

Where Are All the Churches?

by Carl McMurray

Two weeks ago the above title was the heading in a letter to the Anderson Times Herald bemoaning the number of homeless in the city (168) and complaining about churches not “putting their money where their mouth is.” One good-hearted soul responded by telling the complainer that most churches DID indeed offer aid in this area—they just didn’t publicly announce their efforts, so the complaining one should join a church if he really wanted to help.

By the world’s standards the answer is a positive and kind one, but both complainer and answerer display their lack of understanding about the churches real role here. Both the gentlemen above, as do most people I suspect, seem to believe that it is the churches job to direct funds toward changing society. Along with assisting the homeless, many churches are involved with community affairs to the tune of providing ball teams, language classes, political platforms, trips for seniors, and meeting places for the scouts, AA, and a host of others. Are all of the above good and decent things? Absolutely. Are they the churches job to support? Absolutely NOT.

Does the church have an impact on the society in which it exists? Certainly it does. As individual Christians live and work in a community, their light of joy, kindness, and concern casts an influence all about them, 1 Peter 2:12. True Christians are always ready to explain their decisions and choices in a way that glorifies their Father in heaven, 1 Peter 3:13. This teaches others about them of the way of righteousness that leads to a relationship with Jesus Christ. I suspect that the good works, cash, and acts of selflessness done privately by Christians in every community every day far outweighs the annual contributions of the various organizations dedicated to publicly eradicating societies’ ills.

But my point is that there is a great difference between what the Christian does as he/she goes about their daily life doing good, and what the church is authorized to do. The church belongs to Christ. It does ONLY what Christ has authorized it to do. Any money given is to be used in any way that Christ has authorized, period. Wiping out poverty, feeding the homeless, digging wells in Africa, and supplying school books to Russian children are certainly good works and good people should be supporting such efforts. But let the church be the church. Let it continue Christ’s mission of seeking and saving the lost, Luke 19:10. No matter what social problem men’s churches address, let the Lord’s church be the Lord’s church, doing the Lord’s work.

