remotely akin to it. No passage

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FAMILY NEWS

PRAYER LIST –

Preachers we support: Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Canada, Mexico, Peru, & U.S.

Sick: G&K Fletcher, Tony Tolbert, Diane Willis, J&M Swim, Jean Marshall

Shut-ins: Betty Jo Young, Billie Pennington, Shirley Cole, Mary Lou Lewis

Military: Kyler Sullins, Sean Potter

SENTENCE SERMON – “The Pharisees had religion without spirituality, while many today want spirituality without religion.” – Sam Bunyard

GOSPEL MEETING – Our gospel meeting with Mark Roberts begins today and runs through Wednesday – regular times today, and 6:30pm Mon-Wed.