

What's a Church?

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 20 September 2010 10:03

A Testimony by K. B. Napier (Pastor, Manselton Church, Swansea)

Manselton Church (*formerly known as Hazelmere Fellowship, Sketty*), came into being in late 1987, following the death of my father. For the previous ten years I had witnessed gross errors within the churches (most of which are now spiritually dead). This was effected through observation, the study of scripture, conscience, and my own participation in those very same errors. Basically, I could no longer 'toe the party line' enforced by tradition. Finally, in 1987, the insensitivity and lack of true Christian love shown by our then pastor - who preferred to begin his walking holiday than to comfort a bereaved Christian family and to conduct the funeral - persuaded me that I had to follow God's calling, in spite of my reluctance. The same pastor was also responsible for breaking up the whole church and for teaching Biblical/theological errors.

So, I left the established system of things. Accused of leading my family and others 'out of the church', I was actually the **last** member of our new church to leave! My brother, David, and brother-in-law, James, had to persuade me that I had to leave. Whilst I saw many evils within the local churches, I was loathe to leave them. But I did.

For a month or so none of us knew what to do, we were so indoctrinated by centuries of teaching on what was 'the Church'. Then, we decided to form our own congregation. It was not our decision alone. The Christian Research Institute (the former name of BTM) had already been publishing its papers, and this, plus the previous ten years of questioning, had prepared the way. Other pastors from around the UK urged me to leave *before* 1987. They could see, far more than I could, that our position - mine in particular - was intolerable. God has a way of burning our bridges behind us whenever He wishes to execute His plans! And that is what He did, by many clear signs and Biblical evidences. Thus we had NOT 'left the church', but were *returning* to the true Church!

After a month or so, those of us who left - close to twenty including children - began to realise we had to start a new local church. It seemed to go without question that I was to be the pastor (although I believe there should be *more*, I was the only one called at the time). This had already been confirmed by my previous calling to pastoral roles, and was later confirmed by many Biblical and other signs. Significantly, our troublesome previous pastor has now left the devastated church which, to my knowledge, has not yet recovered.

With great unease - for we were still shackled to our past - we began to hold our meetings. We

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met in our homes. Initially, because we did not really know what to do, and it was a novelty, we did odd things, like meeting in the mountains, or some other outside location! This proved to be totally impractical and, really, rather silly. The children would run off to play and the adults would enjoy the scenery!! So, we settled to a more orderly existence. However, if we all decide not to meet as usual on an odd Sunday, then that is what we do, there being no scriptural compulsion to hold 'services' every Lord's Day, even though this is what so many Believers think *should* happen, because of tradition..

We met - and still meet - in our homes. For continuity, on the Lord's Day, this is now in my own home. But, we do meet elsewhere at times. The name - *Manselton Church* - has been adopted because it is Biblical; it reflects the locality where we meet, that is all. There

are

other 'churches' in the area, each of which bears the name of a denomination, plus the locality name. One other exists, which has started to use a very affectatious historical name. All of them are in

'Churches Together'

, and are either charismatic or ecumenical, or both. Hence, for very solid and factual reasons, we are

literally

the

'church in Manselton'

. The name is therefore exact (even though, by 2000, our numbers are very low).

We meet in my home for a very good reason - there are insufficient numbers to warrant hiring a hall or buying a building! Also, there is no scriptural reason to do so, unless numbers are so great they cannot be contained in a home. Scripture does not demand a building of a special type or size. Rather, it tells us that wherever two or three (Believers) are gathered together, ***there is the Church!***

This is very literal. If I meet another Believer in the supermarket as I push my trolley around, then that is a 'meeting of the church'. It does not matter where we meet, once there are at least two Believers together, for

any

reason, then

that

is a 'meeting of the church'. This is highly significant...

'Services' as most churches have them are not scriptural, nor can they be implied from scripture. Yet, for many centuries, Christians have accepted their existence without question. They are conditioned to meeting in a 'proper' church building. They *must* have a 'proper' schedule of weekly and Sunday 'services' to attend. And these churches

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must

have a 'proper' minister, usually with the title 'reverend'. (I find this odd, as I know God has called me, and so do others. I have preached and taught scripture for thirty years - often to other preachers - and take all I say

from

scripture).

For these reasons, whilst some agree with what our small church teaches, they stop short of actually attending our meetings, because they feel that somehow we are not a 'proper' church! Thus, they attend the usual local churches, even if such churches present them with errors! Some who knew me previously will not accept that I am a pastor called by God, partly because I was not 'ordained' by a denomination, Bible school or 'trained' minister. Yet, my Biblical knowledge at least equals that of most other pastors! This is a fact not a boast. God called me to the pastorate and that is my authority. Anyway, I reject the title 'reverend'.

For the first year, as a church, we met to talk about the most fundamental aspects of meeting together. What is a pastor? What is his role and authority? What is the Church? What is a local church? Should we have meetings or services, and are they Biblical? Are prayer meetings Biblical? How should we study scripture? And so on.

Only after we had settled the very basis of meeting together, did we dare to meet for Bible study. For sound Biblical reasons we do not hold prayer meetings - something those who attend 'ordinary' churches do not understand. Prayer is not shunned, it is merely conducted as we see it in scripture. Thus far we hardly ever sing, not because we have anything against it, for scripture agrees with it, but for quite logical reasons. However, if anyone wishes to sing, then so be it! Indeed, I love to sing myself, and look forward to a change in circumstance so that we may all sing together, if called to do so. In these ways we rely on the Holy Spirit and not on tradition. I do not mean the false notion of the Spirit as taught by modern charismatics, but a true understanding based solidly on scripture. There is no 'membership', except that of scripture, and we look after each other.

At our meetings, we all learn scripture in depth and meetings go on for as long as they take. If the study seems longer than usual, I stop after a reasonable time and ask if the others wish to continue or if they want to stop. We all share refreshments, sometimes during the meeting itself. From observation, those who come regularly (all Believers - a true church cannot have unsaved people as 'members') are very enthusiastic about our meetings and they have learned great truths about our historic faith, as delivered by God through His word. There is no pomp or ceremony.

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I never vaunt my pastorship, because I am just one of the congregation. In this way we learn together. Often our meetings are full of excitement as we all learn new truths or rediscover the *real* meaning of old teachings, as revealed by scripture itself. Sinners who make mistakes? Of course we are! The *only* true church? Never!!

So, what is a real church? Manselton Church is a true and authentic example of one! Not because I say so, but because we are devoted to scripture alone and learn exactly what it tells us. We put what we learn into practice, believing that what we learn today is what we must do tomorrow. If some wish to attend the usual traditional churches, even though they are far from the truth, then they are missing out on a life of real spiritual adventure! I can assure them there is far more to 'church' than sitting in a pew and being talked to by a man in a pulpit!! Let the Holy Spirit reign, and your life will change dramatically, as He fills that aching void. If YOU attend a church that is in the 'system', then I GUARANTEE there is a void in your heart!

Scripture

,
not
tradition, must be your guide.

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