

## NARCOLEPTIC DISCIPLES???

The full moon of Passover stared down at Jesus, its light filtering through the shivering leaves of the olive trees, their branches trembling in the early April breeze. Despite the evening chill, sweat glistened on his forehead. Still praying, he stood and then peered into the darkness, listening to a distant murmur of voices. One of his own *talmidim*, Judas, was approaching. Trailing him was a mob of soldiers, snaking up the hill.

Under a nearby tree, Peter, James, and John were lying in a heap. Twice, Jesus had pleaded with them to stay awake, asking them to keep vigil with him on this, the most difficult night of his life. Yet there they were, wrapped in their heavy woolen *talits*, mouths agape and snoring softly, oblivious of the approaching threat ...

*They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed."*

And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him ([Mark 14:32-40](#) NASB).

Whenever I think back to this scene from Gethsemane, I can't help but wonder about Jesus' narcoleptic disciples. How could they have fallen asleep when their beloved rabbi had implored them to stay awake and remain alert? How could they have nodded off when the climax of salvation history was about to take place?

I couldn't imagine a satisfactory answer, and this was just one of many questions that filled my head whenever I thought back to that fateful week.



I remembered previous Palm Sunday services I had attended, where only minutes after the children stream down the aisles, joyously waving palm branches to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the mood shifts, turning solemn as the gospel account of the passion is read. Why were the crowds in Jerusalem so fickle, adoring Jesus one week and then hating him the next? And why, I wondered, did Jesus choose a Passover Seder to celebrate the last meal of his life?

Fast forward two thousand years, to the fellowship hall of my church, on the afternoon of the Thursday before Easter, known as Maundy Thursday. We are setting up for a Passover Seder. As Gentile amateurs, we are doing our best to recreate the Last Supper, giving ourselves a chance to meditate on its significance. Perfect historical accuracy isn't the point. Our goal is to relive a little of Jesus' final evening with his disciples so that we can better appreciate the Maundy Thursday service.

All afternoon the church kitchen bustles with clattering pans and chitchat as we hurry about our tasks, cutting parsley, boiling eggs, and spooning horseradish onto plates. When we finally sit down, I am famished. The time ticks by as I endure the long Seder liturgy, with just a bite of parsley dipped in salt water and dry, cardboard-like *matzah* (unleavened bread) smeared with horseradish to tide me over.

When we finally dig into our simple meal of lamb stew, I devour my humble feast! Afterward, I hurriedly help with clean up and then slip into the back of the service, which has already begun. The liturgy is mournful and solemn.

The events of the day have taken their toll on me — the non-stop preparations, beginning the Seder feeling famished, and then overeating to compensate. I feel a crushing lethargy sweep over me. Over the next hour, the sanctuary lights gradually dim to complete darkness. I can barely see through shuttering eyelids. As the service rolls on, I rouse with a start. Did someone call my name? I can almost hear the disappointment in Jesus' voice. "Could you not watch with me just one hour?"

Suddenly, I understood why the disciples found it so hard to stay awake! And they had an even better excuse than I had. Traditional Passover celebrations involved a huge meal plus four cups of wine, and they started at sunset and went well past midnight. What's more, they took place after several days of exhausting travel and preparation. Certainly everybody in Jerusalem would have wanted to crawl straight into bed after their late-night feast. Aware of this perennial problem, the rabbis ruled that a person who dozed lightly could remain a part of the dinner, but anyone who fell sound asleep could not.

Our amateurish attempt at reliving the Last Supper led to other insights on the final hours of Jesus' life. I realized, for instance, why the leaders had plotted to arrest Jesus after the Passover meal.

A man so wildly popular couldn't have been arrested in broad daylight. To avoid an uprising, the chief priests had to proceed in secret. So they let Judas lead them to Jesus while he was outside the city.



Passover was the perfect choice, because every Jewish family would be celebrating the feast that started at sundown.

