

The Local Church

Acts 11:19-26

What Is A Local Church?

Acts 9:31

Up to this point church is used as a general term to refer to all saints. Though there seems to be some distinction in a few passages, mainly it is not used to refer to a specific group in one place.

That changes with the introduction of the Church at Antioch - **Acts 11:22-24**

Using modern terms, The Jerusalem Church of Christ heard about the Antioch Church of Christ.

From this point forward very few uses of church in general sense. Individual congregations are addressed separately, though all are taught the same thing - **1Corinthians 4:17**

Various local groups referenced - **Acts 13:1; 14:21-23; 15:36**

Made of saints in a particular location - "saints" (Grk., "hagios", holy one) in NT - **1Corinthians 1:2**

Also called disciples, Christians, believers, etc.

Organized For Growth

Throughout Acts, apostles, prophets & evangelists proclaimed Gospel of Christ to lost. They urged all men and women to submit to the Will of God that they might be saved. - **Ephesians 4:11-14**

The Apostles & other inspired men passed away, leaving a written record of God's Will to guide us.

Preachers and evangelists continue today to proclaim to men from that written word.

Commonly use 'preacher' to refer to one who has devoted himself to being an evangelist, minister or teacher - **2Timothy 2:1-2; 2Timothy 4:1-5**

But whether serve as evangelist, teacher, preacher, or minister, within local church they likewise submit to oversight of elders

Overseer

Shepherds in Ephesians are God's means to protect & guide each group of saints - **Philippians 1:1**

Fully developed congregations have elders - **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5**

These elders were also called bishops and pastors

"Elders" (Grk., "presbuteros", presbyter) for they were older men

"Bishops" (Grk. "episkopos", overseer) for their task was to oversee the congregation

"Pastors" (Grk. "poimen", shepherd) for their task was to shepherd and feed the flock of God

Not three distinct offices, but different ways to describe the men and their work (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

The authority of the elders to oversee was limited... - **Acts 20:28; 1Peter 5:1-2**

Elders "must" meet stringent qualifications listed in **1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**

In every congregation with elders, there was always a plurality

No elder or group of elders has authority beyond their local group!

Servants

Deacons to serve the elders and the congregation...

"Servants" (Grk., "diakonos", servant, minister) who assisted the elders in the work of the church

Their qualifications are found in **1Timothy 3:8-13**

The work they do is a very noble one - **1Timothy 3:13**

Probable example of part of their work is found in **Acts 6**

God's Design Matters

Three part organization – Saints, Overseers, and Deacons

Preachers/Evangelist/Ministers are a special category as they may be associated with a number of individual congregations, but are not authorized to override authority of local elders. They are servants of Christ who have set themselves apart to ensure the Gospel is spread.