

FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

NUMBER 165

OCTOBER 2021

The Bible says in Exodus chapter 20 that God spoke to Moses face to face (verse 1) and that you cannot see God's face (verse 20). This apparent conflict in the Bible is explained starting on page 8.

OCCG CHURCH GROWTH WORKSHOP

The OCCG Church Growth Workshop held October 9 at the Hyatt Regency West in Houston was an outstanding meeting of brothers and sisters on the topic of key components in church growth.

The general theme of the workshop was that your congregation can grow relative to your service area growth rate. However, it will not simply take a fresh coat of paint on practices which are not presently working, or one new program; it will mean a fresh look at everything. While you must remain scriptural, you do not need to maintain some of our traditions which have taken on the feeling of being a scriptural requirement.

Continued on page 2

THE POWER OF PRISON MINISTRY

When a person comes to Christ in prison, all other prisoners – “a captive audience” can see for themselves the power of redemption: change in attitude, behavior and perspective of



the future as they witness the transforming work of the Holy Spirit among them.

Continued on page 6

BE STRONG IN THE LORD *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...”* (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

Continued on page 6

AN ELEGY FOR CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Beginning on page 15 is a reprinted article by a member of the Independent Christian Churches about the Churches of Christ. Hold onto your hat before you read this.

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OCCG WORKSHOP P. 2



As seen in the photograph above, Philip Bailey of Memorial Houston was speaking to a full house. There were 81 seats available and reservations plus walk-ins equaled 78 for 96% of capacity. This included leaders from 19 area congregations for a broad representation.

Seven keys for sustained church growth were discussed, including prospect traffic, goals, member involvement, 21st century learning, information systems, organizational changes, and knowing the importance of what we are doing.

Three specific personal evangelism items discussed were prayer tents, which have worked well for Deer Park Church of Christ, tent style business cards (see page 3), and small trifold tracts which can be easily handed out (To be discussed in more detail next month).

Some of the presentations were verbal only, some with PowerPoint, and some were PowerPoints with notes included.

The PowerPoints with speaker notes for this program are posted at www.occg.institute under the WORKSHOPS TAB. A video was taken and is being processed. It will be posted as soon as practical for anyone to watch.

If you would like to have a workshop at your congregation or you would like to help host and area wide workshop, let us know at bbaugh@occg.institute. The fresh point of view in these workshops should be a benefit to anyone, especially congregations which are presently in declining attendance.

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Stephenville, Texas

PERSONAL EVANGELISM TENT CARDS



It is always difficult to start a personal evangelism discussion. The sign to the right we saw in Marble Falls, TX last week illustrates part of our problem. It clearly infers that all you have to do is believe in Jesus, and there are no rules to follow. Ignoring the fact that “Just Jesus” is itself a rule and is judgmental against Mohammad, Buddha, and some other guys, we shall proceed.

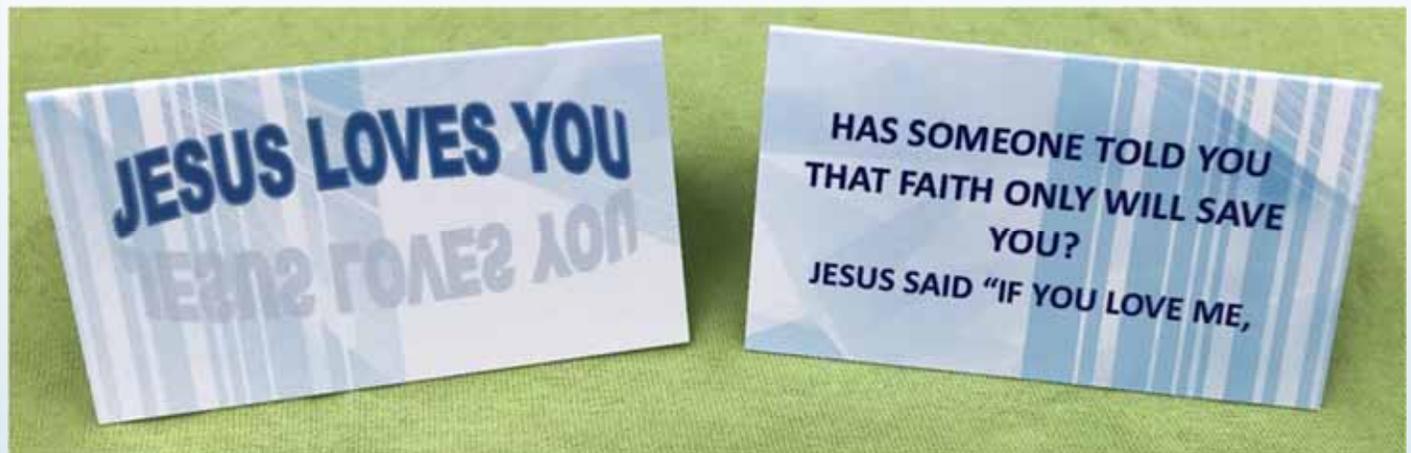
Churches of Christ with the NT:OA basic philosophy of only following the New Testament and following all of it says “burdens” us with telling people there are, in fact, rules to follow.

