

# The Lakeview Lamp

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* - Psalm 119:105

**August 27, 2006**

## *Why "Liberal" And "Conservative" Churches Of Christ?*

Robert Harkrider

During the past two decades many have asked this question. Some sincere brethren who have been caught up in one stream or the other never fully understood, and many who were too young before have now grown into adulthood wondering why. It is therefore a good question worthy of repeated investigation.

Labels of "liberal" and "conservative" have been used by some as a prejudicial tool to halt further investigation. Labels used as prejudicial clubs are to be condemned; yet the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are proper when used as adjectives to describe a difference in attitude toward authority, and consequently, a difference in practices.

As the years go by the attitude underlying the division becomes more apparent. We are not separated because of jealousy and envy. We have divided over a basic attitude toward the Bible: (1) A "liberal" attitude justifies any activity that seems to be a "good work" under the concept, "We do a lot of things for which we have no authority." (2) A "conservative" attitude makes a plea to have Bible authority (either generic or specific) for all we do – therefore we refrain from involving the church in activities alien to that of the church in the New Testament.

Briefly, the walls of innovations, which have divided us, are built in three areas:

### **Who?**

Who is to do the work of the church? The church or a human institution? The church has a God-given work to do, and the Lord made the church sufficient to do its own work. Within the framework of elders and deacons, a local church is the only organization necessary to fulfill its mission of evangelism, edification, and benevolence (**Eph.3:10-11; 4:11-16; 1 Tim.3:15**). However, a wedge was driven when some brethren began to reason that the church may build and maintain a separate institution – a different WHO – to do the work of the church. This separate institution is human in origin and control. It is not a church nor governed by the church; yet it receives financial maintenance from the church. Human institutions so arranged (such as benevolent homes, hospitals, colleges, or missionary societies) may be doing a good work; but when they become leeches on the church, they deny its independence and all-sufficiency and make a "fund raising house" of this God-planned institution.

### **How?**

How is the work of the church to be overseen? On a local basis with separate, autonomous congregations? Or may several local churches work as a unit through a "sponsoring eldership?" The organization of the New Testament church is local in nature, with elders limited to oversight of the work of the flock among them (**Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:2**). We are divided by those who promote "brotherhood" works through a plan of intercongregational effort with centralized oversight, which is an unscriptural HOW.

### **What?**

What is the mission of the church? Spiritual or also social? It is in this area that the loose attitude toward the scripture is becoming more apparent. Though wholesome activities are needed for all, the Lord died for

a higher and holier mission than fun, food, and frolic. Let the church be kept free to spend its energy and resources (**Rom.14:17; 1 Peter 2:5**), and let the home be busy in providing social needs (**1 Cor.11:22, 34**).



*“But in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).*



*“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.” – Psalm 91:14*

# **Family News**

**Virginia Bryant** is feeling better.

Remember **Quinton Coppage** who has several health problems.

**Tiwana Ellis**, who has visited with us, is in intensive care.

**Elmo Ferrell's** back is worse.

**Brittan Gillihan** was born to Brittney and Michael Friday morning. She weighed 7 lbs 7.5 ozs. Both mother and baby are healthy, happy, home.

**Sandra Hunt** has some heart problems. She remains in a lot of pain. She is scheduled to see a neurosurgeon on Wednesday.

**Sara Hurt**, who used to be a member here, had a slight heart problem and was in the hospital for a few days earlier this month. They put her on some new medicine. She is at home and is doing well.

**Jennifer Lindzy**, Fran Pickens' granddaughter, continues to improve.

**Allen Malone** remains in Vietnam. There is a new report in the back (over the next few days, remember **Mark McCrary** as he travels back to US).

**Haley Oglesby**, who some of us here know, had cancer. Thankfully, they caught it and removed it in the early stages. She will have some chemo.

Remember **Laura Reed**. She remains about the same. (She remains very concerned about her granddaughter.)

**Angela Steely**, the White's daughter, continues to improve. Tomorrow she is scheduled to return to the doctor. Her husband **Greg** had back surgery on Thursday. He is at home recovering.

Remember **Georgia Taylor**. She continues to not do well.

**Robert Wray** had surgery on his left eye for a dislocated lens on Thursday. It went well. He received a good report from the doctor on Friday. He is scheduled for another checkup on Tuesday.

*Out of town, travelling, or visiting:* **Heyboers**.

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*"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).*