9/1/2009

THE CHRISTIAN ARRAY

DEDICATED TO SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH IN OUR GENERATION

NUMBER 38 August, 2009

YOUR BUILDING COMMITTEE AS A MEASURE OF YOUR EVANGELISM

Do you want your congregation to grow? Most everyone says they want to and most everyone says they are planning to grow.

If we look at an annual growth rate of 10%, your congregation will double in attendance in approximately seven years. As it is typical to build a new building about twice the size of the existing building, this means a major change should happen every seven years or so.

After you finish a new building, the building committee is probably active for a year afterwards finishing up. It probably takes 3 years to plan, fund, and build a new building. This means that the building committee would be inactive for approximately 3 years.

The conclusion to this would be that if your building committee has been comatose for more than 3 years, you are probably mostly paying lip service to church growth.

If you have 300 members, a 10% growth rate would give you 600 in 7 years, 1200 in 14 years, 2400 in 21 years, 4800 in 28 years, 5600 in 35 years, and so on. A congregation with 5600 members is a major business. For better or worse, there are probably few elders in the church which reasonably administer 5600 members.

What is the alternative to having ordinary men be obligated to administer massive numbers of members?

A good alternative to this is church plantings. If an eldership is good at overseeing a congregation of 300 and is overwhelmed at 600 (much less 5600), church planting can provide a viable alternative.

Imagine that when the congregation approaches 600 and is at capacity, the building committee is active and working hard. They are working hard, but not at expanding the current facility, but in helping to plan the planting.

Imagine the membership of the old congregation has their debt paid off. A plan is drawn up for 1/2 of the members (and elders) to go and form a new congregation. We don't send a few rag-tag members out to start a congregation in a store front, but rather fund a congregation just as big as the old one. We don't bury the new congregation in debt as the old congregation sits on a pile of money, but both congregations work together to get the new debt paid off in 7 years.

This is sort of like dividing a company partnership in half. It is not necessary that one half of the partnership have all the money and one half be broke. If split properly both halves of the partnership can be a new viable entity in a rapid fashion.

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This means that in 7 years we have 2 congregations of 600 members each with their debt paid off. Each congregation does a planting and repeats the process. In 14 years we have four congregations of 600 members and their debt paid off.

In each case a particular thing happens. The first old congregation which was hitting 600 members and becoming lukewarm (fat and happy), suddenly has only 300 members. Instead of the biggest concern being how many inches of shoulder room you have in the pews, members feel a need to actually do evangelism. Individual members become more important as the task at hand becomes very visual.

If you don't think this is true, just imagine how well you would get together and work if your attendance was suddenly cut in half.

What we need is some elderships brave enough to do this. All this is asking is that a congregation (eldership) who have reached the security of a full established auditorium of members to decide they will split and do it again.

In many cases the choice is as simple as

1. One established congregation which is comfortable and well funded, who do not really need personal evangelism and are not growing.
2. Two congregations which are half full and which desperately need their members to do personal evangelism.

The choice and the responsibility is yours.

Again, look at your Building Committee. If it has been relatively inactive for more than 3 years, your congregation is likely lukewarm.

"Thanks for understanding, in lieu of our malfunctioned sound system."

"Clapping or nonclapping?"

9/1/2009

THE CHRISTIAN ARRAY

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IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION: SAND SWIMMING

It is interesting to see an amazing display of God's creativity and know in advance what the evolutionist will say.

The adjacent article is from Mechanical Engineering Magazine and tells of a small lizard which runs on the sand and hides by going into the sand and swimming like a fish. The 6 inches per second speed noted is approximately 8.8 miles per hour, faster than most of us can run.

What is interesting is that this Skink does something that we could not even conceive of. Imagine that you are buried in the sand and need to get out. Would you use your arms and legs or fold them back and try to wave your body. That would go against common sense. Truly this is one of God's "tells" to show us his creativity.

Back to the evolutionist. The evolutionist will likely say that this is a lizard swimming like a fish, demonstrating the evolutionary connection between the species. As a believer in God, we would show that it is a similar talent assigned to different species by a common designer

Just remember who taught the fish to swim.