The purpose is to try to start a discussion. It directly addresses the sign in Marble Falls and what a lot of other groups are telling their followers: faith only will save you.

The card shown below says if someone has told you that faith only will save you, Jesus said “If you love me,” and stops. If the reader flips the card over to find the end of the sentence, he or she will find that Jesus said “**keep my commandments**”.

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The tent cards are business card size and are folded into a small tent. You can hand them to someone or when you go to lunch, you can simply leave it on the table.

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Continue on page 4

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we can do the attached design for you. If we do it for you, it will actually have the stripes on them which are shown on the cards above. We do not accept payments, so if we do this for you, you will make a \$78.00 check to the Oklahoma Christian College General Fund. If we do it for you, there is an ordering form on the following page.

We could like your input; if you have a suggestion of a better message for the cards, let us know at bbaugh@occg.institute.



OUTSIDE OF CARD



INSIDE OF CARD

You can go to their website and use their online design tool and create any design you like or

TENT CARD REQUEST FORM

CONGREGATION NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP CODE: _____

WEBSITE: _____

EMAIL FOR PRAYERS: _____

PHONE NO. FOR PRAYERS (IF ANY): _____

WORSHIP TIMES: _____

BIBLE CLASS TIME: _____

REQUESTORS NAME: _____

REQUESTORS PHONE NUMBER: _____

REQUESTORS EMAIL: _____

Make a sketch below if you like, or we will make one from Google maps. Send this form to bbaugh@occg.institute.

THE POWER OF PRISON MINISTRY

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Continued from page 1

We also live as captives confined by conformity to a worldview culture. However, since we were baptized into Christ, we no longer choose to conform to the world but are being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. We are no longer concerned with worldly temptations because we no longer succumb to the desire for things of this world and have exchanged the perishable false “loves”, selfish ways and worry for Love of God and sacrificial service to Jesus Our Lord. We live by faith, sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. We are free of sin and empowered by the Holy Spirit to reach out to the lost as Jesus’ Disciples – set apart to do good works planned in advance by God – filled with the Holy Spirit and visible to all by the Light of Life.

We are commissioned by Jesus Christ to go – as His ambassadors- declaring the truth of the Gospel message by our personal eyewitness account of coming to Christ by the grace of God, our experience of transformation and our desire to show His love by the love we have for one-another so that the world may know the secret of discipleship .

Let us come before God daily, echoing the praise and petition recorded in Psalm 71:17-18:

Since my youth, O god, you have taught me,
And to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

Even when I am old and gray,

Do not forsake me, O God,

Till I declare your power to the next generation,

Your might to all who are to come.

There is no secret what God can do!

Larry S. Grubbs Harrison, Ohio

Continued from page 1

Peter says there are ferocious predators just waiting to pounce. There is a cunning, devious, hidden nature to those things bent on destroying our faith. They numb, distract and blot out spiritual awareness. We need skills to overcome every diversion.

