NUMBER 90

OC CHURCH GROWTH THINK TANK

November, 2014

CLOSING THE BACK DOOR - A CALL TO SERVICE

At the average church of Christ congregation today, people leave out the back door as fast as they come in the front door. In other words we are at a zero growth rate. We are not even keeping up with the population growth rate, so we are losing market share.

We are all familiar with the Great Commission which surely means Jesus expects us to grow. Surely all congregations would like to be growing, but something is stopping them. What is it, and can we do something about it?

A major church growth initiative has been started by Oklahoma Christian University as **CHURCH GROWTH THINK TANK—CLOSING THE BACK DOOR.** It is specifically to study how congregations can be assisted in growth by minimizing loses "out the back door", and to try to make progress in that area.

It is anticipated that most of the items which will "close the back door" are also likely to "open the front door", so the results will hopefully have broad applications to all of us.

A theme of this program is that **if we can assist the 1,500,000 member church of Christ in going from the present 0% growth rate to a 5% growth rate, an additional 75,000 members per year will go to heaven.** Consider that as our collective personal evangelism program.

It is a massively beneficial goal to hope to be of scriptural assistance to 12,311 autonomous US congregations. It is matched by the massive task which trying to do this represents. It cannot be accomplished by fewer than a dozen members of a Think Tank. A critical, key component of this is to communicate the goal to a large number of members and pray that a significant number of them see this as their chance to help make a difference.

This article is an attempt to start that process as it is going out to 6000 members and congregations.

> **IF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST RETURN TO A 5% ANNUAL GROWTH RATE, AN ADDITIONAL 75,000 MEMBERS PER YEAR WILL BE SAVED!**
>
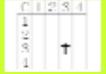> **CONSIDER THAT FOR YOUR PERSONAL EVANGELISM PROGRAM!**

The program has three parallel thrusts: 1. Studying the problem of church growth including soliciting suggestions from other members, 2. initiating some of the recommendations to get the progress started, and 3. recommending a permanent organization to carry on the work.

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Although this project is fairly new, certain recommendations are already being implemented as are indicated on page 2. To a large extent this article is a solicitation for member involvement in these projects and to ask for your ideas on what can to be done to assist in scriptural church growth.

E-MAIL DATABASE
We have purchased the phone number listing of the 12,311 congregations in the US and are dividing them up into blocks of 123 congregations. By having this e-mail listing we will be able to quickly and inexpensively communicate good methods and ideas to a large number of congregations. We **need 100 volunteers** to take a block and make the calls. You will be provided with a script and a form to fill out. (Lead: Benton Baugh, Memorial, Houston, bbaugh@thearray.org)

> **THIS IS NOT SO MUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A THINK TANK AS A CALL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

> **YOU CAN DO THIS!**

EFFECT OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
A factual study of what happened in subsequent year to churches of Christ which adopt instrumental music. The study is being done by a group of students at OC. We need assistance in identifying congregations which have adopted instrumental music and collecting information historical information regarding them. (Lead: Alan Martin, Memorial Road, Edmond, OK, alan.martin@oc.edu)

MATURING NEW CONVERTS
Determine what various congregations do to mature new members in the faith. Then, suggest a plan which congregations might follow in maturing new Christians. (Lead: Larry Keele, Champions, Houston, ldkeele@sbcglobal.com)
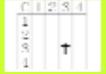
CHURCH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE - 1
Consider what a database should be to support the organization of a church of Christ. List all desirable features for comparison. We need members to review the currently drafted list and suggest improvements. (Lead: Benton Baugh, Memorial, Houston, bbaugh@thearray.org)

CHURCH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE - 2
Review available databases to recommend to congregations which is the most practical to use so that every congregation doesn't have to make an independent study. We need input from those who have researched this question for your congregation before, or who are otherwise informed on the subject of church management software. (Lead: Alan Reed, Champions, Houston,

The Church Today

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CHURCH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE - 3
Consider writing an application specifically tailored to the scriptural organization of the churches of Christ for free distribution to churches of Christ. We need programmers to plan and accomplish this task. (Lead: Ben Steinhauer, Memorial, Houston, admin@coc.directory)

