



South Florida Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST MESSENGER



1807 S. Florida Ave.,
Lakeland, FL 33803

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ELDERS

David Anderson
Brian Kenyon
Bobby Sheumaker

DEACONS

Tyler Anderson
Jason Hendrix
Rick Kenyon
Stacey Paulin

MINISTER

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Vince Daugherty

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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Dub Hill Russia
Don Iverson India
Marc Veary Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald Scotland
J. Paguaga Honduras
Joey Treat Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler Ghana, W.A.

Church Growth: Real & Imaginary

George F. Beals

There are different kinds of church growth taught in the Bible. It is pleasing to God for the members of His church to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Savior (2 Pet. 3:18). Of course, in addition to such spiritual growth, it also is pleasing to Him for more and more people in a community to become saved, thereby expanding the church (Eph. 5:23) in a physical way. Let's think about the latter kind for a moment — the physical growth of a local church.

Whether physical church growth is real or unreal depends on whether it is Scriptural or unscriptural. "Growth" here means increase in number. "Church," according to the New Testament, is the saved (Eph. 5:23). Thus, if the number of saved people in a local church increases, there is real (actual) church growth. However, if the number of people, but not the number of saved people, increases, there is growth, to be sure, but not real (Scriptural) church growth. We should seek real and resist unreal church growth.

Seek

Jesus came to seek and save us sinners (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15), and God wants all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4-5). So, to be Christ-like and godly, we also must seek and want nothing less. We should want this both for ourselves and for everyone else. This requires us to be positive by expressing the saving truth and negative by opposing damnable error. Indeed, only by engaging in both this positive and this negative can it be said correctly that we seek Scriptural (actual, real) church growth.

Resist

There are many ways unreal church growth can occur. Here are some. *First, it occurs in a church whose members have not followed the Bible plan of salvation, and then more of the same are added to this number.* There can be several sins here. It is sinful for a person not to become saved. This is the case because such a person violates one or more Biblical requirements (John 8:24, 58; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; and others). On the same basis, how can one consistently encourage or support others in following a plan which results in more unsaved people? Following and promoting the Bible plan of salvation itself puts one at odds with this kind of "church growth." Rather, let us endorse Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation," and Psalm 97:10, "You who love the LORD, hate evil!" and James 4:4, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" and the requirement to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Eph. 5:11).

Second, it occurs in a church whose members have followed the Bible plan of salvation, but accept as members those who have not. An example here would be a church's accepting as a Christian a person who still denies the deity

of Jesus (like an unrepentant “Jehovah’s Witness”). Another example of this relates to the issue of “re-baptism” — a church’s accepting as Christian one who has not been Scripturally baptized. A third example would be for a church to accept as a saved person one who engages in homosexual activity — or to accept and ignore such behavior. Rather, we would need to study with these precious souls in hopes they would make the necessary changes in their lives. Otherwise, there would be numerical growth, but not real (God-recognized) church growth. In this case, those in the congregation who have followed God’s plan of salvation would need to revisit the appropriate passages.

Third, it occurs in a church that accepts as members only those who have followed the Bible plan of salvation, but who choose to ignore essentials after baptism. Such “freedom” attracts some brethren and, as a consequence, the congregation may grow in number. Here are some essentials after baptism that seem especially susceptible to being overlooked nowadays: (1) allowing the doctrine that Bible-silence permits, thus violating Colossians 3:17; (2) allowing the doctrine that we must not bind deductions from Scripture on others, thus violating First Thessalonians 5:21; and (3) ignoring a member or members who fall back into sinful practices and continue in them. Faithful Christians will not support such behavior, and brethren who do, need to return to their first love. They need to look at passages such as the following, and do some repenting: Titus 1:9, 13-16; Revelation 2:4-5; First Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21.

Salvation Is Better

It would be better to be a saved group of eight than an unsaved group of thousands (1 Pet. 3:20). Of course, the higher the number of saved, the better, and with love in our hearts we should work toward that end. However, this requires us never, ever to seek unity and numbers first, and saving truth second. Otherwise, we glory in numbers in this life only and, at the end, wind up having contributed to the devil’s hell. This will be especially evident in eternity. It will be better for us then, if we are real now.

Note: Much of the content of this article was taken from my article of the same title that appeared in the brotherhood publication, *The Plumblin*, Vol. 1.4, pp. 3-4.

GOD’S GREAT FAMILY!

We thank Victor Eskew and the lessons he preached during our Spring Gospel Meeting! The lessons were timely, relevant, and went along with the SFA acrostic (Spiritual-Family-Accountable). More importantly, these lessons challenged us to live better for God and help His family grow. In the first century, Christ “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12). Now that the age of these special appointments by God and the miraculous gifts that often accompanied them has ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13), we have the completed revelation of God’s word that completely “equips for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17 cf. 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). All of us need to constantly study that word and make application to our lives in order to please God and be the faithful people He desires (Acts 2:42; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). We elders need to abound more and more in Scriptural shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-4); deacons need to abound more and more in serving in their ministry (1 Tim. 3:8-10); and each member needs to abound more and more in living for Jesus in every aspect of life (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). We must be the functional, God-glorifying family the world needs to see and of which those seeking God can take note (Mt. 5:16)! ♥ *Brian*

Join Us for Bible Classes!

