

What About the Church?

This week we consider what we believe about ourselves, the church. You will notice in our Articles of Faith, section 13, that we speak of the *universal* church and the *local* church. We will explore both of these concepts this week, but first,

Do you think it is important to have a statement about the church in our Articles of Faith? Why or why not?

Our Articles of Faith are derived from and very similar to those of IFCA International. In some articles they are identical in wording. Compare ours and the IFCA's closely.

Bible Center	IFCA International
<p>a. Universal Church. The universal church is the spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of the present age and it is the body and espoused bride of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:12; Acts 2).</p>	<p>a. We believe that the Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2).</p>
<p>The true universal church began on the day of Pentecost and could not have existed until Christ died, for she must be redeemed by His blood, and it could only be formed by the present ministry of the Spirit in Baptizing all members into one body.</p>	
<p>b. Local church. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. (Acts 14:27; Acts 20:17; Acts 28:27; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11; Acts 2:42).</p>	<p>b. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. (Acts 14:27; 20:17, 28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1- 13; Titus 1:5-11).</p>
	<p>c. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control. (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:9,16; 5:4-7; 13; I Peter 5:1-4).</p>

What differences do you see?

Having considered these two statements, both of which talk about these two churches, consider,

What is the difference between the 'universal' church and a 'local' church?

There were many attempts to write a concise statement of our common beliefs early on. The Apostle Paul may have been citing one of these in 1 Timothy 3:16. The Nicene as subsequent councils considered various statements of creeds with out settling on the exact wording of one. It is believed that the *so-called* “Apostles’ Creed” was begun in the 2nd century AD, but its present form is only found in a 7th Century work:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Do you see any problems with this creed's statement about the church?

What does the word 'church' mean anyway?

The standard for Greek dictionaries (called *lexicons*) is *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd edition*. It is usually referred to by the first initials of its author *Walter Bauer*, the current English editor, *F.W. Danker* and the editors of the previous English editions, *W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich*. It is just simpler to refer to BDAG. It defines the word translated *church*, Greek, *ecclesia*, with three primary usages:

1. A regularly summoned legislative body, *assembly*,
2. A casual gather of people, *an assemblage, gathering*,
3. People with a shared belief, *community, congregation* of which they cite three major usages:
 - a. OT Israelites: *assembly, congregation* as used in the Septuagint (*Deut. 31:30*).
 - b. Christians in a specific place or area (*Mt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 11:18*), even though they may be meeting in different places, including homes (*Acts 5:11*).
 - c. The global community of Christians (universal) church (*Ac. 9:31*).

How does a person get into the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)?

Is this different from how one got to be an Israelite?

Is it different from how one gets into a local church?

Is it possible to be in a local church, but not the universal church?

Who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23)?

Is our statement about the beginning of the church accurate? Why or why not?

What changes would you make to clarify our statement on the church?

Do you think the following statement should be in ours? Why or why not?

c. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control (Acts 13:1-4; Acts 15:19-31; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:9,16; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
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How would you improve our statement of the teaching on the church?

On the next pages is a list of every reference where the Greek word *ecclesia* is found in the Septuagint translation of the canonical books of the Old Testament and then in the New Testament:

Deut 4:10	Ps 106:32	1 Co 16:19
Deut 9:10	Ps 149:1	2 Co 1:1
Deut 18:16	Prov 5:14	2 Co 8:1
Deut 23:2	Job 30:28	2 Co 8:18
Deut 23:3		2 Co 8:19
Deut 23:4	Mt 16:18	2 Co 8:23
Deut 23:9	Mt 18:17	2 Co 8:24
Deut 31:30	Ac 5:11	2 Co 11:8
Josh 9:2f	Ac 7:38	2 Co 11:28
Judg 20:2	Ac 8:1	2 Co 12:13
Judg 21:5	Ac 8:3	Ga 1:2
Judg 21:8	Ac 9:31	Ga 1:13
1 Sam. 17:47	Ac 11:22	Ga 1:22
1 Sam. 19:20	Ac 11:26	Eph 1:22
1 Kgs 8:14	Ac 12:1	Eph 3:10
1 Kgs 8:22	Ac 12:5	Eph 3:21
1 Kgs 8:55	Ac 13:1	Eph 5:23
1 Kgs 8:65	Ac 14:23	Eph 5:24
1 Chron 13:2	Ac 14:27	Eph 5:25
1 Chron 13:4	Ac 15:3	Eph 5:27
1 Chron 28:2	Ac 15:4	Eph 5:29
1 Chron 28:8	Ac 15:22	Eph 5:32
1 Chron 29:1	Ac 15:41	Php 3:6
1 Chron 29:10	Ac 16:5	Php 4:15
1 Chron 29:20	Ac 18:22	Col 1:18
2 Chron 1:3	Ac 19:32	Col 1:24
2 Chron 1:5	Ac 19:39	Col 4:15
2 Chron 6:3	Ac 19:41	Col 4:16
2 Chron 6:12	Ac 20:17	1 Th 1:1
2 Chron 6:13	Ac 20:28	1 Th 2:14
2 Chron 7:8	Ro 16:1	2 Th 1:1
2 Chron 10:3	Ro 16:4	2 Th 1:4
2 Chron 20:5	Ro 16:5	1 Ti 3:5
2 Chron 20:14	Ro 16:16	1 Ti 3:15
2 Chron 23:3	Ro 16:23	1 Ti 5:16
2 Chron 28:14	1 Co 1:2	Phm 2
2 Chron 29:23	1 Co 4:17	Heb 2:12
2 Chron 29:28	1 Co 6:4	Heb 12:23
2 Chron 29:31	1 Co 7:17	Jas 5:14
2 Chron 29:32	1 Co 10:32	3 Jn 6
2 Chron 30:2	1 Co 11:16	3 Jn 9
2 Chron 30:4	1 Co 11:18	3 Jn 10
2 Chron 30:13	1 Co 11:22	Re 1:4
2 Chron 30:17	1 Co 12:28	Re 1:11
2 Chron 30:23	1 Co 14:4	Re 1:20
2 Chron 30:24	1 Co 14:5	Re 2:1
2 Chron 30:25	1 Co 14:12	Re 2:7
Ps 21:23	1 Co 14:19	Re 2:8
Ps 21:26	1 Co 14:23	Re 2:11
Ps 25:5	1 Co 14:28	Re 2:12
Ps 25:12	1 Co 14:33	Micah 2:5
Ps 34:18	1 Co 14:34	Joel 2:16
Ps 39:10	1 Co 14:35	Lam 1:10
Ps 67:27	1 Co 15:9	
Ps 88:6	1 Co 16:1	