Jesus' arrest and trial proceeded swiftly, occurring during the wee hours, when most of his supporters were in bed. Peter's denials happened as the rooster crowed, around four or five in the morning. According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus' final sentence was handed down at sunrise ([Mark 15:1](#)). One has to ask, what group of people were around at the crack of dawn on a major Jewish holiday to shout crucify him? Mostly corrupt priests and Roman soldiers who wanted to kill Jesus.

But there's more. Jesus was crucified at nine in the morning — the time of the first Temple service of the day! The authorities knew they had to finish their secret trial before the crowds re-entered the city. And indeed, as Jesus was carrying his cross out of town, his supporters reappear, weeping out loud as they see him being led to his death ([Luke 23:27](#)). His followers had just learned of the events that had transpired the night before.

Prior to our Passover Seder, I had always thought the crowds unimaginably fickle, cheering Jesus one day and then shouting for his head the next. But Jesus' supporters never changed their minds! How could they have when they were not even present at his arrest or trial? The entire plot unfolded after the Passover festivities, while most people were sound asleep.

Note: From Lois Tverberg's blog — [Our Rabbi Jesus: His Jewish Life and Teaching](#).

This is an excerpt from the book [Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of the Jesus can Transform Your Faith](#). Used by permission. We believe this book is well worth your time and attention!

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## WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church of Christ is a local group of Christians which try to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where this Bible is silent.

The church of Christ tries to reestablish the pattern and teaching of the New Testament era at each location.

The church of Christ tries to reestablish the scriptural organization of the church at each location.

The church of Christ has members who believe they are following the scriptural teachings as best they can.

Church of Christ members believe that we should not judge others' eternal reward, but that it is not reasonable to give comfort to others who follow their own preferences rather than teachings of the Bible.

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## IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION: BLIND COMPLEXATION

Much of the myth of evolution involves cells assuming new tasks for which the cell would have no knowledge of what it is doing. This is a cell becoming more complex with no knowledge of why it is doing so – or blind complexation. Blind complexation is impossible. In order to understand what this means, consider the following definitions of terms:

**COMPLEXATION:** The act of a cell or group of cells assuming a new function for the good of the whole.

**DIRECT COMPLEXATION:** The act of assuming a new function when there is a direct benefit to the cell or group of cells which is assuming the function.

**BLIND COMPLEXATION:** The act of assuming a new function when there is no direct benefit to the cell or group of cells which is assuming the function, i.e. cells in the optic nerve developing the ability to communicate an electric signal for an eye it cannot see to a brain it cannot see.

**IMPOSSIBLE:** That it will not happen with the laws of nature as the laws exist today.

**SUPERNATURAL:** Something that does happen outside the laws of nature.

**EVOLUTION:** An extremely ambiguous term which can be a wide variety of things from a color fading to the creation of a species.

**MICRO-EVOLUTION:** Minor changes which happen within a species. If you feed small horses and they become big horses, it is micro-evolution.

**MACRO-EVOLUTION:** Creation of new species or new characteristics. For a species to not be able to see and then develop a way to see would be macro-evolution.

To a large extent, the theory of evolution is based upon the observation that on the Galapagos Islands in the South Pacific birds with hard food had hard beaks and birds with soft food had soft beaks. Bird's beaks "evolved" to match the food supply. It is reasonable to conclude that bird's beaks micro-evolve to match the food supply. To use that as proof that macro-evolution occurs is simply not reasonable.

An example of macro-evolution is light shining on a cell and the cell deciding to convert the light signal to an electric signal for vision. It is not possible for a cell to decide to become an electric signal generator. If you think it is, you are smarter than a cell, try it yourself. Beyond the impossibility of a cell deciding to be a signal generator, another cell(s) must decide to be an optic nerve to transmit the electric signal, and another cell(s) must decide to be a brain to convert the electric signal to a vision. These are three impossibilities which must happen at the same time. If you were a cell which decided to be a signal generator and no one listened why would it matter.