SAME GOSPEL - NEW METHODS

EXIT INTERVIEW FORM
Collect all available exit interviews, compile into the best Exit Interview Form we can make and send to congregations. Make sure the Exit Interview Form is integrated into the database. We need samples of your Exit Interview Form if you use one and your assistance to develop one for wide distribution. (Lead: David Duncan, Memorial, Houston, dduncan@mcoc.org)

CONGREGATIONAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS
Collect available job descriptions from congregations and compile into a uniform format set of job descriptions which can be made available to all congregations. You can help by notifying David is your congregation has job descriptions available and is willing to share them and/or are willing to do compiling work. (Lead: David Deffenbaugh, Southwest, OKC , david@swcoc.org)

PERSONAL EVANGELISM IS PERSONAL CONTACT PLUS A LOT OF OTHER SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

If you would like to volunteer for any of these activities or have information to submit, contact the lead person on the project.

Numerous projects like these must be started during the next two years if the program is to have sufficient impact to improve the growth profile of congregations. Your assistance is needed now, and for future projects.

The direct members of the Think Tank are Bob Rowley (Memorial Road, Edmond OK and OC staff), Alan Martin (Memorial Road, Edmund OK and OC staff), Kent Allen (Memorial Road, Edmund OK and OC staff), David Deffenbaugh (pulpit minister, Southwest Church of Christ, OKC), Larry Keele (pulpit minister, Champions, Houston), David Duncan (pulpit minister, Memorial, Houston), Gary Smith (Pulpit minister, 5th Ward, Houston), and Benton Baugh (Deacon, Memorial, Houston). Others are involved as project leaders and project members.

We solicit your ideas, your involvement, and your prayers on this extremely important work.

We'd like to talk to you about cheeses.

Church Mice.

CASTLEMAN COMMENT
TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Several years ago there was a TV program titled "Truth or Consequences". Maybe the program could have been named "Truth or Lies have Consequences". The consequences for truth are blessings; but refusing to love the truth or believing a lie also has consequences and condemnation.

A friend, an alcoholic, said to tell young people, "don't even take the first drink." Many people wished they had never smoked the first cigarette. Many testify, "Don't contemplate sexual relations without a marriage commitment. " What about, "I can take it or leave it. " We know that the majority will continue to take it. When no consequences are considered for an action or reaction, it is easy to be deceived. The Bible states, "If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end (or consider their future, or comprehend what will happen to them)", Deuteronomy 32:29. Proverbs 14:12; 16:25 states, "there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Some believe that by leaving the body of Christ, the church, they solve their problem of anger with an offense committed. Was the offense such that there could not be the prayer, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do?" Is the hurt or pain greater than our Lord's suffering on the cross for us?   There may be situations when it is better to separate, Acts 15:39, but always "do all that you can to live in peace with everyone", Romans 12:18, 14-17, NLT.

Israel was deceived by the Gibeonites when they "examined their food, but they did not consult the Lord", Joshua 9:14. May we look to the Lord, seek his wisdom and evaluate the consequences of our behavior.

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HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH:
ELIZABETH BROWN

The Scottish preacher, Henry Drummond, 1851-1897, stated, "Unless a man undertakes more than he can possibly do, he will never do all that he can." Now that's a philosophy that will keep you busy. But busy is not really the point. We want to serve in profitably, productive and effective ways to glorify God and share Jesus Christ with others.
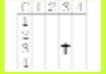
Serve appropriately: There is a time and a season for everything. There is a time for mothers to tend their children and fathers to play ball. Make family care and support a priority. There will be a time for greater involvement in other things. There is a time for study and learning from others. You may want to try out different ministries to see what fits. You may be surprised where God wants to use you. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10)

Serve the Lord: Always remember who you are working for – not the church or elders or supervisors. We serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask for the equipping you need to serve in a productive way. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17)

Serve wholeheartedly: Find the right task – one that suits your talents and interests. An effective ministry is something that you can be enthusiastic about. "For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative." (2 Cor. 8:17) "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men…" (Eph. 6:7)
"I expect to pass though this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show a fellow being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." (Stephen Grellet) .

