

Playing Church

Church-Gk.1577- εκκλησια- a calling out, that is, (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): -assembly, church.

(There's no mention made of a physical structure built by men out of wood, brick or stone nor were there any such edifices in the first century so the word "church" was referring to the group of people who were "called out" of the world. And there is no mention of Unitarian Universalists, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Lutherans, Evangelicals, Catholics, Presbyterians or other denominational names in the Bible. We are to call Bible things by Bible names.)

Act 11:26 ... And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Mat 15:7 *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draw nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips; but their heart (Gk.2588- thoughts or feelings [mind]) is far from Me. 9 But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

According to "The Worldly Church" (*second edition 1991*) on page 30 it states "...the church has given up one of its most precious possessions: its identity." And on page 40 we find that some "contend that the church cannot reach the lost in this modern age through serious Bible study but only through 'meeting needs,' as if the Word of God alone is impotent." And on page 48 "many Christians often view the church as little more than a civic club with religious overtones".

In a recent front page article of "The Sentinel Sunday" (*Carlisle, PA – Aug 19, 2012*) titled "Like Church?", with the well-known "thumbs up" icon that's used by FaceBook, there were a number of different local denominations that weighed in on their strategies on increasing their membership and/or improving their church's attendance.

- The Unitarian Universalists in Boiling Springs erected a sign that reads "Religiously Liberal?". When a local couple saw the sign they remarked how they (UUCV) "welcomed all faiths". (*Years ago I wrote to this group's female "pastor" seeking answers to some questions I had concerning their liberal stance of accepting "all faiths" but received no response.*) The couple continued that it just "showed that most churches will stop at nothing, spare no expense, to get people to come". The Sentinel article then went on to report "The Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley are among several denominations turning to advertising, social media, and even capital campaigns for new cafes inside churches to attract new members." There's nothing wrong with advertising but the question begs, how were the very first members attracted to the only body of Christ in existence at her inception? And from whence did their financing come?

Act 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. **37** Now when they heard *this*, **they were pricked in their heart** (*a café in a church building won't do that, but the truth will*), and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, **what shall we do?** **38** Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized** every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. **39** For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. **40** And with many other words (*not "many other cups of latte's"*) did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. **41** Then **they that gladly received his word were baptized**: and the same day **there were added unto them about three thousand souls**.

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the **collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **2** **Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you **lay by him in store** (*He didn't say anything about tithing, bake sales or car washes*), **as God hath prospered him**, that there be no gatherings when I come. **3** And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your **liberality** unto Jerusalem. (*These funds weren't to go to a bagel & wine café to be set up in the synagogue either. See Jn 2:16*)

- The only thing that's supposed to be liberal about the church is in her giving! And that's not talking about just in the collection either! **Paul did not tell the brethren to have bake sales or camel washes to raise money for the poor saints in Jerusalem.** The Sentinel article continued. "...the West Street A.M.E. Zion Church is offering a picnic next month as well as an estate and funeral pre-planning workshop (*Are they wanting to make sure they get a piece of your estate? That's the way it would look.*), a cosmetics workshop and homemade dinners to, in part, attract potential parishioners. The St. Paul AME Church in Oberlin is using 'fish and chit'lin dinners' to attract the masses." **These "gimmicks" to retain and or add to their numbers just shows a lack of faith because of a lack of study and following after the truth.** There is nothing wrong with having picnics or feeding the poor but not for the sole purpose of winning souls. First, the "cosmetics workshop". This only promotes what scripture discourages. Putting their focus on the outward beauty only takes away from the inward.

1Pe 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; **4** But *let it be* the hidden (*Gk.2927- concealed, that is, private*) man (*Gk.444- human being*) of the heart (*Gk.2588- [mind]*), in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit (*Gk.4151- mental disposition*), which is in the sight of God of great price.

- **And the "dinners to...attract potential parishioners".**

Joh 6:11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. **12** **When they were filled**, He said unto His disciples, **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.** **13** Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. **14** Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. **15** When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and **take Him by force, to make Him a**

king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone. *(I guess they figured with a king that could do this, who needs to work anymore?)*

Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.** **27** Labour not for the **meat** (*Gk.1035- food*) **which perisheth**, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.