**The only point we are making here is that blind complexation is impossible.** In future articles we will be giving examples of evolutionary concepts which are impossible, many based on the concept of blind complexation.

One point to note is that we do not have to show many reasons why evolution is impossible. **If we can show one, the theory is disproved.**

## DOES GOD EXPECT CHURCH GROWTH?

**SUMMARY:** An analysis of the actual need for church growth and a look at 3 popular misconceptions about church growth.

### THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS

The apostle John wrote the church at Ephesus by divine inspiration in approximately A.D. 95 saying "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent." (Rev. 2:5)

This is surely the picture of a church which had probably stopped growing and was told that they were in danger if they did not do the deeds that they had been doing. It could well be the picture of many of our churches today which have stopped growing. It does not say that church was in danger because of apostasy, only inactivity. They are even commended in verse 6 of taking a strong stand against apostasy, but that virtue did not replace the need to "do the deeds".

Between this and other scriptures such as the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, it should be obvious to each of us that there is an obligation for us to make a return to the Lord on the abilities, resources, and talents with which we have been entrusted.

### THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA:

"So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth." (Rev.3:16). Congregations which could be determined as lukewarm by their conversion rate and/or their negative growth rate seldom consider themselves as lukewarm. If they do, characteristically the leaders consider the followers as the problem and the followers consider the leaders as the problem. As this verse and the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) indicate, lukewarm performance is not acceptable to Jesus.

### CONTEMPORARY UPDATE

As the bad reports on the congregations at Ephesus and Laodicea were of interest, we dispatched our ace reporter, Jimmy Olson, to interview the elders of these congregations,

At Ephesus, Brother Ray said "All the churches are having growth problems today. It is just a sign of the times."

Brother Lester said "That John is always criticizing something. The church is being continually dragged down by negative comments. He is not even an elder. He just doesn't know the problems that the elders have to face."

At Laodicea, Brother George said "We are teaching and preaching the simple New Testament truth, that is all that God expects us to do. The Word converts, not the speaker."

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## DOES GOD EXPECT CHURCH GROWTH?

Brother Tom said "Sure we are declining, but if we elders weren't doing as well as we are, think of how much more we would be declining!"

Brother Allen said "Anyone who thinks that the elders are the problem with church growth is just a shallow thinker, a shallow thinker!"

When Jimmy arrived back at the office and we realized that they had told him the same thing we are hearing today, it made us wonder. These men are sincere and hard working. Is it good enough. Then we read John's letter again. The warnings are directly inspired of God. The justifications were sincere and creative, however, it appears that there is:

### NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PERFORMANCE:

Ultimately, following the suggestions in these articles or any other ideas will not make a satisfactory replacement for making a "return" to Jesus on the talents He has given us. We all have some talents. Church leaders concur that they are 5 and 10 talent men by their acceptance and occupation of leadership positions,

### POPULAR MISCONCEPTION NO. 1: THERE IS NO SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENT TO GROW

"That is precisely why it is not our burden and responsibility to produce the numbers. 'But God giveth the increase' (I Cor. 3:5-7). As long as we are planting and watering (i.e. teaching God's word), we need not feel compelled to force our own increase! Only the implanted word will save people Jas. 1:21)" from "Church Growth" in the July 22, 1986 issue of Firm Foundation.

"Search these chapters and verses and nowhere will you find condemnation for a lack of growth so far as numbers are concerned." and "God demands faithfulness to His word. The numbers will take care of themselves." from "Growth God's Way" in the October 14, 1986 issue of Firm Foundation.

"All of the congregations are declining at this time. It is just a sign of the times." (Comment from a minister).