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH: Increase your knowledge, goodness, self-control, perseverance, kindness and love. Take a firm stand on the truth and persevere. One of the most cunning ploys is the demand for tolerance of evil. It takes strength and self-control to stand your ground.

STAY ALERT: There are many enemies of alertness. Whether caring for a loved one or staying up too late binging on a TV series – the result is the same. Too little sleep makes us more vulnerable to the enemy. Exhaustion whether our fault or not has the same effect. Live a balanced prudent lifestyle as much as possible to stay out of trouble.

RESIST! Recognize that there are many enemies seeking to destroy our faith. Be strong in the Lord. Be aware of your surroundings, stay away from places of darkness and sin. We are to avoid worldliness that contaminates our souls. May the Lord bless every effort toward strength, purity and holiness.

Elizabeth Brown

NT:OA



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If you know of someone else who is thinking about closing and selling their church, we would appreciate your telling us.

THE CATALYST INITIATIVE

PROMOTING THE GREAT COMMISSION BY ENCOURAGING STRONG MEMBERS TO START LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

bbaugh@thearray.org

SUMMARY: An apparent conflict exists in Exodus 33 on whether Moses did or did not see God although they were talking face to face. The apparent conflict is a mis-interpretation considering face to face is a relational term and seeing is a vision term; and that 4 verses say that God is an invisible spirit which cannot be seen.

Questions have arisen on the apparent conflict between Exodus 33:1 which says “**used to speak to Moses face to face**” and Exodus 33:20 which says “**You cannot see My face**”.

A first point to notice is that this is not a conflict between the books of Exodus and Matthew which were written years apart by different authors even likely speaking different languages. This is within the same chapter of Exodus in the same writing by the same author. It is far more likely to be a mis-interpretation than a conflict.

Secondly, it is comparing apples to oranges. Face to face is a relational term whereas seeing my face is a vision term. It would be reasonable to say two blind men were talking face to face, but were not seeing each other.

Thirdly, the Bible clearly states in 4 verses (following) that God is invisible, so He cannot be seen. God is a spirit being which we are not able to fully comprehend in our lifetimes, but apparently being a spirit and being invisible are part of it.

That being said it is reasonable to say that God and Moses were proximately located and talking, but Moses did not see God.

VERSES APPROPRIATE TO THIS DISCUSSION:

Exodus 33:11 Thus the Lord **used to speak to Moses face to face**, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Exodus 33:18-23 Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory! And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” But He said, “**You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!**” (me or face?) Then the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. “Then I will take My hand away and **you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.**”

John 1:18 **No one has seen God at any time**; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

VERSES SAYING GOD IS INVISIBLE

I Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

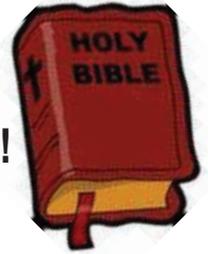
Hebrews 11:27 (Moses) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as **seeing Him who is unseen**.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His **invisible** attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the **invisible** God, the firstborn of all creation.



Dr. Jonas Gadson, Minister



Good News That You Can Use In Times Like These!

Ephesians 3:20 Sunday November 14, 2021 Isaiah 43:19

Welcome to the Beaufort Church of Christ

“Where All the Doors Swing Loose on Welcome Hinges to You and to Yours!”

This Is A Special Invitation for YOU and Your Family!

Gospel Meeting REVIVAL! Get It Done In 2021!

Our prayer for you and your family is in Ill John 1:2, “Beloved, I Wish Above All Things That You May Prosper And Be In Health, Even As Your Soul Prospers!”

“It’s In the Book! Take a Look!” We Speak Where the Bible Speaks and We Are Silent Where the Bible Is Silent! The Church That Is Biblically Alive Is Worth The Drive! Come Learn God’s Word, Obey His Will And Stay In His Way!

