

Monocacy Church of the Brethren

Monthly Newsletter

April 2026 – Issue 4

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The Empty Church

Here are a few reasons why doing church away from church isn't church.



1. We wouldn't approach other areas of life like that.

To assert that we can do church away from church is an unparalleled way to approach life events. Do we approach other areas of life like that?

Husbands, next time you've scheduled a family day, just before it happens, tell your wives, "Honey, I'm actually going to do our family time on a solo-camping trip. But I'll think about you and the kids while I'm sitting out there with the dog and my knife cramming Spam in my mouth. It still counts as family time, right? We don't have to be all legalistic, honey."

I wonder if we would use the "church-away-from-church-still-counts" jive towards other things in life, like missing the game, our daughter's ballet, our hobby, or that movie we really want to see. "I'm going to forsake my daughter's ballet, but I'll do the ballet by remembering the moves I saw her practice in the living room last week." "I'm going to miss hunting with the crew today, but I'll do hunting by watching hunting YouTubes at home." "I won't make it to the premiere of that movie, but I'll do the movie by watching the preview again on my phone."

A YouTube video isn't hunting with the crew. Meditating on her grande jeté is not attending my daughter's ballet. Watching the preview on my six-inch screen isn't doing the movie premiere. And doing church at home, in the car, or on a hike is not doing church.

2. Since we are not God, we cannot redefine things that are God's.

If we are the head of an organization, then we can choose to define things in that organization. If you are the founder of a company, you can define your company's goals. You can define standards for your employees, because you are over the thing.

Christ is the head of the Church (Eph. 1:22-23 Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). He bought the Church with his life (Acts 20:28 Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). He birthed the Church into being. It's his Church (Matt. 16:18 Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)). So, he gets to say how things go. When he lays out things for his Church, that's how they need to be.

Christ has specified how things look for his kind of church. And there are no verses which say, "Well, if you want to alter this thing that I've specified, go for it." So it is when it comes to doing church God's way. He is so great and worthy that it is reasonable for us to submissively and carefully approach what he says about church. We'll look at some of what that means below.

3. Worship of God is not a self-determined endeavor.

Much of the Bible begins with God laying out what it means, and does not mean, to worship him. One take-away from Exodus and Leviticus is, "Wow. This glorious God does not leave the details of worship up to us." That's because one of the great problems with humanity is that depravity renders us unable and unwilling to worship him correctly. We have manufactured 10,000 ways of worship. And every one of them is profane and idolatrous.

Not once in the history of humanity has a person or people devised the correct way to worship the true God. That's why we need the Bible. Whenever man takes the self-determined approach to worshipping God, he makes an idol. In his grace, God prescribes worship to sinful man for good reason.

Just consider some of these Old Testament examples: "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes" (Leviticus 18:3).

"And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them" (Leviticus 20:23). Consider those Old Testament times. With all of those blood sacrifices, couldn't someone just offer up a sacrifice at home? Wouldn't that be good enough as long as they meant well and thought about God? Those who offered a sacrifice away from the tabernacle were to be killed (Lev. 17:8-9). The point is that proper worship of God is not a self-determined endeavor. God has not left it up to me to decide what defines obediently gathering as the church for corporate worship.

4. Church means something specific in the New Testament.

Not once in the New Testament does God refer to an individual or parents and their kids as the/a church. Individuals are called by their name. Families are called households. But they are not called "church" or said to be doing church. An arbitrary group of Christians is neither called church, as in the gathered body for corporate worship.

Sometimes "church" refers to the larger body of believers (e.g. Acts 8:3, Acts 9:31; Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 5:25), and sometimes to local bodies of believers (e.g. Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Revelations 1:11, Revelations 22:16). When Paul and his team roll into Philippi, they find some people praying by the river (Acts 16:13). Then, they meet with the jailer and his household in a home (Acts 16:34). Neither venues were deemed a church. They needed to be baptized and gathered with other regenerate individuals under biblical leadership. Crete had a similar situation. While there were many Christians scattered around the island, they needed to be shepherded and gathered under qualified biblical leadership (Titus 1:5-9). Until then, Paul did not consider it ecclesiological-ly complete (Titus 1:5).

The book of Acts gives us a clearer picture:

During the earlier days of the book of Acts, the church was in its infancy, foundational stages. God matured it towards the end of the first century. By the time we get to 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, many of the necessary ingredients of a local church are prescribed and handed off by the apostle. Contemporary believers have the responsibility of observing these prescriptions so as to keep with God's idea of church.

Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 14 is that the church gathering needs to look a certain way. The way of self-centered, self-expression did not count for Paul (1 Corinthians 14:12, 23). As certain individuals intelligibly use their gifts in the corporate gathering, the whole body receives edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Intelligibility and orderliness must abound (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). In other words, the church gathering is to be done as God defines.

All that to say, church means something that is not arbitrarily defined in the New Testament. In part, the emphasis is on the corporate body gathering for edification in an orderly manner according to commands prescribed to church leaders. Thus, it will not do to consider myself "doing church" way from the local church.

5. Gathering corporately observes that God has saved us into the body of Christ.

"Well, the church isn't a building. It's people. So, if I am with Christians, then it's technically church." As demonstrated above in #4, the New Testament does not support that argument. Hanging out with my family or a few Christian friends might be practicing the one anothers or studying the Bible or praying. But it is not the church gathered in obedience for corporate worship.

That's the very thing that the writer of Hebrews corrected. Various individuals, and likely families, were not gathering with the church for corporate worship. In response, he does not say, "Oh, right, the church is not the building, so go ahead and forsake corporate worship." Instead, he says, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25-26).

Paul addressed an individualistic attitude towards the body of Christ plaguing the Corinthian church. His argument there speaks to the "church-isn't-a-building-so-I-can-do-church-anywhere" attitude. Speaking to a local church, he writes, "The body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). Yes, the church is not a building. No, you and your family do not constitute the church. A local body is made up of many members. You need those other members, and they need you. "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing where would the sense of smell be?" (1 Corinthians 12:17).

Paul's illustration helps us understand this: Consider Paul's illustration; a body. Can a lung be considered a body? "Well, it's my family, not just me." Can two kidneys and an armpit be considered a body? In a New Testament kind of church, God has made that group of believers as a functioning body (1 Corinthians 12:18). It's not perfect. It needs work. But it's a body, and far more so than lungs and kidneys sliding around our kitchen floors.

My family hunkered down at home is not the local, representative body of Christ. Hiking with a few friends is not the body of Christ. Going out skiing with unbelieving friends is not the body of Christ. Doing church away from church isn't church because doing church without the church isn't church.

Our good God commands us to forsake these lone-ranger-ism fallacies and instead gather with his people for worship. Doing so expresses the wonderful truth that we belong to something bigger than ourselves. We belong to the body of Christ. Gathering with the church shows that we enthusiastically embrace God's good desire to immerse eagerly into his visible, living church; the body of Christ. Apathy thereto is apathy towards God and the Head of the body.

6. Church constitutes, in part, a group of believers under the committed care of qualified leadership present to bless the local body.

“House churches” are popular in many areas these days. That’s great that people want to gather with others to study God’s word. But often these gatherings are missing something critical; biblically qualified and affirmed leadership. Again, Paul did not consider things as faithfully complete in a church without such leaders (e.g. Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). At the close of the first century, the apostles delegated elders/pastors to take the baton in the shepherding-care of the churches (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Tested leaders physically present were necessary in every church.

We need to honor God and the way that he has decided to care for his churches. Part of doing that is working to raise up and install biblically qualified and affirmed leaders (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5-9). Another part of doing that is gathering for worship with a church where such things exist. Prescribed corporate worship involves the preaching of God’s word, administering the ordinances, and disciplining as necessary by these leaders (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2). I can’t do that if I’m doing church with my friends on a hike.

“Well, we do sit under the word and listen to a qualified pastor charged to preach. We watch our favorite pastor live-streamed on Sundays in our living room.” Certainly there are intermediate and temporary situations where we can do that. We may be a church plant in the process of becoming a church or have lost our pastor. But these ought not, and need not, be permanent solutions. We need physically present leaders to shepherd us.

Even if the New Testament was written in the 21st century virtual age, the ideal would be a church who is physically, and not virtually, gathered together. It’s possible, and necessary, to do so. Even with the many first century constraints, God’s people were able to travel, train, and get local leaders raised up so that leaders were physically present in the various churches (e.g. Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). And they did so even in churches within a few miles from each other (e.g. Corinth and Cenchrea, Romans 16:1).