Articles and comments such as those referenced above and comments heard from many individual Christians indicate a contemporary acceptance of no-growth as a scriptural operating style. It is the theme of this book that God expects growth. Consider the following:

1. No numbers are given as a requirement for church growth, but nowhere in the Bible is any comfort given for non-growth.
2. Numerous examples are given for lack of performance, i.e.
  - a. Parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18-23)
  - b. The barren fig tree (Matthew 21:18-22)
  - c. Parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)



## DOES GOD EXPECT CHURCH GROWTH?

(Note: The one talent man had a plan, executed his plan, and presumably felt justified in his actions. Would this teach that being self-satisfied by your plan is not what is acceptable? Results are what count.)

3. Examples are given for our challenge to work, i.e., the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20 & Mark 16:15-16).
4. If we are planting and watering, God gives the increase (I Cor. 3:6-7). If there is no growth and we say that we are planting and watering then we are telling God that He is failing on his part of the arrangement? This cannot be. The growth or lack of growth is not a measure of whether God is doing His job, it is a measure of how we are doing our job.

Based on scriptures such as these and the absence of any scriptures offering comfort for non-growth, we see it as a natural result to grow if we are doing our work properly. If we are not growing (in a stable society) we need to take a serious look at our attitudes and the approaches we are taking to doing God's will.

There may well be some individuals and congregations which do not grow and are considered justified by God. However, I would not want to get to judgment day and depend on it.

### POPULAR MISCONCEPTION NO. 2: CAUSES VS. SYMPTOMS:

The September 1987 issue of the Christian Chronicle printed a book review article titled "Book Indicates Attitudes That Can Erode the Church". This article repeated the following attitudes from the book:

1. End of volunteerism,
2. Even those in mid-sized churches hardly know each other,
3. Members become involved only in works that have benefit for them and their families,
4. Activities involving the whole church are rare and attendance is minimal,
5. Members are reluctant to make an issue of doctrine,
6. Members give when convenient and to programs they agree with,
7. Fellowship activities accentuate economic and social boundaries, and
8. Marriages are binding only when they give involved parties exactly what they want.

We suggest to you that each of the items listed above as "attitudes that can erode the church are not "attitudes that can erode the church". They are symptoms of an eroded church. This is a critically important concept. A 104 degree fever is not an illness, it is a symptom. You may temporarily bring a fever down for a sick person, but the person will not be well and growing until the causing disease is cured. Discerning the difference between causes and symptoms is key to the understanding of church growth processes.

Let us go further to say that this difficulty is not only a problem with non-growing churches. Representatives of growing churches making presentations about their success often appear to have no idea why the church was growing. They just revel in the symptoms.

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## DOES GOD EXPECT CHURCH GROWTH?

We have seen buildings built by non-growing churches because they saw that there was a correlation between growing churches and churches which were building. We have seen annual budgeting processes changed to have the symptoms of the budget processes of growing churches, without considering the causes. We all tend to do things like this because knowing how to change the causes is difficult for people who are in the system.

### POPULAR MISCONCEPTION NO. 3: GOOD CHRISTIANS ARE ALL SELF MOTIVATING

We tend to credit each individual with the ability and responsibility to be self starting and self motivating Christians. We tend to say that the leadership is not ultimately responsible for church growth because the individual members are supposed to be self starters and self motivated Christians. Church growth is therefore the composite responsibility of individual members.

Observation of people around you will tell you that most people are not effective self starters. They need a leader.

If you do personal evangelism and can encourage a friend to do personal evangelism also, the friend is then doing personal evangelism. At least at that time the friend is acting as a good Christian in doing personal evangelism, even if he/she required your personal encouragement. Let us say that you the encourager are a 5 talent person and the person who needs to be encouraged is a 1 talent person. Does God desire for 1 talented Christians to come to Heaven also? Surely He does.

Let us assume that approximately 20% of the population are self starters, 80% need someone to show the way. If we expect to have a church of only self starters, we will eliminate 80% of God's people from the possibility of going to Heaven. If we instead consider it acceptable to God for the 20% self motivators to make the plan and the 80% of followers to work in the plan, many more of God's creations have the potential of going to Heaven.