- **Continuing**, “Churches have undergone radical changes in recent years because of closings, dwindling congregations and even apathy toward religion by the hip social media generation in which we now live. As attendance at Sunday services continue to decline, many churches have **altered their style** (*emp. mine*) and revamped their images to help maintain and grow their member numbers. Churches have focused more on entertainment and attractions such as picnics, which **have come at somewhat of a price: instruction from the Bible.** (*emp. mine*)” **Imagine that!**

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ **the same yesterday, and today, and forever.** **9** Be not carried about with divers and strange (*Gk.3581- foreign [literally alien or figuratively novel]; by implication a guest or entertainer*) doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart (*Gk.2588- thoughts or feelings [mind]*) be established with grace; not with meats (*Gk.1033- food: victuals*), which have not profited (*Gk.5623- to be useful, that is, to benefit*) them that have been occupied therein. *(Food cannot save you!)*

2Ti 3:16 All **scripture** *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, **for instruction** in righteousness: **17** That the man (*Gk.444- human being*)[*thus person*] of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Act 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to **God**, and to the **word of His grace**, which is **able to build you up**, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

- How can a café in the basement of a church building “build you up” and “give you an inheritance among” the saints in the last day like the word of God can? The article quotes “the Rev. Canon Mark Scheneman” (*who seems to be their local expert on religion since he has a “title” they must feel is impressive*) as stating “most would agree the Walmart model has dominated.” (*See how they like to get all technical?*) “If you think of Walmart, you’re getting everything under one roof and open 24 hours a day with little commitment... Churches are following that same model now”. “**Rev. Canon**”?

Psa 111:9 He (*God*) sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant forever: holy and reverend (*Heb.3372- to fear; morally to revere*) *is* His name.

- According to Webster, *revere* means “to regard with deep respect”. In this context anyone who claims the title “Reverend” considers himself or herself on the same level, respect wise, with God. ***No one is on that level!** Notice what Jesus commanded with respect to placing any human on the same level as His Father.

**Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Mat 23:9 **And call no man your father** (*here according to level of spiritual authority*) **upon the earth: for One is your Father, Who is in heaven.**

- “Scheneman added that decades ago a church didn’t have a gym, a pre-school, a school for children and other attractions. He said with over 400 congregations in Cumberland County alone, churches are competing for worshippers and to remain relevant”. When we go to the dictionary (*Webster’s*) to find exactly what “relevant” means within the context here, we find it states “see relieve”. So when we go to the word “relieve” we find under definition number five; “to make less tedious, etc. by providing a pleasing change”. Are we to understand that people are so self-centered? What can be so long and dull about spending a couple hours out of 168 hours in a week worshipping God, as He expects, or hearing the truth about the “simplicity that is in Christ” no matter how boring the preacher or teacher might be? After all, God gave up His Son (*Jn 3:16*) to come to this earth for about **33 years**, to the end that He would die for our sins! I would like to believe what people really need is to be told the truth!

2Co 11:1 Would to God ye could bear with (*Gk.430- put up with: -endure*) me a little (*Gk.3397- a small space of time or degree*) in my folly: and indeed bear with me. **2** For I am jealous (*Gk.2206- to have warmth of feeling for or against*) over you with godly jealousy (*Gk.2205- heat, that is, “zeal”: -indignation [Webster: righteous anger]*): for I have espoused you to **one husband**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. **3** But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the **simplicity that is in Christ** (*1 Cor 14:33*). **4** For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus, Whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit (*Gk.4151- vital principal*), which ye have not received, or another gospel (*Gk.2098- a good message*), which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with (*Gk.430- put up with*) [*me -Paul*] him (“him” is not in the original manuscripts).

- Paul was telling the **Corinthians** that they just might as well tolerate him who brought the **true** gospel because following another would only be to their downfall. They must have been looking around at other teachings on salvation because of Paul’s “godly jealousy” for him to make such a statement, reminding them of the sincerity of the gospel of **Christ**. And Walmart should never be our “model” since we already have a simple, sincere pattern handed down from above that we are to follow.

1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because **Christ also suffered** for us, **leaving us an example**, that ye should **follow His steps**: **22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: **23** Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but **committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously**: **24** Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree (*Gk.3586- timber*), that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed.

- Even though as a carpenter, **Jesus** could have left blue prints for cafés in church buildings, ours is not to be such a worship where it’s all about us because we are not worshipping “self”, we are supposed to be committed to worshipping our **Creator**. The article continues, “There are many things that demand us to be relevant in our society,” said the Rev. Timothy Sadler of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Carlisle.” He went on to speak of a “renovation project” that would “accommodate the different context of worship services so that we can be relevant to different segments of the society”. There’s that word “relevant” again. We are not to worship to please or accommodate or make things less tedious in order to find our worship more uplifting or

exciting. Again, we are not to be worshipping “self”. And that’s **exactly** what these denominations are doing in order to attract and be competitive for “worshippers” and to remain “relevant”.

Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. **24** God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit (*Gk.4151- mental disposition*) and in truth (*1 Thes 2:13 ...truth, the word of God...*).

