

The Baptist Faith and Message

VII. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Hebrews 10:19-25

- I. The Universal and Local Church
 - a. Independence – Acts 14:23
 - b. Ultimate unity in Christ – Ephesians 2:19-22
 - c. Membership
- II. The Purposes and Benefits of the church
 - a. Purpose - Matthew 28:18-20
 - b. Benefits – personal sanctification (growth), relationship, and ministry
- III. The Activity of the Church
 - a. Evangelism
 - b. Discipleship
 - c. Ministry to the body
 - d. Study and Teaching of Scripture
 - e. Prayer
 - f. Worship & praise
- IV. Ordinances and Special Services
 - a. Ordinances – Commanded (ordained) by Jesus Christ
 - i. Baptism
 - ii. Lord’s Supper
 - b. Special Services
 - i. Weddings
 - ii. Funerals
- V. Leadership and Government
 - a. Offices
 - i. Pastor – I Timothy 3:1-15
 - ii. Deacon – Acts 6:3-6
 - iii. Missionary – Acts 13:1-3
 - b. Government
 - i. Biblical Examples are elder rule
 - ii. No form of government is taught by Scripture
 - iii. Hierarchical church government is condemned
- VI. Individual Responsibilities of Members
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Support & service
 - c. Godly submission to leadership
 - d. Personal involvement in activities of the church (III. above)