Sand Swimming

Some 10 percent of the Earth's surface is covered with desert sand. Animals have adapted to sand's peculiar properties—a solid that also can flow—in a number of different ways. The sidewinder snake, for instance, moves across the loose, shifting surface with a characteristic S-shaped motion. And certain species of lizards can burrow so quickly that they seem to disappear under the sand.

But for a species of skink native to North Africa and Southwest Asia, sand isn't something to walk on—it's something to swim through.

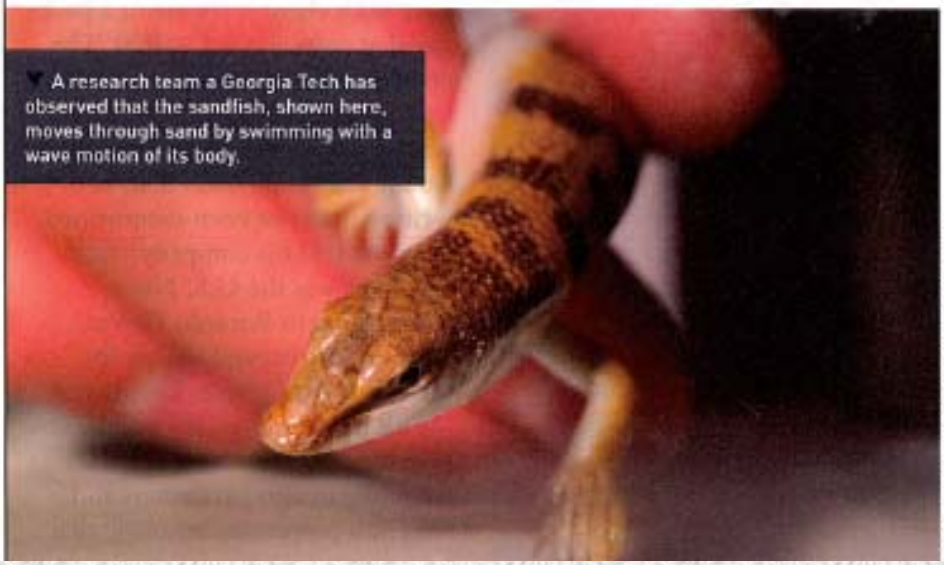
Biophysicists at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta have studied a skink, known as a sandfish, to uncover just how it moves under the surface. When startled, the four-inch sandfish dives headfirst into the sand, covering itself in an instant. But as a means of evading predators, the sandfish doesn't just stay in place under the sand, it moves away from danger.

To get a sense of just how it does this, the researchers, led by physicist Daniel Goldman, built a bead-filled glass container. Using X-ray images, the researchers tracked the sandfish as it moved under the sand. Instead of crawling or using its front and hind legs to pull itself through the sand, the sandfish tucked its forelimbs and hindlimbs close to its body. The lizard's entire body undulated through the sand in a swimming motion, contorting into a very large amplitude wave shape.

What's more, the speed at which the wave moved along the sandfish's body determined the speed at which the creature moved through the sand—as fast as six inches a second.

The team's work may find some application in robotics. Researchers may one day build a robot that can mimic the motion of a skink through the sand, enabling it to move through debris to look for earthquake survivors, say, or though through sand or loose soil for a military reconnaissance mission.

JEFFREY WINTERS



▼ A research team a Georgia Tech has observed that the sandfish, shown here, moves through sand by swimming with a wave motion of its body.

MEK, GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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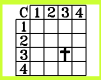

CHURCH GROWTH: LET'S HELP MEMBERS DO EVANGELISM

We have no excuse for not doing personal evangelism. However, it may be harder than it needs to be. Most evangelism potentials already believe in Christ and are affiliated with a denomination which has assured them that they are in good shape.

The challenge for our members is to convince them that their respected authority figures are misleading them and that the Church of Christ is the essential place to be. The Church of Christ is the group whose colleges are in business with the denominations which we need to at least imply are teaching error. It is the group which doesn't have instrumental music. So we start out as hypocritical and picky.

