

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Why Should I Be A Member of a Local Church?

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**W**hen we are baptized into Christ and enjoy the salvation from our sins, we are added to His church, the church of Christ. Luke records this as fact: “*And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved*” (Acts 2:47, KJV). Paul reminds Corinthians that we all are *baptized into one body* (I Corinthians 12:13). This “one body” is “the church”, the Lord’s body (Ephesians 1:22-23).

This spiritual body, to which the Lord adds us, is *universal* in nature. By this we mean it is not characterized by, or limited to a single specific locality on earth. For example, the church the people were added to in Jerusalem, was the same body into which believers were baptized at Corinth. But neither were added to or baptized into the local church in Jerusalem, or Corinth. They were added to the one body, the church in its “universal” sense. This is the same body into which we are added today when we are baptized, regardless of where we are when we obey the Gospel.

Since at baptism we are already members of the one church, should one become a member of a local church? If so, why?

The examples of Christians in the New Testament show that being members of a local church was an approved pattern before God.

Paul, three years after being converted, came to Jerusalem with more than one purpose in mind. One purpose was to “see Peter” (Galatians 1:18). Another one was “join himself to the disciples” (Acts 9:26). The word “join” means to “be cemented to” or to be “firmly joined”.

Apparently, Peter and the Lord’s brother were the only apostles in Jerusalem at the time before whom Barnabas proved Paul’s credentials as an apostle (cf. Acts 9: 27, Galatians 1: 18-19). It is probably also true that Paul’s stay in Jerusalem on this occasion was fifteen days, (Galatians 1:18). While he was probably not aware at the beginning of how long he would be in Jerusalem, the interesting point for us to consider is that he came to do more than have a visit with Peter, he came to be “joined” or firmly “cemented” as one in faith and work with the disciples in the church at Jerusalem. Like Paul, should we not want to be more than a visitor in a local church, but be joined to them as a member?

While Paul greeted the beloved saints in Rome (*Romans*

1:7), it appears that these faithful saints were identified with various local churches in Rome. Paul at the end of this letter to the Romans gives greeting to Prisca and Aquila and the “church that is in their house” (*Romans 16:5*). He greets five Christians in particular and “the saints that are with them” (*Romans 16:15*). These beloved saints were identified with the Lord’s church not just as members of the universal church, but as members of local churches. Should not you also be a member of a local church in your locality?

God’s plan in the local church is for qualified men known as elders and bishops to watch as shepherds over souls, tending the flock that is “among them”. (Acts 14:23, Hebrews 13:17, I Peter 5:2). It is true all Christians should watch out for souls, even those who are visitors, and be responsive to their needs (I Thessalonians 5:14, I Corinthians 16:13, Galatians 6:1). But God has given qualified and mature men this definite responsibility in a local church. Should we not avail ourselves to this prescribed safety net for our souls, and commit to serving brethren in a local group instead of just being a visitor?