Elizabeth Brown, Texarkana, TX

A READY ANSWER: THE RAPTURE

Ready Answer: The Rapture is not a scriptural concept or teaching. Neither the word or the concept are in the Bible. The teachings on the "Rapture" are a sterling example of taking verses and misusing them.

In order to demonstrate that the "Rapture" is not a Biblical concept, a tape recording promoting the concept was listened to and **every scriptural reference supporting the concept is listed** and is typed completely following:

John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." (The first alleged mention of the rapture in the Bible)

I Thess. 4:13-18: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

I Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, no wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

I Cor. 15:51-52 "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."
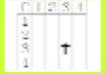
Acts 9:7 "And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one." & **Acts 22:9** "And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me." (Teaching that if the Rapture had already occurred, you might not have heard or understood the trumpet because the men with Paul did not hear God.)

In spite of the fact that the preceding was all the scriptures that were quoted, one should be ready to discuss the following verses also:

Matt 24:40-41 "**Then there shall be two men in the field, one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.**"

Luke 17:34-36 "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same plate; one will be taken, and the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."

Each of these verses are more reasonably understood as the being second coming.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION: MOTHER'S MILK

In the last issue we discussed bisexual reproduction. In this issue we discuss something related, mother's milk.

In issue #79 we discussed the impossibility of evolving the snake venom snake venom system. It generally involved creating a poison which kills other things but doesn't hurt the snake, a storage system, a delivery tube, a control valve, a system for controlling the control valve, and a delivery method.

The mother's milk system is similar to snake venom, except that it is not poisonous, it is actually beneficial to other beings. The mother still has to create the product (milk), figure out how to store it, provide delivery tubes, provide some kind of valving to keep it from leaking out, and developing a personal delivery apparatus (You can figure out what that is). We will leave it to you to figure out what that is. All of these components are of no use individually and they are of no use partially formed. To believe in evolution, you must believe they all accidentally evolved at the same time, and fully.

It is simpler than snake venom in that the zero I.Q. snake had to invent a poison and invent a way for it to not hurt itself. However, the snake had a decided advantage. When the snake decides to deliver his product, it is all his choice. He bites someone.

At the same time, the mother's milk creation must have a voluntary customer. A whole other system must come into existence for it to be useful. That is of course a baby. Babies in antiquity had a common problem. No mother's milk, they died.

Again, to be an evolutionist, you must believe that babies were evolved at the same precise time (in the vaunted 14.7 billion years) as mother's milk or nothing worked. This dual timing problem means that two impossibles must happen at the same time. Otherwise the mother's milk atrophies away from lack of use or the babies simply die.

Is it logical that all these astounding thing happen by chance in zero I.Q. pre-history animals or that they are the work of an intelligent designer which we comprehend but cannot completely understand. The rational choice is that there is an intelligent designer, and the intelligent designer is Jehovah.

Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E.

Atheism

The belief that there was nothing and nothing happened to nothing and then nothing magically exploded for no reason, creating everything and then a bunch of everything magically rearranged itself for no reason what so ever into self-replicating bits which then turned into dinosaurs.

Makes perfect sense.

THE CHRISTIAN ARRAY

AN E-MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH IN OUR GENERATION

HOUSTON AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

2nd Tues.   Houston Preacher's Luncheon, confirm with Dale Foster at dalefoster@gmail.com for address.

5/20/15   Houston Foster's Home For Children Golf Tournament—Blackhorse

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 E-Magazine
This e-magazine is sent to members of the church on a monthly basis as an attempt to promote scriptural teachings, area wide activities and church growth. If you do not want to receive this e-magazine, send an e-mail to bbaugh@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 bbaugh@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 it if you would:
1. forward the church member e-mail addresses which you have,
2. send the directory of the congregation you attend or any other directories which you might have, and
3. give us an idea of how to collect church member e-mail addresses.