- But according to “Ryan Brown, pastor of New Life Church in Carlisle, where Sunday attendance ranges from 180 to 250 people... ‘If it’s about just going to church service on Sunday morning, I don’t want to go.’ (*As if worship isn’t enough to attract him.*) “You have to be exciting because God is exciting and church should be exciting.’” No, church is **not** supposed to be “exciting” according to the more charismatic movements. But worship is also not to be a “*just going through the motions*” type of event either. There has to be some balance with regard to how we approach our worship to God “**in spirit and in truth**”. The article continues, “Still, some argue that the emerging trends of advertising and using gimmicks is in stark contrast with the Christianity that Jesus practiced and taught, which was for a Christian to disown himself and follow him continually.” **AMEN! Almost...** “ ‘People have gotten away from teaching,’ said the Rev. Sandy Adams of Carlisle’s Community Christian Fellowship Church.” They’ve also gotten away from **learning!** Once again the term “reverend” isn’t to be associated with anyone other than God. Also, if “Sandy” is referring to the female gender there is also another violation of scripture.

1Ti 2:8 I will therefore that **men** (*Gk.435- ανηρ- a man, not Gk.444- ανθρωπος- manfaced, that is, a human being*) **pray** everywhere (“*I want everyone everywhere*” *Contemporary English Version*), lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. **9** In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; **10** But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. **11** Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection (“*in keeping with her position*” *God’s Word*). **12** But I **suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man**, but to be in silence.

- Even though a woman **can** teach other women (*Titus 2:4*) and even children, she is not to dominate the worship, as in preaching or other acts of worship, or Bible class by instructing while there are men (*or even a man*) present. Men and women are to respect what authority they have been given and be content therewith.

The article goes on. “The Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle recently undertook a \$700,000 capital campaign to repair the basement of the church and install a cafeteria it hopes will appeal to younger people. ‘We tried to create an atmosphere where young people would thrive,’ said Rod Benner, the church’s publicity coordinator” (*which should be every Christian’s job*). It “was definitely designed to address our church’s mission to attract young people”. “How you get ‘em is how you keep ‘em” as I always say. If you get them with the truth you’ll keep them with it. The truth won’t cost anything but if you get them with gimmickry...

Luk 12:30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. **31** But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. **32** Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure

to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

1Ti 6:6 But godliness **with contentment** is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And **having food and raiment** let us be therewith **content**. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the **love of money** is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But thou, O man of God, **flee these things**; and **follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.**

- Nowhere in scripture does it say we are to be begging the community outside the church for funds for anything let alone for cafés or gyms, etc. to win souls to the Lord. (*If these things were to be removed after a while I wonder how many of those who went because of them would continue to go.*) When a church has hundreds of thousands of dollars to invest in cafeterias or other **carnal** things, she has the finances to invest in evangelism, benevolence and mission work and should not be competing with secular institutions that do a better job at what they get paid to do anyway. *Back to the article.*

“However, when it’s all done, churches are still forced to assess whether their ad campaigns, renovations and other tools have worked.” There is nothing wrong with having a kitchen in the church building as long as it was installed as a convenience and not for the prime purpose of bringing souls to Jesus. That’s what the word of God is for and when we substitute “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (*Rom 1:16*) with something carnal those who accept other than the truth can never be saved by it.

1Co 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

- “Jacques Anelli, the director of the National Vocation Service of the French Catholic Church, told The New York Times that, ‘We’re seeing the super-marketing of religion. People consume, and when they don’t find an institution they agree with, then they go somewhere else.’” “Religion, like so many other things, has entered the world of options, lifestyles and preferences” according to “Professor Grace Davie of Britain’s Exeter University” who did a “study of European religion.” Sadly in “a recent article in Newsweek...the fastest-growing category in surveys that ask people to give their religious affiliation is ‘None’. Certain congregations are growing because others are in decline”.

“ ‘All of us, for better or worse, have been pulled into the commercial model,’ Scheneman said. ‘We are another business and we are selling something.’”

Speak for yourself, sir!

Pro 23:23 Buy (*Heb.7069- by implication to own*) the **truth**, and **sell it not**; *also* **wisdom**, and **instruction**, and **understanding**.

- The “*products*” (*truth, wisdom, instruction, understanding*) that we have are **not** for sale as though we are a business trying to lure people in to buying something. We are to

just give it away and the profit we make on it is accumulating in **Heaven**. And not only do we profit from these invaluable commodities, those receiving them will too.

Luk 12: 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Hear: Romans 10:17 ..."faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of **God**."

Believe: Heb 11:6 ..."for he that commeth to **God** must believe that **He** is"...

Repent: Lk 13:3 ..."except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Confess: Mat 10:32 "Whosoever shall confess **Me** before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in **Heaven**."

Be baptized: Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the **Lord**."

Remain faithful: Rom 6:4 ..."even so we also should walk in newness of life."

*Charli Yana
August 26, 2012*

www.searchfortruth.church