

## Washington church of Christ

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# The Washington Messenger

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**December 14, 2014**

## Order of Services Sunday December 14, 2014

Song Leader	Derald Sanchez
Prayer	Ralph Ruggiero
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Scott Thomas
Prayer for the Cup	Stan Thompson
Prayer for the Collection	Bob Celentano
Assisting at the Table	Matt Grimaldi
Morning Closing Prayer	David Osinski
Evening Opening Prayer	Tom Dolan
Announcements	Bill Duryea

## Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

## ***The Church – An Institution or a Relationship?***

*By Sewell Hall*

Common to both Catholics and Protestants is a concept of the church as an earthly organization of congregations with organizational officials, headquarters, creeds, names, publications and agencies. The continuity of such a church depends upon the preservation of these features. As soon as one pope dies, he must be replaced with another, or when the term of one president or bishop ends, another must be elected. A creed may be amended or revised, but it can never be abandoned, for it is the constitution of the church; abolition of the creed would mean the end of the church.

Most Protestants are wise enough to understand that the churches they have established on this pattern are not the church which Jesus built. They generally refer to Christ's church as the "universal church" or the "invisible church" or, perhaps, as the "body of Christ."

Many of us have been diligent to point out these errors. We have condemned denominationalism, party names, party creeds, and all that goes with such institutions; and we have maintained that we should be nothing more than Christians, members of the body of Christ—the church to which He adds us when He saves us. Our friends have difficulty understanding us because, while we are speaking of membership in Christ's body—the church—they are thinking of the "Church of Christ" as an institution.

One danger, however, we must recognize! With the institutional idea so prevalent, it is possible for us to begin thinking of Christ's church as an institution. And such a concept becomes even more lethal if we continue to consider ourselves members only of the body of Christ. To us, then the institutionalized church which exists in our mind is the body of Christ. This is a greater mistake than our Protestant friends have made.

After all, officials do not have to be elected to exercise authoritative influence. Creeds do not have to be written to be binding. Names do not have to be adopted by a conference to be considered essential and exclusive designations. Publications do not have to be funded by churches to serve as their spokesmen, and religiously-oriented agencies do not have to be legally attached to the church to be considered church-related. That such features of the institutional church are prominent in the thinking of many of us can scarcely be denied.

This concept is usually embodied in the word "brotherhood." Do we not hear often of the leaders of our brotherhood, of brotherhood papers, brotherhood schools, and brotherhood agencies of various kinds? Some would be uncomfortable meeting in a building if the sign out front said anything but "Church of Christ" and they would deny being members of the church of God. We commonly see reference to "congregations of the Church of Christ" as though the church of Christ was a body of congregations rather than a body of members; and some cannot tell you what they believe until they have checked their "brotherhood publication." A "Directory of the Congregations of the Churches of Christ" lists Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities, Bible Colleges and Other Degree-Granting Schools of Religion, Schools of Preaching, and Care Facilities and Agencies in the U.S. for Child Care and Senior Citizen Care.

Once we identify such a brotherhood, or any part of it, as the body of Christ, several serious consequences follow. We then conclude that to be saved one must be a part of this brotherhood and, at all costs, maintain good standing in it. We dare not question brotherhood leaders, traditions, publications or institutions, for to do so is to be "disloyal." We must believe and practice whatever the mainstream of the brotherhood considers orthodox; we cannot risk being isolated from it, for that would mean being out of the body of Christ and lost. On the other hand, if we are in good standing with the brotherhood, we can conduct ourselves most any way we please; we are right with God because we are in the right church. Such thinking is foreign to the Scriptures.

The Lords church is His body (Colossians 1:18) and being in that church depends upon our being baptized into Him and maintaining a relationship with Him by continued submission to Him as our head.

Christ is the vine, individual disciples are the branches, and those in this relationship are in the church. Bearing fruit is contingent on abiding in Christ, not in a denomination, brotherhood or congregation. A disciple's choice of fellowship is part of the fruit he bears; but it is neither the source of his spiritual vitality nor his link with that source. Christ is the source, and relationship with Him is personal.

We are not saved because we are in the church; we are in the church because we are saved (Acts 2:47) and everyone who is saved is in it. It is "a small thing" what brethren may think of us: He that judges us is the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:3-4). A corrupt church like that in Pergamum may tolerate our sin, but if we continue in that sin, the Lord will make war against us with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:14-16).

On the other hand, a Diotrophes may cast us out of the church, but if we do what is good, we are of God (3 John 9-11) and have nothing to fear.

### ***Our Prayer List...***

***For Spiritual Responsiveness*** – Those studying with us in the Thursday morning Perkin's Study ... All of our wayward members

***For Physical Healing*** – Ellen Jinks - Bill Duryea's Parents ... Mary Jinks ... Kathy Syracuse (Fair Lawn) ... Georgia DeLorenzo

***For Wisdom and Good Judgment*** – The Leaders of our congregation ... the leaders of our nation

***For God's Care and Good Providence*** – Our young people away at college ... Our young people here at Washington ... our members who are traveling ... the men and women in military service ... our congregation ... the Evangelist and Teachers We Help Support

### ***EVENTS AND NOTES***

- ⤴ WE HAVE A MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING SCHEDULED FOR THIS AFTERNOON STARTING AT 4:00PM
- ⤴ WE ALSO HAVE A LADIES BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULED FOR THIS AFTERNOON STARTING AT 4:45PM
- ⤴ WE WILL HAVE OUR PERKIN'S THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY THIS WEEK AT 10AM. ALL ARE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE WHENEVER YOU CAN ... MORE IMPORTANTLY INVITE THOSE WHO MAYBE SEEKING JESUS!
- ⤴ ALSO, REMEMBER THE TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY AT THE PANERA BREAD IN HACKETTSTOWN.
- ⤴ DON'T FORGET TO JOIN OUR "MEET-UP" SITE ON THE WEB ... [HTTP://WWW.MEETUP.COM/THURSDAY-MORNING-BIBLE-STUDY-AT-PERKINS-IN-PHILLIPSBURG-NJ](http://www.meetup.com/Thursday-Morning-Bible-Study-at-Perkins-in-Phillipsburg-NJ) ... CHECK IT OUT!