**The Lord’s Church In Your Community**

(Robert F. Turner)

There is a church in your community which has no bowling club, no softball team; nor does it sponsor a Boy Scout troop. The physical property of this church includes a very modern place for assembly and worship, with many modern, air-conditioned classrooms for Bible study; but in all of this widespread plant, there is no kitchen, no banquet hall, no gymnasium, and no party room.

 Your first thought may be, “What a strange church! What strange people!” Perhaps. However, many of these church members are your neighbors; and in fairness to them, and to you, we should explain that they are very normal people. Many of them enjoy bowling, and softball; some serving as trainers and managers for various Little League teams. Our young men “make the team” in High School, and College; and the parents cheer them on with enthusiasm. But the church is not used as a civic or social club. By now you may be asking, “Then what does this congregation offer me? What does she offer the community in which we live?” These are fair questions and demand fair, open answers.

‘***We offer you the New Testament church!***’ Not a social club; not a civic organization; not a political forum; not a Public Welfare Institution – although the influence of Christianity has been felt in all these worth-while fields of human endeavor. Members of the Lord’s church, who are businessmen, bring honesty and fairness into commercial and domestic relations. Christian men and women, richly endowed with the Spirit of Christ’s love for mankind, have made better communities, cleaner politics, and have done much to relieve the sufferings of humanity. But the church of the New Testament, the Lord’s church, has a very special reason for existing – a divine reason for existing – with a purpose and work that demands attention and precedence over all else in this life.

 ‘***She is a spiritual institution administering to our spiritual needs!***’ The church, as a functional organization, was established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to fill a need, to do a work that no human institution could possibly perform. We deplore the fact that many religious institutions of the present have smothered the real purpose of the church beneath civic, social, and domestic affairs. They feed hungry souls with hamburgers. But when all the needs – or desires of this life have been met, and we find we must leave this life – what then? “*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul*” (Matthew 16:26)?

 Jesus said, “*And upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). The church was to be built upon the truth that Jesus was the Christ – “*For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11); a truth fully proven by His resurrection from death (Romans 1:4). By this sacrifice of Himself, Christ “bought” the church (Acts 20:28); He “gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). Reading such scriptures concerning the church of Christ we are impressed with the sacredness of this divine institution. She can have no trivial purpose, nor is such assigned her by the Word of God.

 From Ephesians 3:10-11 we read, “*To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” Can a community social center serve so noble a purpose?

 In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul writes to Timothy, “*That you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*.” The church “holds aloft” truth – and the reference is to spiritual TRUTH that saves souls. Shall we replace divine truth with book reviews and travelogues? God forbid! But some may say, “We live in the 20th Century. The church must meet the needs of today!”

Exactly so! We have many fine civic and social organizations, which can meet the physical needs of our community today. Members of the New Testament church, as parents and citizens, individually support and promote all wholesome efforts to better the lot of mankind in this life. But this 20th Century is woefully lacking in emphasis upon the soul of man, and his eternal welfare. The church must meet the need of today – the very greatest need of all being the peculiar and distinctive benefits offered mankind by Christ.

‘***This church specializes in being the church!***’ We offer this community simple New Testament Christianity. Our primary concern is with the spiritual needs of mankind – his need for God, for forgiveness of sins, for genuine God-satisfying worship, for the pureness of conscience that can come from living, working, worshipping according to the directions of the Word of God.

 As people, we know we are not perfect. “*For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us – a sphere which especially includes you*” (2 Corinthians 10:12-13).

 We make no plea of greatness on our own part, but pledge ourselves to strive diligently to follow the rule of God, the divine message. We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent. Visit with us soon – and let us welcome your honest investigation of the church of Christ in this community.