SPEAKER: Dr. Jonas Gadson, DTM is an International Motivational Speaker, Corporate Trainer, Radio Personality, Best Selling Author, Expert Communication Coach and Minister of the Beaufort Church of Christ. He has been teaching and preaching the Word of God for over 40 years across the country and never been on the Church payroll! He is an Evangelistic Catalyst baptizing thousands of people into Christ. Many members of the body of Christ have been strengthened by his sound teaching and preaching the Gospel and have become teachers, preachers, elders and deacons in the Church! He retired after 30 years with Xerox Corporation and Eastman Kodak Company where he trained over 8,000 employees from 69 countries and earned the Trainer of the Year Award! He established this mission work in Beaufort, SC in 2005! Dr. Gadson will deliver Educational, Inspirational, Transformational and Motivational Messages that Are Good News for These Times!

Good News That You Can Use In Times Like These!

Ephesians 3:20 Gospel Meeting REVIVAL! Sunday November 14, 2021 Isaiah 43:19

Morning Bible Study for All Ages at 10am

Morning Worship Service 11:15am to 1pm ■ Special Afternoon Worship 3:30 pm to 5pm

All Services Are Held At the Beaufort Church of Christ

170 Robert Smalls Parkway Beaufort, South Carolina 29906

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COVID19 Notice: We are observing distancing and wearing masks. However, if you don’t want to come to the building you can still participate in the Worship Services by dialing our

Telephone Conference Call Line: Dial Direct: 1-425-585-6574

BONUS FROM JONAS “The Church That Is Biblically Alive Is Worth The Drive!”

Our Regular Worship Services

Sunday Morning Bible Study for all ages 10 am

Sunday Morning Worship Service 11:15 am

Wednesday Night Bible Study

“Hour of Power!” 7pm-8pm

Dial our Telephone Conference Call Line: 1-425-585-6574

Beaufort Church of Christ

COVID19 Notice: We are observing safe distancing and wearing masks. If you don’t want to come to the building you can still participate in the Worship Services by dialing our Telephone Conference Call Line:
Dial Direct: 1-425-585-6574

BEAUFORT CHURCH OF CHRIST

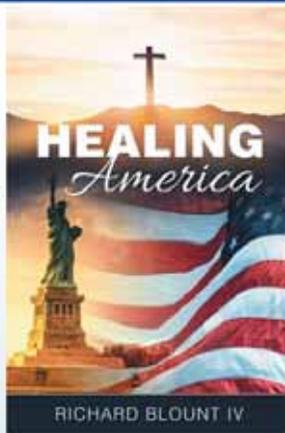
170 ROBERT SMALLS PARKWAY • BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA 29906

BONUS FROM JONAS “The Church That Is Biblically Alive Is Worth The Drive!”

“GOD Is Great All The Time And All The Time GOD Is Great!” Psalm 145:3

HEALING AMERICA

A timely new book by Richard Blount IV exploring the problems, causes, solutions, and benefits of being an American.



He provides an intentional approach for the country's healing process and aims at healthy relationships and spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal.

This book can be purchased for \$19.95 at: Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and Westbow Publishing

- 16 - Ambition is a poor excuse for not having enough sense to be lazy.
- 17 - Hard work pays off in the future; laziness pays off now.
- 18 - I intend to live forever... So far, so good.

Steven Wright

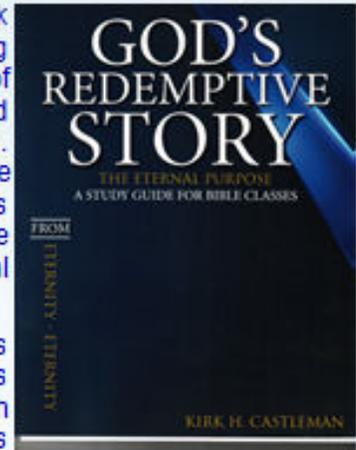
Need a hand with your student ministry? Here to help! Teaching, training, support and care for your ministers and volunteers. Twenty years in the trenches. Been there and done that. Let me know how I can serve and support your congregation.

Dave Blanchard

daveblanchard@fuller.edu

734-516-6008

A 13 lesson book written by a long time Church of Christ minister and servant of Jesus. Intended for Bible Class studies, this book can also be used for personal evangelism.



