

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Somers Ave Church of Christ
4801 Somers Avenue
North Little Rock AR 72116

Phone: 501-758-5256
Fax: 501-758-1047

Office@somersavenue.org

Schedule of Services:

Bible Classes: 9:00 A.M.
Worship: 10:00 A.M.
Evening Service: 5:00 P.M.

For Our Guests:

Attended Nursery at back of the Auditorium—infants

Attended Training Room at back of the auditorium East side [for 1-3 Yr. olds]

Wireless Hearing receivers are available in the sound booth at back of the auditorium.

Coming Soon

February 5
Young men singing at
4:30pm

February 19
Somers Ave. Orientation
3:30pm

February 26
Navigating our website
4pm

April 20-22
AR Enrichment Seminar
Village Church of Christ
Hot Springs, AR

Life Support Ministries

None meeting at this time.



The *OBSERVER*

Issue 5

January 29, 2012

Searching For Understanding by Oran Burt

“What we don’t understand, we fear; and what we fear, we despise.”

After doing some surveillance over the lost sheep of the house of Israel [nowadays, we might say, delinquent church members], followed by a reconnaissance mission revealing the exodus of young moderns from today’s church, I find that writing off the current generation as just being unable to “get it,” and thereby despise their departure does nothing to address the situation. I should instead first seek for deeper understanding of 21st Century America and its people. Sound like a tough assignment? Hey, I should be able to figure that out before supper! Reckon?

Fortunately, for this intrigued searcher, clues are surfacing for me in books written about this graying of the church and the absence of today’s young families from the body life of congregations. And watching and listening to the content of social media (Face Book, You Tube, et al) I can see some of the values generated within the entertainment world and even in the chosen lifestyles of the up and coming, as well as lifestyles of the “been there, done that” crowd. All this gives some insight as to what people are thinking that made them vote with their feet to stay away from church buildings.

Churches of Christ find themselves experiencing almost the same level of drop-out rates that everyone else experiences.. So, it’s not just “us” and it’s not just “them.” I realize that in this short article I am not providing even a shovel-full of the tons of statistics out there on this. And I am always careful to avoid the single factor analysis to any problem or issue. It is rarely a single factor that is responsible, but usually a combination of multiple stimulants.

Writing on the subject of “Preaching to A Postmodern World,” Graham Johnston has observed many of the things that fuel the exodus. I also am not going to elaborate on a definition of just what “Postmodernism” is, or what a “postmodern” person is. But in the description of the various values and world views, we will begin to see a form come into focus. In chapter five he deals with various obstacles facing the messenger of God’s Word to today’s mindset. One thing that surfaces is the general disdain of any kind of authority, and the idea that there is no such thing as an absolute truth, or that the bible is God’s word. Johnston writes:

“While the postmodern shift will open some doors, it’s already closed others. For instance, to postmoderns the Bible is no longer accepted as the authoritative Word of God. Jesus appears fascinating but not the unique Savior, the attitude “whatever” rules and so there’s little belief in an absolute truth, there’s little acceptance of a master plan for the universe and our lives, and most people today no longer believe in a future judgment....

Preaching to the biblically Clueless

“...Every preacher begins work recognizing that the Bible stands as the basis of authority for all; the proclamation of the divinely inspired message from God is foundational to any ministry. However, what exists in the speaker’s mind and the listener’s may not be the same thing. Remember, the postmodern movement originated in debate over the use of language and interpretation; in the fifties through the seventies the inerrancy [of the bible] debate raged in what was labeled “the Battle For the Bible.”

“But the battleground has shifted. The real issue is not one of an inerrant text, as much as having any authoritative text at all. The issue is no longer about what is in the text or what the original author intended but about what is in the interpretation of the text as understood by the present-day reader. “

Johnston goes on to point out that when any objective truth, history or meaning is emptied from the text, **the meaning becomes whatever readers construct for themselves.** [emphasis mine, O.B.] The biblical communicator who succumbs to this hermeneutic relinquishes speaking for God.

Continued on Page 3

IN TODAY'S SERVICES

A.M.

Song Leader

Larry Curtis

First Prayer

Butch Gardner

Scripture Reading

Tyler Smith

Communion Leader

Mike Hughes

Closing Prayer

John Goodin

Nursery

Contessa Moore

Ruth Busby

Training Room

Sue Simmons

Lorey Phillips

P.M.

Song Leader

TBA

First Prayer

Jovan Hill

Closing Prayer

Mark Jahnke

Nursery

Cindy Taylor

Family News

REMINDERS:

TODAY is our 5th Sunday potluck in Activities Center!! We will have a potluck lunch following our morning worship and then conclude immediately after lunch with the early service in the AC. We will not have an evening service at 5:00 P.M.

Family Game Night—every Friday night at 7:00 P.M. in the Activities Center!!! Meal begins at 6:00 P.M. Games will follow until????? Come join in the fun and fellowship!



Remember the "twin boy" baby shower in honor of Shelly Halter
—February 12, 2:00-4:00 in the OFR!