Add to this that it is simply not socially acceptable today to proselyte members of denominations. Members who Jesus referred to as sheep need to go out and do what is really hard.

The most help we normally give them is to tell them that if they will do all the hard work of getting the attention of a prospect and qualify the prospect, we will provide a preacher to try to do the closing.

Our current lack of church growth shows how well this works.

Consider the following as assistances to your members:

1. **Monthly Friday Night Game Night**:
On the same Friday night of each month hold a game night and ask that your adult classes sponsor the night in rotation. Snacks and drinks can be hosted by the class and a variety of games can be ongoing. If any member comes in the door and approaches your table with someone that you don't recognize, a member at the table stands up and announces a bathroom break and asks for a fill-in.

This means that the visitor will immediately be engaged with the social mix and have a chance for "friendship" evangelism.

This program allows for any member to have a known social association to invite a prospect to attend.

2. Service Project:
Take advantage of any relief requirement such as hurricane problems, home fires, group home repairs of needs, etc. It is far easier to invite someone to come and pack boxes for the needy than to make a first invitation to a worship service. Once they see you in the service mode, they are likely to judge you as interesting helpful people rather than simply that bunch which doesn't have a piano.

3. **Special Presentations**:
Special presentations such as Financial Peace University, marriage seminars, Singings, Night time VBS, etc.

4. **Special Area Needs**:
Be sensitive to community needs. One activity which can get people in your building is to volunteer to baby sit on back to school night or meet the teacher night. If the parent is free to meet the teacher of one child while leaving a smaller child in your nursery, they will remember it.

5. Other Use of Your Facility:
The typical church facility is used a few hours a week. If you let the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Red Cross, school band, or other local groups use your facility at other times it can open evangelistic doors.

There is no pat answer for what all congregations can do. Your congregations / neighborhood situation will be unique to your congregations. What is pat is that your congregation can assist members in doing evangelism.

It is truly a win/win situation.

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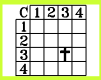

WHAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT	WHAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS
A local group of Christians who believe that the Bible can be updated by contemporary council decisions.	The church of Christ is a local group of Christians which try to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.
A church which receives the permission from an earthly headquarters to plant a new congregation..	The church of Christ tries to reestablish the first century pattern and teaching of the New Testament era at each location.
A church which attempts to duplicate a 19th or 20th century pattern for a church.	The church of Christ tries to reestablish the scriptural organization of the church at each location.
A church which believes you can pick and choose what part of the Bible you want to believe and follow only those parts.	The church of Christ has members who believe they are following the scriptural teachings as best they can.
A church which believes that we should judge that we are all in a community of believers as long as we say we believe in Jesus, irrespective of what we do and preach. A church which should assure all others that they are saved.	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.
A group who makes decisions based on popularity rather than scriptural basis.	A non-instrumental body as instruments were available in the first century and not used, and not used for several centuries.
A group which simply skips over Acts 2:38.	A group who teaches Acts 2:38.
A group which finds more convenient ways to simulate baptism.	A group which teaches baptism by immersion for the remission of sins as that is what is taught in the Bible.
A group which votes on what it suits them to believe and preach or a group which believes that they are still getting direct revelations from God.	A group which believes all revelation was given in the first century.

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 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.

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.

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.

ARTICLES NEEDED

Whereas we are interested in articles which support the themes of this newsletter and articles of general interest, we want to request articles which oppose these viewpoints. It is educational to be exposed to and understand various points of view.

We would like to specifically invite an article which justifies the non-growth of a congregation from anyone who does not believe that church growth is God's plan.

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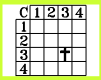

MONEY PAGE

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)

THE MONEY PAGE:
This page may seem odd, even irreverent to offer money for something like this. It is 3 simple statements on church growth, that we cannot be here without God, and evolution is not possible. The steadfastness of putting money on the line for this is to try to be of assistance against those who would discourage church growth, believe in atheism, or promote atheistic evolution.

The page is intended to be a continuing reinforcement.

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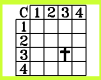

AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

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 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] 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 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. 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.