“Well, our family does everything a church does on Sundays.” Is dad a pastor? Has he been recognized and affirmed as such by a currently-qualified and recognized body of local church leadership (1 Tim. 4:14 Open in Logos Bible Software (if available))? How is your family church disciplining people? And is there not a New Testament local body with whom you could gather? Bottom line: I cannot consider my arbitrary group of people gathered on a Sunday a church if it does not include a regenerate body of individuals committed to one another, biblically qualified and affirmed leaders, preaching of the word, administering the ordinances, and conducting biblical church discipline as necessary. Therefore, I could not consider such a group as doing church.

More could be said on what church is and is not. But Christians should scrap attempts to justify church-away-from-church as church. We don’t approach other areas of life like that. We are not God, and so have no authority to redefine ins and outs of his church. Truths about church and worship are not arbitrarily defined, but mean something specific in the New Testament. Gathering with the body under the shepherding of biblically qualified leaders demonstrates the privilege we have of belonging to something larger than us; the greatest organization in the universe.

We ought to consider it a privilege and joy to gather weekly with God’s people. The body needs us and we need the body. We need what God desires to give us through qualified, affirmed leadership. We need to see and be seen. If we are missing church with the family, and attempting to supplement it, just say, “We are going to study the Bible, sing some songs, and pray as a family. This isn’t church, kids.”

Copied from Crosswalk: Eric Davis is the pastor of Cornerstone Church in Jackson Hole, WY. He and his team planted the church in 2008. He has been married for 15 years and has 3 children.

Welcome to Our Church

We welcome Brother Bob and his wife Carol to our congregation.

Bob and Carol Krouse



I was raised in Johnstown PA, an only son with 3 sisters. In 1972 I graduated from Temple University with a Bachelor of Music Degree and in 1975 from Bethany Seminary with a Master of Divinity Degree. Carol and I met in Philadelphia where she went to Nursing school at Thomas Jefferson University. I was ordained in 1975 in the MidAtlantic District where I served the Meadow Branch congregation. Following a brief pastorate in Virginia, Carol and I were called to serve as missionaries in Nigeria in 1985. With our 4 sons, age 2, 4, 7 and 10 we enjoyed life in the African bush, just a couple of hundred miles south of the Sahara Desert. Following our time in Nigeria I became the pastor of Florin COB in Mount Joy PA...for about 10 years and then helped to plant Cornerstone COB for another 10 years. Then Carol and I were asked to return to Nigeria as the mission coordinators. When we returned to the states I continued as a pastor at Little Swatara COB. Carol worked part time as an RN, juggling being a part time nurse with her first love as a mother and her second love as the wife of a pastor. I was elected Moderator of the Church of the Brethren in 2011. When I tried to retire in 2014, the Atlantic Southeast District invited us to help plant another church in Florida. Since then, Monocacy COB will be the 6th church I've served as an interim pastor. Carol and I will celebrate our 54th wedding anniversary this May. With our 4 wonderful sons and 13 amazing grandchildren, we continue to enjoy an extremely blessed life.

The Bulletin Board



The Mid-Atlantic Auction is scheduled for Saturday May 2nd at the Carroll County Agricultural Center, Shipley Avenue, Westminster Maryland. Lots of auction items and great food.



Easter Sunrise Service – 6:45 am. We will be meeting at the church at 6:30 am. Light refreshments after the



Mount Tabor Church Easter Egg Hunt
April 4, 2026 at 1:00 pm at Mount Tabor Church
Money box on back table if you would like to make a donation



We will be having an Appreciation Luncheon for all those who have filled the pulpit duties while we were searching for a new pastor on April 19th at Mountain Gate Restaurant in Thurmont after church. Please put your name and how many from your family will be attending on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.



This cradle is in the current storage room. It is not being used and some of the branches are broken. If it belongs to you, please take it. If it is still there on May 1st it will be removed. Thank you!



We are still in need of help to clean the church. It's just 1 or 2 days a month. If you would like to help, please put your name beside the month you are available.