If a congregation's leadership provides a program in which a non self starting member can actively participate in personal evangelism, they can be productive members. If you know that the non-self starting members will fade without the encouragement, does that prevent him from being a good Christian while he/she is working? He/she is literally dependent upon the leadership of the congregation to be a good Christian.

What this teaches by implication is that leadership is critical to the salvation of many of these people. Platitudes that every member is independently responsible for their own salvation are just that, platitudes. We have a few with the stamina of the Apostle Paul, most of us need the encouragement of others.

## NEW SPANISH WORK IN SPRING BRANCH IN WEST HOUSTON

As of the first of the year, Jim Culpepper began a new work in the Spring Branch area which is focused on the Spanish speaking brethren (and future brethren and sisters). If you might be interested in helping in this work, contact Jim at Jim L. Culpepper & Associates, P. C., 9821 Katy Freeway, Suite 110, Houston, Texas 77024-1208, Telephone: 713-463-6300, Fax: 713-463-6301, or jim@culpepperlaw.com. Jim has been a leader in this work for many years and should be commended and supported in his new challenge.

### FILL-IN PREACHERS

We are starting a pilot program to coordinate fill-in preachers for various congregations in the greater Houston Area. The presumption is that there are some larger congregations who have more men willing to present an occasional sermon than opportunities exist, and there are some smaller congregations where more opportunities exist than speakers.

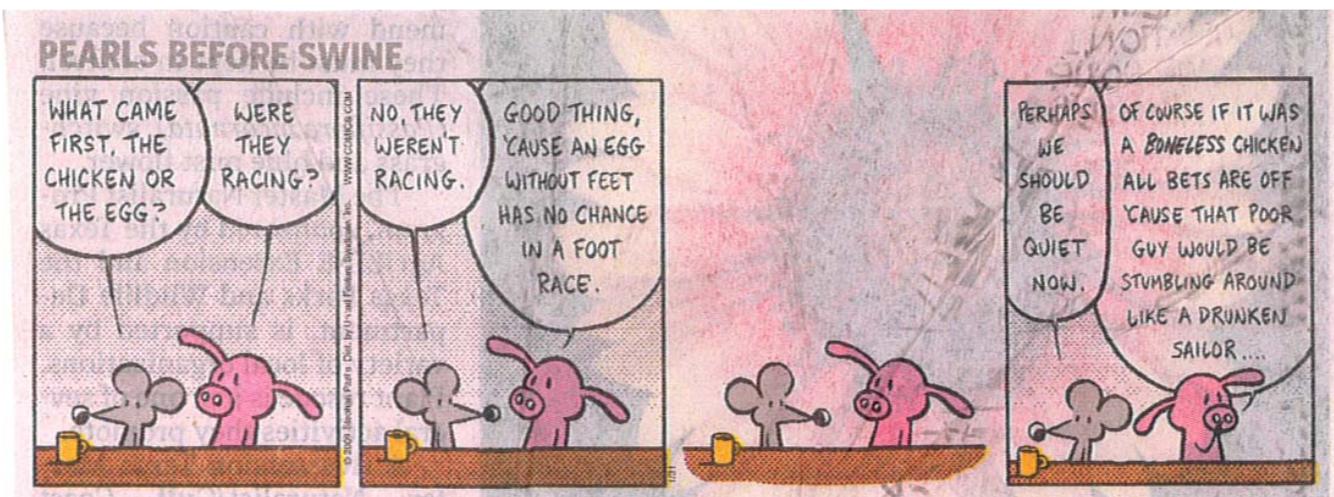
Visit [thearray.org](http://thearray.org) and click on **FILL-IN PREACHERS** to see if any of the speakers / topics are interesting to you, or if you would like to add a topic to the list.

If you want to add a topic, you need to indicate your name, home congregation, phone number, and 1 to 4 topics. Each title and description of a topic should be 15-30 words. Send the list to [info@thearray.org](mailto:info@thearray.org).

### SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH CONFERENCE

We are considering sponsoring a conference on sustained scriptural church growth in the greater Houston area. If you would like to speak at such a conference, would attend, or be involved in any other way, let us know at [info@thearray.com](mailto:info@thearray.com).

The conference would not address doing the same things to continue to not grow. It would be focused on what we can do to remain scriptural and grow.





## MONEY PAGE

### GUARANTEED CHURCH GROWTH

If your congregation does the following, BCE Publications guarantees that it will grow.

Poll your congregation three times at 6 months intervals with the following results:

- 50% of the members know who their elder is
- 50% of the members will say that a minister is their friend
- 50% of the members will say that they are uplifted by the song services
- 50% of the men will say that their input is considered before physical decisions are made
- 50% of the members will say they are an important part of the work
- 50% of the members will say they are aware of the goals of the congregation
- 50% of the members will say that they know what their part is in achieving your goals

**GUARANTEE:** For the first congregation which does this and does not grow by at least 10%, we will send \$1000 to the church related children's home of your choice in your name.

I have never met a person who said that if they did this their church would not grow. If your congregation is not growing, what have you got to lose? (Offer made since 2001)

### IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION?

**We will offer \$100 to the first person who can explain how we could have violated the first law of thermodynamics and have come into existence without God.**

**We will offer \$100 to the first person who can explain how we could have violated the second law of thermodynamics and have existed forever without God.**

**(Offer first posted 8/08)**

### IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION!

This publication continues (since 1991) to make a standing offer of \$100 to the first person who can give any reason (1 or more) as to why atheistic evolution is a better explanation for the universe and/or life than creation by God, The Father of Adam, Abraham, and Jesus; as revealed in the Bible.

We will also give you \$100 if we cannot give you 12 reasons why atheistic evolution is impossible as an explanation for our existence.

We will discuss this any place, any time, and in any forum.

(This offer has been made repeatedly since June of 1991 with no takers)

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## AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

### AREA WIDE WORSHIP SERVICE

*Fifth Ward Church of Christ and Memorial Church of Christ have been exchanging annual visits to each other's congregations for Sunday evening services. It is an activity well received by all members, and has included a meal prepared by the hosting congregation.*

*Discussions are underway between the congregations to sponsor an AREA WIDE WORSHIP SERVICE, potentially once a quarter. A possible venue could be the 5000 seat Don Coleman Basketball stadium on Dairy Ashford in west Houston. Hosting a meal is probably not practical. If you have ideas on how to implement this, want to help implement this, would like to attend, or have other comments, send to [info@thearray.org](mailto:info@thearray.org) and we will forward them to those having the discussions.*

### YAHOO GROUP

*HoustonCofC is a Yahoo group hosted by Steve Sandifer [[steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net)] for the purpose of communicating Houston area news among the brethren. It is open to any member of the church at no cost.*

### The Christian Array Newsletter

This newsletter will be sent to members of the church on a monthly basis as an attempt to promote area wide activities and church growth. If you do not want to receive this newsletter, send an e-mail to [info@thearray.org](mailto:info@thearray.org) and it will be stopped.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this newsletter, send their e-mail addresses to [info@thearray.org](mailto:info@thearray.org). All past copies of the newsletter can be found on the website "thearray.org".

## E-MAIL ADDRESSES

A goal of this newsletter is to develop a mailing list of as many members of the church as possible and to communicate church related information to as many members as possible. In that light, we would appreciate:

1. Your forwarding the church member e-mail addresses which you have.
2. Sending the directory of the congregation you attend or any other directories which you might have.
3. Give us an idea of how to collect church member e-mail addresses.

This information will not be sold or used for any purpose not mentioned herein.

The Christian Array is dedicated to support the sustained scriptural growth of the churches of Christ. It is published by BCE Publications, a 501(c)(3) organization with Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E. as editor. BCE is solely responsible for the content. Any announcements, requests for publication, or comments should be e-mailed to [info@thearray.org](mailto:info@thearray.org).