

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

September 25

2022

## Overseers versus Consultation Team

The Bible gives us Jehovah's plan for the organization, structure and maintenance of the church. Elders or overseers are to supervise legislation for Christ's body that the Lord has already given. These men are officers, types of sheriffs if you please, over what has already been divinely decreed. The qualifications and general work of such men are explained in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-14. Men called "deacons" are also discussed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. These deacons are not "overseers" as elders, but are "servants," i.e. to carry out the work in behalf of the church. The Lord's church as to its membership is described in Phil. 1:1 where the phrase, "saints or believers," inclusive of "elders," and "deacons" is used. There are no scriptures that even intimate boards of directors, counseling advisors, committees or subcommittees. These are all foreign to the Bible; and yet, many men and women have decided they have a better plan for the working of the church than did God!

A case in point has recently come to my attention in an eight-page letter sent to the members of a particular religious group. One member who was the recipient of this information asked if I would review it and give my opinion. The assembly is not a church of Christ. It is a denomination; but I will attempt in this article to outline some pertinent points of religious interest.

1) Such language as "Consultation Team is headed up by veteran pastor. . ." should cause the thinking Bible student to question by what authority things are being done in this group. "A church vote will be taken. . ." is another questionable phrase. "Church Conference" and "Sanctuary" are other words and expressions that should be probed. Such words and terms

are not used in the Scriptures; at least not in the context in which these are implemented. As overseers or presbyters, (another Greek word for "elders" meeting those qualifications mentioned above), of the congregation, no place is given for other entities to devise a "team" of human authority. Not even scripturally appointed "deacons" have oversight, but like all members are in submission to "those who have the rule over them," (Heb. 13:7, 17).

2) Nowhere does the Bible speak of "voting," ("casting lots" notwithstanding) to decide on an issue; yet this is the format being used by this "church" in deciding whether to accept the "Consultation Teams" advice or not.

3) The whole appeal reads like a business or company report. In a "Consultation Team" 9-point plan, non-scriptural words such as "Ministry Action Plans," "Ministry Team Leaders," "Focus Group," "Church Council," "Mission Insite demographic report," "Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Report" and "Saturday Leadership Workshop," are all used. Such comes from the minds and pens of men, and women. These words and phrases are certainly not from the language of God. Sounding like a business instead of the Lord's church, these "advisers" use as "Strength Points" the concept of something called "Corporate Worship Opportunities," and "Commitment to Downtown." While it is agreed that we are to "go into all the world," (Mk. 16:15), why must we use such commercial language to express such?

4) The church has a responsibility to provide for brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need, E.g. Acts 2:45; 4:34-35; but the body of Christ is not accountable for feeding the world. There is no way the church can do that. Humanly, some try to justify giving from the church treasury to as many as they can, saying this is a scriptural plan. Christ did not set up the church to be the benevolent society for all of creation. Even Jesus Himself taught, "The poor you always have with you," (Matt. 26:11).

As an individual one is to do what he can in assisting the poor. Let's look at a couple of passages: 1) Gal. 6:10 says, "...while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Notice the distinction between "all men," and "household of the faith;" i.e. I as an individual am to help everybody, but especially my brothers and sisters in Christ. Concerning the church, however, there are no scriptures given that authorize the church treasury supplying the needs of the world. 2) 1 Tim. 5:16 says about the church's

money, “If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed,” (i.e. with no family). Granted this is speaking about a particular situation, regarding widows, but notice that families should care for their own that “the church be not burdened.” The church is to care for brothers and sisters in Christ and that is all we have a pattern for doing in the area of benevolence. I, on the other hand am to help whomever I can, but especially my fellow Christians. God never intended for the church “in going into all the world” to feed the poor and hungry. He intended for going “into all the world,” to be in the area of evangelism, not benevolence. So, while Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Interfaith Winter Shelter, Martin Luther King service, Hoosier Housewarming, the Shalom Center, Pre-School Programs all may sound like wonderful ideas, they are not Bible authorized and, therefore, monies cannot be taken from the church coffers to support such.

A business-like concept also seems to permeate this Consultation Team’s efforts to redesign their religious organization. I would appeal to them and all others who are interested in pleasing God to re-think their position on biblical authority. Do it God’s way. Read His word. Do not modernize it. Do as Jeremiah said, “Walk in the old paths.” Do not be as the people of his day who said, “We will not walk in them.” (Jer. 6:16).

*✍ Gary L. Fiscus*

## God Does Not Change

As most of us are aware, we live in an ever changing world. However, no matter how much the world we live in changes around us, we need to be ever mindful of the fact that our God is everlasting (Psalm 90:2), and He does not change (Malachi 3:6).

I remind us of this fact because I have recently heard some say, “absolutely everything has changed.” Many are likewise proclaiming that “nothing will ever be the same” and they say, “life as we knew of it has changed forever.”

Now, I do understand that the effects of the coronavirus pandemic these last couple of years have brought about many changes in the way in which we now live. I know that social media these last few years, has certainly changed the way we live and communicate in this world. I realize that the price of fuel and groceries have certainly increased to prices never seen before, and I likewise understand that the way in which our society as a whole views God and His commandments have drastically changed for the worse, and unfortunately, this will probably continue to change for the worse. However, my friends, as the prophet Isaiah informed the children of Israel many years ago, we likewise need to remember that although some things change, and some become weary due to those changes, God, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not change and He neither faints nor is weary (Isaiah 40:28).

So keep in mind, although we live in an ever changing world, God does not change. He does what He says (Numbers 23:19), and He means what He says (Hebrews 6:17-18). Therefore, no matter how much things seem to be changing around us, may we always fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13), may we always hold to God’s unchanging hand, and may we never forget, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

*✍ Brad Phillips*

**Belleville church of Christ**  
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**Schedule of Services**

Sunday Bible Study .....	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship .....	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship .....	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study .....	7:00 p.m.

**Evangelist**

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