

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

March 22

2009

Editor's Note: The following article was written by Robert Turner several years ago and some younger folks may not relate to some of the specific departures from truth that he mentions (Herald of Truth, etc.) but the problem he addresses is still present today. Those who accepted the use of instrumental music in worship about 150 years ago, if alive today, would see their followers so far removed from truth that they would not even recognize the groups of which they are members. The same is true of those who upheld such sponsoring church arrangements as the Herald of Truth and the church support of human benevolent societies such as orphan homes. They have seen a departure from truth that is far beyond anything they ever dreamed of. Such just illustrates the fact that once you allow that first thing that is not authorized in the word of God the door has been opened for anything one wants to bring in. May we ever demand the truth to be taught and defended. (JH)



"HOW" THE CHURCH DIVIDES

Several years ago a fellow-preacher assured me, "If the church divides I will be with the sound minority!" Meantime, (while "the church" is trying to decide what to do, I suppose) he is right in the fat middle of the liberal camp. Another party asked, "If the church divides, who will get the name?" Neither of these parties showed a working knowledge of the church, either united or divided.

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH is the whole body of saints, world wide; and has no organizational entity. It grows as individuals obey

the gospel; and it "divides" every time a member leaves Christ. This fluency has been characteristic of the church since its beginning, and will continue to the end.

A single LOCAL CHURCH is the largest (and only) organized body of Christians authorized in God's word. Any "dividing", in the sense of one group of members becoming two groups, would have to take place here. Paul foretold such division in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:29,30).

But men have invented a new conception of churches, which they erroneously call "brotherhood." They speak and write of this churchhood as though it were a functional unit; assigning it a work, a doctrine, and institutional adjuncts ("our" homes, "our" hospitals, etc.) which carry on "churchhood" (they call it brotherhood) functions. THIS is the "church" they think may divide; and sometimes it seems "churchhood" pride outweighs concern for alienated brethren. Denominational concepts prevail among "us."

But even if we accept an accommodative manner of speech, and discuss a division in "the church" as that caused by the missionary society and mechanical music in the past; we need to read our history with greater care. Such divisions do not take place on a certain date – prior to that time all are one – the next day, divided. We do not flip a coin for "the name" nor line up on "sides" at a bugle call.

There are multiple shades and hues of "soundness" at all times; and the color of "the great body" or majority of churches **has nothing to do with being acceptable in God's sight.** The "middle of the road" philosophy has blinded some otherwise good preachers on this point. Our adherence to God's word, both in individual and collective (congregational) matters, is the only true rule of soundness (2 Corinthians 10:12ff). Congregations "come and go" with respect to "soundness"– one here, one there. Through a sort of radiational influence, the churches in one section may be ultra-liberal; while another section may be ultra-conservative; but neither extremes nor **general consensus** are safe divine guides. Taking consolation in such is a sure sign of denominational thinking, and can only lead us away from the truth.

If the church of which you are a member is not NOW encouraging sound preaching: warning of the rapid encroachments of the social gospel and "churchhood" projects such as Herald of Truth.

Campaigns for Christ, Inc., "churchhood" benevolent societies, and the like, **that church has already separated itself from the truth**, and you are encouraging its waywardness.

✍ Robert F. Turner



Time Nears For Gospel Meeting

The time (April 12-17) is rapidly approaching for "our gospel meeting" with Steve Niemeier doing the preaching. I hope every member is making plans to be present for every service during the meeting. I commend to you the following article written by Steve shortly before their meeting at Greenwood. Our upcoming meeting presents each one of us with a twofold opportunity; i.e., the opportunity to do good and the opportunity to receive good. We can do good by being present and encouraging others and by inviting friends and neighbors to come and hear the word of God proclaimed. We can receive good by taking the truth taught and making the necessary application to our own life. In doing so we will *"grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

We are confident that Steve will teach nothing but what can be found in the pages of God's word. We encourage all to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. *(JH)*



"Our Gospel Meeting"

Sometimes we look at a gospel meeting through very tainted vision. A week of going to services and listening to lessons on top of our normal week of working and all that we do in our normal week. It is usually a very busy week that goes by fast and yet we become tired and somewhat burdened by the activities of rushing around to get to services every night.

A gospel meeting no doubt changes our normal week into a week where every night we are privileged to come and associate with our brothers and sisters and be edified. We sing and pray and listen to one speak to us from God's word. While the activities of this world

are swirling all around us it is a week that is set aside for us to gather daily in much the same sense our New Testament forefathers did (Acts 2:46).

It is a week that we can hear a different voice from the pulpit yet speaking out of the same guide book. It is a time the elders have decided to provide a spiritual feast for the flock here. It is a time that the whole community will see a new sign advertising special messages that will be presented. It is a time that we all get to gather as a congregation of the Lord's people and worship Him.

Years ago some folks called a week like this a revival. Today we have moved away from that term for one reason or another. Yet, it is a week that the members here should use as a week of reflection and "revival". Many of us do become "stale" in our routines and this week will certainly bring a change in our normal weekly routine.

It is a week that many visitors will come and visit us. We should try and be as gracious of a host as we can be. We are God's people through His Son and our visitors need to see this in our actions. Plan to be here early, meet our visitors, talk with them and encourage our visiting gospel preacher. This is a week that we should look forward to and participate in with enthusiasm.

✍ Steve Niemeier

<i>Belleville church of Christ</i> 5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258 www.bellevillechurch.net	
Schedule of Services	Elders
Sun. Bible Study. 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter. . . (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship. . . . 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study. 7:00 p.m.	
Evangelist	Deacons
James Hahn. (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins (317) 272-2966
	Don Perry. (765) 676-5825
	Alvin Stanley. (317) 831-3514