Most Bible class study books on this subject begin with Genesis 3. This study however, lays

the foundation by beginning with a basic study-outline of Biblical History, which is sorely lacking among many Christians today. Then after laying this foundation, it seeks to present a "Synthesis of Scripture" by asserting that the theme of all the Bible is Jesus, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection! The Eternal Purpose of God for Redemption is then presented with an in-depth study of Ephesians 1, and other New Testament passages which describe God's redemptive plan.

It is not until the fourth lesson that God's Eternal Purpose in Genesis 3 is presented. Then other Promises, Pictures, Prophecy, and Prep-

"AN EXCITING STUDY OF GOD'S POWER AND REVELATION IN HUMAN HISTORY"

aration, are fully described. This study includes a description of the Davidic Covenant, as well as a helpful approach to Old Testament Prophecy.

This guide is helpful for all Christians, but especially new Christians who need an understanding of God's eternal desire for all the world!

This book can be bought on Amazon for \$10.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #121 - PUFFER FISH 2

As mentioned last month, Tetraodontidae is a family of fish in the order Tetraodontiformes. The family includes many familiar species variously called pufferfish, puffers, balloonfish, blowfish, globefish, swellfish, toadfish, toadies, honey toads, sugar toads, and sea squab.

The puffer's unique and distinctive natural defenses help compensate for its slow locomotion. They can move with a sudden burst of speed, blow themselves up like a ball, and have pointy spines which make them hard to swallow and can choke their predators.

A catfish would be lucky to have such defenses, but the puffer fish designer was not done yet.

Predators that do manage to swallow the puffer may find their stomachs full of tetrodotoxin (TTX), making puffers an unpleasant, possibly lethal, choice of prey.

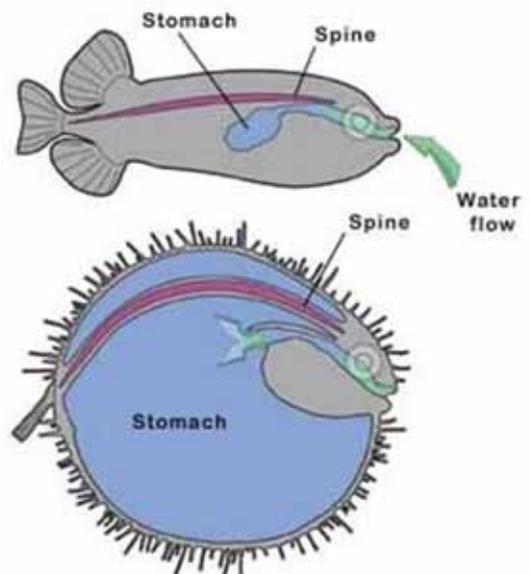
This neurotoxin is found primarily in the ovaries and liver, although smaller amounts exist in the intestines and skin, as well as trace amounts in muscle. It does not always have a lethal effect on large predators, such as sharks, but it can kill humans.

Pufferfish can be lethal if not served properly. Puffer poisoning usually results from consumption of incorrectly prepared puffer soup, fugu chiri, or occasionally from raw puffer meat, sashimi fugu. While chiri is much more likely to cause death, sashimi fugu often causes intoxication, light-headedness, and numbness of the lips. Pufferfish tetrodotoxin deadens the tongue and lips, and induces dizziness and vomiting, followed by numbness and prickling over the body, rapid heart rate, decreased blood pressure, and muscle paralysis. The toxin paralyzes the diaphragm muscle and stops the person who has ingested it from breathing. People who live longer than 24

hours typically survive, although possibly after a coma lasting several days.

Imagine a fish figuring how to make a poisonous tetrodotoxin (TTX) which does not hurt itself but can kill you. That is not the accidental happening of a fish, that is the work of an Intelligent Designer.

Information collected from Wikipedia
Benton F. Baugh



Guinea fowl puffer – un-puffed and puffed



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Worship at 10:00 am.

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Available as a free download.

LESSON TOPICS ARE:

- (1) **IF GOD?** Atheistic evolution vs the reality of a god.
- (2) **WHICH GOD?** The various offerings to be the god.
- (3) **WHICH GROUP?** A brief history of the world and of Christianity leading to a discussion of how to find Christ's church.