Christian Woman Magazine Renewal:

Our club subscriptions will expire with the March/April Issue. To renew your subscription, or to become a new subscriber, give your check (made out to Christian Woman Magazine) for \$15.98 to Yvonne Stinebaugh by February 12.

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES COMING IN THE SPRING QUARTER (March-May):

Contact Tressa Ashberry as soon as possible, if you are interested in teaching in our Cradle Roll - 1st & 2nd grade classes! Many have volunteered to help. We only need a Wednesday night teacher for the 1 year olds and a Wednesday night teacher for the 1st and 2nd grades.

MORE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

Our "transportation" ministry is in need of more drivers to provide a ride to worship services. Please call the office if you can help!!!

YOUTH:

LTC Photography group trip TODAY after the 12:30 afternoon worship service. All photographers should plan to attend. **Art participants** are encouraged to attend as well as taking pictures of potential art subjects.

February 5—There will be a **teen parent meeting** after morning worship services in the OFR in regard to the summer calendar. Please plan to attend.

February 24-26—9th through 12th graders are invited to **CHRISTeens Youth Rally** in Russellville, AR. Cost is \$50.00 per person and the deadline to register is February 5. If you plan to attend you can pre-order a T-shirt for \$15.00.

JANUARY PANTRY ITEMS

- Oatmeal or Cereal
- Pancake Mix and Syrup
- Jelly

Our Record

January 22, 2012

Sunday Bible Classes

155

A. M. Worship

240

P. M. Worship

145

Monday Night Men's Class

January 23-No Count

Tuesday Night Ladies Class

January 24-4

Wed. Morning Ladies Class

January 25-18

Wednesday Night Classes

January 25-155

Budget \$10,125.00

Contribution \$10,229.83

Average \$9,827.00

In Our Thoughts

- ◆ **Chester Ingram** is still weak, but seems to be somewhat improved.
- ◆ **Bea Edwards** was readmitted to Springhill with pneumonia. She is in room 355.
- ◆ **Floy Blanchard** is in room 110 at Springhill. She hopes to come home soon.
- ◆ **Alexis House** has dislocated her knee. She will have an MRI to assess her treatment.
- ◆ **Haleigh Cloer** is at home recovering from pneumonia.
- ◆ **Davy Carter**, father of Brittany Smith is waiting to be placed on the list for a kidney transplant. Please pray that his health is stable until then.
- ◆ **Teresa Triplett**, sister-in-law of Lisa Triplett continues her fight against spinal cancer.
- ◆ **Gloria Strayhorn**, sister-in-law of Brenda McKee will have heart surgery on Feb. 9.
- ◆ **Muriel Dixon**, mother of Robert Dixon had a heart attack last Sunday. She is in room 230 at Springhill.
- ◆ **Steve Foster's Aunt Margaret** of Nashville is having breathing problems. She is also on kidney dialysis.
- ◆ **F. H. Lyons**, member at PV & friend of the Ingram/Rye family is in ICU at St. Vincents.
- ◆ **Ricky Trice**, friend of the Ingram/Rye family is in LR Baptist for heart bi-pass surgery.
- ◆ **Judy Sanderson** of Michigan, cousin of Neita Phillips will have a breast surgery—Feb. 3.

Prayers For Our Military Personnel:

Austin Sharp, grandson of Charles & Treva Voyles

Brad Cook, grandson of Oren McSwain

Landon Crawford, husband of Charles & Treva Voyles' granddaughter, Tona

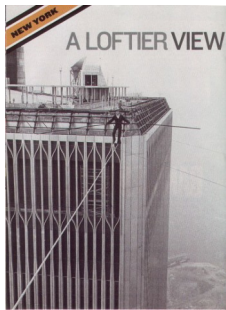
A. J. Williams, son of Diann Simmons

Ashley Sharp, granddaughter of Charles and Treva Voyles.

Lafe Weston, grandson of Treva & Charles Voyles and great-nephew of Betty Lewis.

Lofty Heights

The other night I watched a movie about one of the craziest stunts I have ever witnessed or heard of in my lifetime. On August 7th, 1974, a young Frenchman named Philippe Petit stepped out on a wire illegally rigged between the New York World Trade Center's twin towers. After dancing for nearly an hour on the wire, he was



arrested, taken for psychological evaluation, and brought to jail

before he was finally released. This extraordinary documentary incorporated Petit's personal footage to show how he overcame seemingly insurmountable challenges to achieve the artistic crime of the century.

Now I have made it no secret that I am terrified of heights and I cannot imagine ever having the courage to step out on a wire 1350ft above the street. But one of the most striking comments Petit made regarding his decision to do this was when he said "if you want something nothing is impossible." That's a bold statement. However, in Genesis 11 God himself said of mankind after they built the tower of Babel "this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them."

Perhaps one of the greatest

strengths given to man by our Creator is our determination. It is the fuel by which civilization has been developed. We are always striving to do better than those before. We want to do more. We set our collective aspirations on lofty heights.

