

ISSUE

19.38

BULLETIN OF  
THE OLSEN  
PARK CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

# Faithful Sayings

September 17,  
2017

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

## Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

## Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



## Why Do We Use the Word “Church”?

By Kyle Pope

S ometime back I got an email from a gentleman who had read a study I did on the use of the Greek word *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), usually translated “church” in our English Bibles. The gentleman appreciated the study but posed a question to which I did not have an immediate answer—“Why do we use the word ‘church’?”

That was an interesting question. Many sermons have been devoted to explaining the biblical concept of the church. We emphasize that in Scripture the church is not



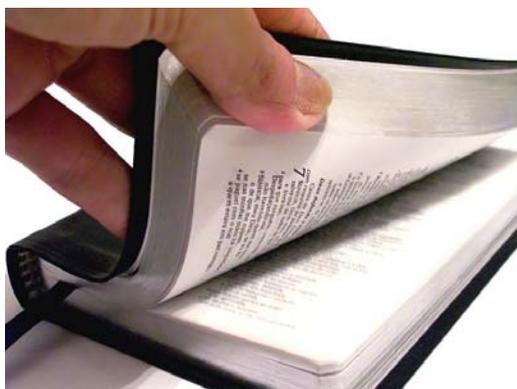
a building, but people in a saved relationship with God in Christ (Acts 2:47, KJV, NKJV; Eph. 5:23). Much like the word *baptism*, we must help people wipe away centuries of misconceptions about its nature and embrace the pure and simple meaning taught in God's word. Yet unlike the word *baptism* the word "church" is not a transliteration (brought into English without translation), but neither is it a literal translation of the concept inherent in the

word *ekklesia*, which is a political term referring to a "called out" assembly (often of the citizens of a city-state). That means we must first *define* the very word used to translate this word in order to help people truly understand its meaning.

So why do we use the word "church"? The gentlemen who asked this question had concerns that its origin may go back to the name *Circe* (Κίρκη), the witch from pagan Greek mythology (such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Hesiod's *Theogony*). If so, could a pagan origin of this word contribute to false concepts that have become attached to it? While there are similarities how some ancient forms of the word "church" were spelled, no sources that I consulted claim that our word is derived from the name *Circe*.

Instead, all of the sources I have consulted claim it is derived from the Greek word *kuriakos* (κυριακός) meaning "belonging to the Lord." This word is used twice in the New Testament of the "**LORD'S day**" (Rev. 1:10) and the "**LORD'S supper**" (1 Cor. 11:20). In Greek

the word *kurios* (κύριος) means "lord" and is used throughout the New Testament in references to Jesus (God the Son) and God the Father. Scholars tell us that fairly early on Christians began to speak of the *ekklesia*, the called out body of Christ's disciples, as the "LORD'S household," using the word *kuriakos* (*Patristic Greek Lexicon*). This is much the same way



# CHURCH

Paul speaks of Christians as **“fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God”** (Eph. 2:10). Early Christians also began to call the place where the *ekklesia* met the “LORD’S house” (also using the word *kuriakos*) and eventually *kuriakos* itself came to be used of the assembly of disciples (*ibid.*).

The earliest translations did as we do with the word *baptism*—they didn’t translate *ekklesia*, they brought it into their own language. For example in Latin translations *ecclesia*, the Latin transliteration of the Greek word *ekklesia* was used to translate references to assemblies of Christ’s people. The first Germanic translation, the Gothic translation also transliterated this to *aikklesjon*. At some point, however, in Germanic Languages the emphasis shifted to the use of *kuriakos*, meaning “belonging to the Lord” in reference to the people who belong to the Lord. In German this became the word *kirche*, in Anglo-Saxon it became the word *cirice* (also spelled *cyrce* or *cyrice*). In Wycliffe’s first trans-

lation of the Latin Vulgate into English (1395) it was *chirche*. William Tyndale, the first to translate the New Testament from the Greek (1526) actually translated *ekklesia* and rendered it “cogregacion” (the archaic spelling of the word “congregation”). The Great Bible (1539) and the Bishop’s Bible (1568) did the same, but the Geneva (1557), Rheims-Douay (1582), and King James (1611) for some reason followed the approach taken by Wycliffe, rendering this “church” (as have virtually all English translations since then).

By using the word “congregation” instead of “church” Tyndale may well have been trying to



cut through the misconceptions of his own day about the church. If I could have it my way I would prefer a more literal translation of *ekklesia* to make it clear it's not a building or a superstructure many think of when they see the man-made organizations that speak of themselves as

a "Church." Does that mean that it is wrong to use this word? No.

For whatever reason English did not bring the word *ekklesia* into it except in references to "ecclesiastical" matters. It did, however, bring the word *kuriakos*, "belonging to the Lord" into it. Over time this evolved into the word "church." The background of this translation of the word *ekklesia* rests in the concept that these are the people who "belong to the Lord." That is a biblical concept. It is true that today many people hear the word "church" and think of a building or a man-made institution. This makes it necessary to help people see what the Bible means by the *ekklesia* (or "church"). That doesn't mean we must object to the use of the word "church"—we must clarify its meaning and help people understand how the Bible uses these concepts.



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**We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.**

**● Let us know if you have any questions.**