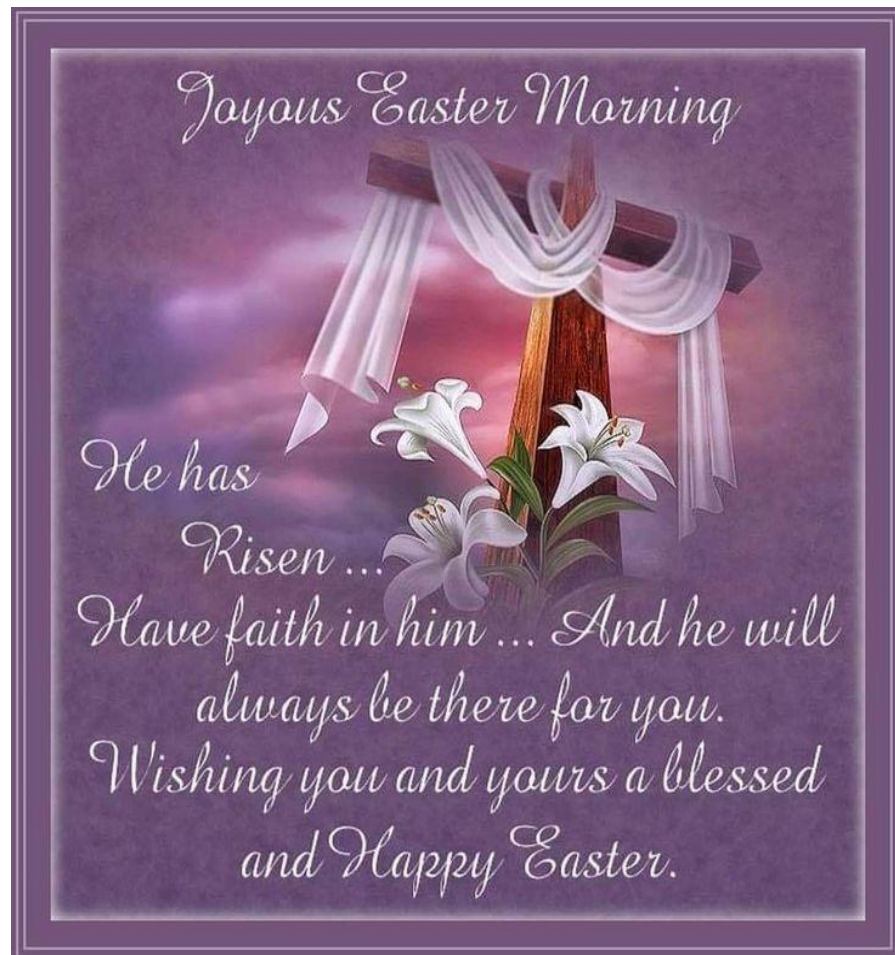


Every Sunday from 9:30 – 10:30 am

Adult Sunday School

David Jeremiah Series - The Promise of Heaven

- April 5 - Five Crowns
- April 12 - Won't Heaven Be Boring?
- April 19 - Where Are They Now?
- April 26 - What About The Children?



Birthdays



Sarah Edah 1st
Terry Free 2nd
Justin Andrew 9th
Lynn Ott 13th
Richard Simpson 15th
Alec Boone 17th
April Smith 19th
Adrien Ott 29th

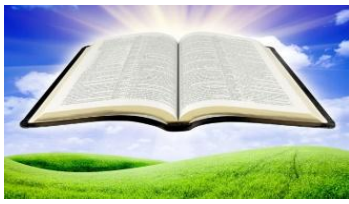
Wilton Smith 2nd
Joshua Free 8th
Sam Lookingbill 9th
Kevin Orndorff 15th
Darlene Fogle 16th
Pam Kilcoyne 18th
Cotey Eyler 27th
Carreanne Eyler 29th

Anniversaries

Greg & Diane Stambaugh 2nd
Jason & Denise Cook 6th
Joey & Karen Andrew 19th
Donnie & Teressa Kaas 21st
Harold & Trish Lutz 30th
Paul & JoAnn Hurley 4th
Curtis & Tammy Hartman 18th
Don & Kathryn Carnes 20th
Bob & Joy Luke 22nd

Contact Information

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SUGGESTED DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL

1 <u>Wednesday of Holy Week</u>	2 <u>Maundy Thursday</u>	3 <u>Good Friday</u>
4 <u>Holy Saturday</u>	5 <u>Easter Vigil</u> <u>Resurrection of the Lord</u>	6 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21 Colossians 3:5-11
7 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Exodus 15:1-18 Colossians 3:12-17	8 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 Joshua 3:1-17 Matthew 28:1-10	9 Psalm 16 Song of Solomon 2:8-15 Colossians 4:2-5
10 Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 5:9-6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;	11 Psalm 16; Song of Solomon 8:6-7; John 20:11-20	12 Acts 2:14a, 22-32
13 Psalm 114; Judges 6:36-40; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20;	14 Psalm 114; Jonah 1:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:19-28;	15 Psalm 114; Jonah 2:1-10; Matthew 12:38-42;
16 Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:1-5; 1 Peter 1:8b-12;	17 Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 26:1-4; 1 Peter 1:13-16;	18 Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; Isaiah 25:6-9; Luke 14:12-14;
19 Acts 2:14a, 36-41	20 Psalm 134; Genesis 18:1-14; 1 Peter 1:23-25	21 Psalm 134; Proverbs 8:32-9:6; 1 Peter 2:1-3;
22 Psalm 134; Exodus 24:1-11; John 21:1-14;	23 Psalm 23; Exodus 2:15b-25; 1 Peter 2:9-12;	24 Exodus 3:16-22, 4:18-20; 1 Peter 2:13-17
25 Ezekiel 34:1-16; Luke 15:1-7	26 Acts 2:42-47	27 Psalm 100; Ezekiel 34:17-23; 1 Peter 5:1-5
28 Ezekiel 34:23-31; Hebrews 13:20-21;	29 Jeremiah 23:1-8; Matthew 20:17-28	30 Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 6:8-15

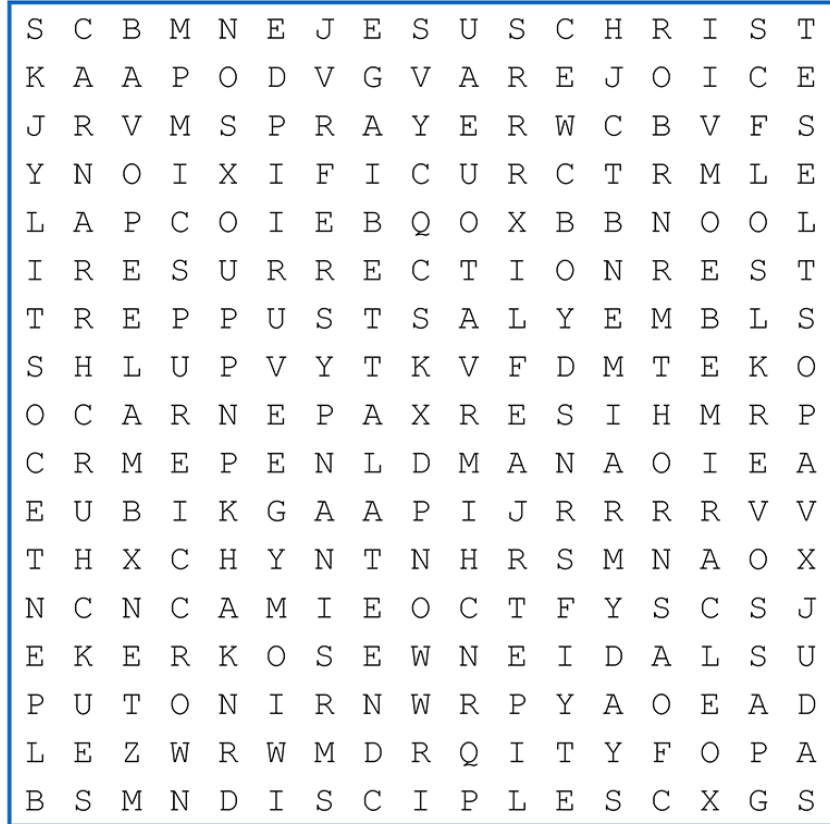
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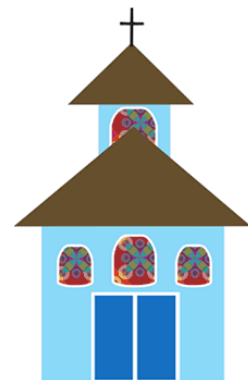
Easter Story

WORD SEARCH

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| APOSTLES | JESUS CHRIST | PRAYER |
| BETRAYAL | JUDAS | REDEMPTION |
| CAVE | LAMB | REJOICE |
| CHURCH | LAST SUPPER | RESURRECTION |
| CROSS | LENT | RISEN |
| CROWN | MARY | SAVIOR |
| CRUCIFIXION | MIRACLE | SON |
| DISCIPLES | PASSOVER | THORNS |
| FAITH | PENANCE | TOMB |
| GOOD FRIDAY | PENTECOST | |



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