And while this is one of our greatest strengths that has helped and will continue to help man develop for as long as this world remains, it is also an incredible weakness. For we wrongly believe in many instances that if we **can** do it, we **must** do it.

We've tried cloning. We have the ability to decide which embryo lives and which one doesn't based on whether we wanted a brown haired or a blonde haired baby by selecting the right DNA. We spend billions of dollars on science re-

search trying to find the answers to the universe. Sometimes I want to shout like the preacher in Ecclesiastes who said "vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

It seems to me that we spend a lot of time trying to break the last guy's record. Build it bigger and better. Progress is imperative to improving life on this earth. Absolutely. But as Christians, may our priority be to seek God and His righteousness above all else. If we wanted that more than anything else what would our family look like? Our community? Our world?

If you really want to walk a wire, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Micah 6:8.

Searching For Understanding [Continued from page One]

Oran Burt

Must we, by necessity, always begin with *a priori* acceptance, or presumption of authority of God's word when we engage in conversation with a postmodern? Of course we hold that authority within our own mind and heart, and that keeps us on track handling aright the Word of God. But for their thinking, they need to be even willing to examine the bible in the first place. And that examination may well begin with looking at the bible from another standpoint first, rather than from its presumed authority.

In the book *Letters from a Skeptic*, author and theologian Gregory Boyd dialogues with his unbelieving father over the issue of the authority of scripture. Boyd challenges his father to examine the Gospels and the claims of Christ, not as "God's Word" but as one would examine any historical document. "Dad, I'm not asking you to accept on "blind faith" that they are God's

Word," the son pleads. "Forget about that altogether for right now. I'm simply saying, look at them as you would any ancient document. Apply to them the same criteria historians apply to other ancient documents when they research history. My contention is that, when the Gospels are treated in this critical-historical way, they fare very well and can be trusted to tell a good deal about the person of Jesus Christ, enough, in fact, to know that God was present in Him and working through Him in a most significant way."

This recognizes that the key issue is trust. People in a post-modern context are unprepared to trust something without first being able to examine and probe its reliability.

So when we insist that the Bible must be accepted as authoritative before the book can even be read, postmoderns feel pressured to make a huge leap of faith—and they won't do it.

The focus of the biblical communicator must shift from asking "How do I protect the Bible from people viewing it as just another book?" to a more strategic issue, "How can I get them to examine the Bible [in the first place], to see if it is true?"

Johnston, and many other researchers and writers studying the trends of today's religion in America have identified some real concerns. How can we think that we will simply start a conversation (if we even get that far in our mission) with someone, all the while assuming the absolute truth and authority of the Bible, and they already are assuming the opposite?

And another reality check reveals yet more challenges to provide something for today's seeker that will allow this examining and probing—this "try before you buy" approach to our own reliability as genuine Christians. It really is a wake

up call to hear that the general view from the outside is that most Christians are only "so-called" Christians. That there is somehow just a glorified hypocrisy among the pew packers that is re-upped every Sunday, sanctified by church attendance, yet hollow and lacking on Monday morning. The word is hypocrite. A play actor.

Visitors who muster up the courage to actually visit a congregation unknown to them receive signals from the moment they enter the driveway at the house of worship. Is there a place for me to park? How will I be received? How will I be treated? Who are these people that meet here? Can I see myself as a part of this? And as they are among us and observe, they ask "Are you for real? Are you genuine?" It may well be that the seeker needs first to find that *WE* actually believe! That *WE* actually live in genuine faith. Then **they** may want to take a closer look.

OUR ELDERS

Jim Akins
Tim Ashberry
Oran Burt
Mike Hughes
Mike Penrod
Danny Rye

ELDERS OF THE MONTH

Mike Penrod

Available

Sunday, February 12

6:00—6:30

Wednesday, February 29

7:15—8:00

**NEED A RIDE TO
WORSHIP SERVICES??
CALL: CHURCH OFFICE
758-5256
(Call by noon on Friday)**

**We're On the Web:
www.somersavenue.org**

Upcoming Teen Events

There will be no Sunday Night
Devotional for teens, due to
5th Sunday format.

**Sign up deadline for
CHRISTeens is: February
5th**

Also February 5th, there will
be a Teen Parent meeting
right after Sunday morning
services in the OFR about the
Summer Calendar. Parents
please plan on attending.

*The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine
upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift his countenance upon
you and give you peace.*

CHRISTeens 2012

Who?

9th-12th only! (Sorry Jr. High)

When?

Feb 24 - 26, 2012

Where?

Russellville, AR

Cost?

\$50 per person for registration (includes registration and hotel stay)

Registration deadline is February 5th. It is \$15 extra if you would like to pre-order a t-shirt.

What to Bring?

Bible

Money for 3 meals (fast food \$7-\$10 a meal)

Clothes for 2-night stay

Swimsuit (includes colored shirt for boys, shorts and colored shirt for girls)

Friends!!!

Other Notes:

We will meet at the building at 5:30 p. m. Friday and return around noon on Sunday.