Located at occg.institute, TOPICAL LESSONS , 02 WINGS OF EAGLES



Jerry Heiderich: Director
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

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Clinic 979-578-9091, Cell 214-862-8964

jerry@gulfcoastchristiancounseling.com



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NT:OA

New Testament: Only and All of it.

YOUR CONGREGATION WILL NOT GROW UNTIL:

YOU HAVE PROSPECT TRAFFIC.

MEMBERS ENGAGE THE PROSPECTS.

MEMBERS FEEL OWNERSHIP.

CAN WE HELP?



For more information,
info@occg.institute



NT:OA=COC

I named my dog "5 miles" so I can tell people I walk 5 miles every day.

Barry & Ace

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

11/14/21 GOSPEL MEETING REVIVAL, Beauford Church of Christ, 170 Robert Smalls Pkwy, Beauford, SC, 29906, see page 10 for more information.

HOUSTON PREACHERS AND LEADERS LUNCHEON Every third Tuesday except December, For information contact David Wardrup - cell: (281)635-3135; davidwardrup@gmail.com or Cruz Hernandez - cell: (713)560-9080; cruzalbertohdz2017@gmail.com

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Circulation: 4000 congregations and individual members

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The following article is a recent discussion of us by an author from the Independent Christian churches.

Incidentally “elegy” in the title means: a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead.

The red highlighting in the text is ours.

Noninstrumental Churches of Christ Facing Uncertain Future

by Christian Standard | 13 October, 2021 | 8 comments

By Kent E. Fillinger

Jack R. Reese’s book *At the Blue Hole: Elegy for a Church on the Edge* —which comes out Thursday—chronicles the rise and fall of the noninstrumental Churches of Christ. The book includes several startling facts and concerning predictions from leading researchers in the Church of Christ fellowship.

This article will share some of those statistics and predictions about the Churches of Christ from that group’s leaders, and I will use some of my research to draw statistical comparisons with the independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.

My intention is to illuminate (not denigrate), and my hope is to raise awareness and perhaps inspire action to ensure our independent Christian churches remain strong.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE & STATUS TODAY

The Churches of Christ were first recognized as a separate religious body in 1906. At that time, there were 2,649 congregations with 159,658 members (an average of 60 people per church). Forty years later, their size had quadrupled to 10,089 congregations and 682,172 members (68 per church).

Attendance in Churches of Christ peaked in about 1985 and has been in decline since about 1990. As of 2010, Churches of Christ had 1.6 million adherents (the 13th-largest so-called “denomination” in the country) and 12,584 congregations (the 7th most).

In their report “Churches of Christ in 2050,” **Tim Woodroof** and **Stan Granberg** wrote that Churches of Christ have lost more than 2,000 people and nine congregations a month since 2015.

Interviewed for this article, Granberg said, “My personal expectation is that by 2050, we will be about one-third the number of churches and members that we were

about 1985, our high point." If that occurs, Churches of Christ would have about 4,000 congregations and 400,000 members by 2050.

Data this year from **21st Century Christian** indicates there are 11,875 Church of Christ congregations in the United States; total attendance is 1,092,182; and total number of adherents (both baptized and unbaptized individuals) is 1,423,295.

By comparison, the *2018 Directory of the Ministry* lists 4,921 independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ with a total membership of 1,228,573. (*Note: the Directory of the Ministry relies on self-reporting, so the numbers are questionable; still, they serve as reasonable reference point for the purposes of this article.*)

AN ATTENDANCE COMPARISON

Research by Granberg in "A Case Study of Growth and Decline: The Churches of Christ, 2006–2016" found that 91 percent of all Church of Christ attendees belong to churches of less than 250 and that the smallest Church of Christ congregations (55 percent of them) have an average attendance of 34 people.

For the sake of comparison, attendance data from our 2019 annual *Christian Standard* church survey included 439 independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ reporting a total average worship attendance of 483,434. More than one-third (35 percent) of that total attendance was comprised by the 194 megachurches (averaging 2,000 or more weekly), emerging megachurches (1,000–1,999), and large churches (500–999).

That means the 245 congregations in the smaller categories—very small (1–99), small (100–249), and medium churches (250–499)—reported a total average attendance of 49,771, or 203 per church.

If you extrapolate these numbers and assume the nonreporting churches (4,482 of them) each averaged 203 for worship weekly, total attendance for them would equal 909,846. If we add that figure to the attendance average for the 439 churches that did report—483,434—it results in a total average attendance for independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ of 1,393,280.

So, with lots of guesswork and assumptions, we can conclude that attendance at independent Christian Churches likely exceeds that for noninstrumental Churches of Christ, 1,393,280 to 1,092,082.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

A geographical comparison of these two related church groups will interest many. Nearly half (46 percent) of all Church of Christ congregations are located in five states: Texas (1,901), Tennessee (1,406), Alabama (838), Arkansas (694), and Kentucky (570). By comparison, the *2018 Directory of the Ministry* shows that 42 percent of independent Christian Churches are in these five states: Indiana (541), Illinois (449), Ohio (448), Kentucky (341), and Missouri (304).

Membership data indicates 54 percent of all Church of Christ attendees are located in Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. By comparison, 46 percent of independent Christian Church membership is concentrated in Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and California.

So, we can conclude, the Churches of Christ have a more tightly concentrated congregational and membership base.

COMPARING THE LARGEST CONGREGATIONS

In 2018, the most recent year data is available, the Churches of Christ had 30 congregations with an average attendance of more than 1,000. Of their four megachurches (averaging 2,000 or more) the largest was **The Hills Church** in North Richland Hills, Texas, which averaged 4,658. All combined, these 30 congregations averaged 44,224, or 1,474 per church.

The independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ had more than 125 churches that averaged 1,000 or more in 2018, based on our *Christian Standard* survey. The 30 largest Christian Churches average 230,682 weekly, or 7,689 per church.

The 30 largest Churches of Christ were in 6 different states, while the 30 largest independent Christian Churches were in 13 different states.

One-third (33 percent) of the largest Church of Christ congregations used a multisite model in 2018 compared with 73 percent of the largest independent Christian Churches.

A review of the websites for the 30 largest Churches of Christ indicates 10 of these congregations (33 percent) use musical instruments in some or all their worship services today. The others appear to offer only a cappella worship services.

CHURCH PLANTING

Years ago, church growth guru Lyle Schaller said a movement must plant 1 percent of its total number of congregations each year to maintain itself. Logic would indicate a higher percentage would be necessary to spur growth.

The Churches of Christ have only two small church-planting organizations, both started in about 2004. One of them, **Mission Alive**, has planted an average of 2.5 new churches per year. **The independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have at least 20 church-planting organizations.** So, we can conclude, Churches of Christ likely are struggling to plant enough new churches to offset those that are closing.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

"The Churches of Christ almost have no vision for the mission of God in North America," Mission Alive director **Tod Vogt** told me. **He noted the churches have a "radically autonomous mindset" and that there is "virtually no collaboration or coordination" between the congregations in the fellowship.**

"With rare exceptions," Woodroof and Granberg wrote, "we have given up reaching new audiences and vehemently resisted adaptations which might make us more evangelistically effective."

Granberg predicted, "Churches of Christ will be almost nonexistent along the West Coast by 2050 (California used to be our fifth most populous state). The Midwest and Northeast will be fewer in number but still holding on (they are used to surviving). The South, from Texas east, will have pockets of strength but probably half the current number of churches.

"I truly hope and pray that my expectations are badly underestimated," Granberg said. "Yet my experiences since 2005 . . . have not made me optimistic for our fellowship for any great turnaround as a whole. Individually, I expect to see congregations and pockets that are wonderful bright spots."

Several Church of Christ leaders like Granberg are trying to sound the alarm and motivate their congregations to action. And books like *At the Blue Hole* are intended to help spur people to new ways of thought and practice. My hope is they can stem the tide and revive the evangelistic spirit they displayed in the past.

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CHRISTIAN STANDARD