Christianity is a taught religion (John 6:44-45). It is impossible for our faith to outgrow our knowledge of God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Come and grow spiritually with us!

Cradle Roll (behind tech booth)

Sundays: Rene (Bible basics)
Wednesdays: Jagie (Bible basics)

Elementary (Room 17)

Sundays: Kathy (EHT)
Wednesdays: Becky (EHT)

2-3 Year-Old (Room 18)

Sundays: Tiffany (EHT)
Wednesdays: Nicole (EHT)

Teenage (Room 19)

Sundays: Josh (EHT)
Wednesdays: Vince (Ezra/Nehemiah)

4-5 Year-Old (Room 7)

Sundays: Michelle (EHT)
Wednesdays: Marissa (EHT)

Adult (Auditorium)

Sundays: Vince (Acts 14-28)
Wednesday: Brian (Revelation)

First Principles Class (Fellowship Room, any aged adults)

Wednesdays: Rick

PRAYER LIST

Current Jeanelle Thrower had minor back surgery on Monday, Dawn Sutton was in an auto accident, Beverly Sunanan is not feeling well
Continual: Brenda Mask (blood pressure issues); Debbie Bush (struggles); Brian Smith (heart health); Antoine & Marcella Swain (health); Geny Johnson (health); Bill & Carlene Long (strength); Ron & Judy Ford (health); Bobby Simpson (health); Annett Phillip (health); Janie Wise (health); Charles Paulin (health); Jim Turner (health). Margaret Coone (health) Kathy Nester(health); David Anderson (hand surgery)

Shut-ins: Joyce Burbage, Carol Eason, Kenny & Reba French
Extended family and Friends: prayer requests are emailed each week.
 Please help us keep these lists updated by informing the office of known changes in status.

Responses: We had two who responded to the invitation this week and are asking for prayers. Vince Daugherty requests prayers so that he will have more of a sense of urgency when it comes to seeking lost souls. Marissa Estridge is asking for prayers as well to be what God wants her to be, to be what she should be to those who are her church family and in leadership roles at her place of employment, that she will be a good example. Let's keep them in our prayers!

Evangelism Seminar-March 23-24 @FSOP
Training the Saved to Teach the Lost
Rob Whitacre - Speaker
Classes are from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm- All are welcome!
Ladies class on Thursday at 9:00 am



Ladies Days in our Area:
 April 1 - Kissimmee church of Christ
 April 15- Eagle Lake church of Christ
 April 15- Beville Rd. church of Christ

These are great opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth!

Thank you Notes:
 Dear Family, Thank you for all the prayers, calls, texts and visits. It's truly a blessing to be surrounded by such a loving congregation! Love, Mike Van Allen
 Dear brothers and sisters of Christ, I want to thank you for all that everyone has done to help me through a difficult time after my daughter Gina passed away so suddenly. She flew down with my granddaughter Alissa and their flight was late arriving, so we had only one hour that evening, the next morning she passed away. It was unexpected. I am so grateful for all the cards, visits and meals during my recuperating from knee and hip surgery and passing of my daughter. My family and I will make a donation to the FSOP. My family also wants to thank you for all you do as a church family. Love your sister in Christ, Kathy Nester

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

March

Designated Elder - Brian Kenyon

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Announcements.....T. Anderson
 Song Leader/prayer.....Frank Hamby
 Devo..... Josh Potvin
 PrayerRick Kenyon

Sunday, March 26, 2023

10:30 A.M.

Rise Up and Build (Nehemiah 2)
 Vince Daugherty

6:00 P.M.

"Cultivating a Culture of Confession"
 (James 5:13-16) Rick Kenyon

Those to Serve

10:30 A.M.

Song/Prayer before class.....David Williams
 Song Leader (both services).....Terrence Dindy
 Announcements.....David Anderson
 Scripture reading/Prayer.....Paul Sweeney
 Lord'sTable (both).....Jarred Spivey
 Closing Prayer.....Jeff Stewart
 Open/Close bldg (both).....B.Sheumaker
 GreetersMccarters
 Attendance cards (both)Peyton/Landon
 Sound Booth (both).....Brian Williams

6:00 P.M.

P.M. Song LeaderTerrence Dindy
 Scripture reading/PrayerAndre Medley
 Closing PrayerRoberson Louissaint
 Greeters PM.....Olivia/Ingrid

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Announcements.....Rick Kenyon
 Song Leader/prayer.....Peyton Willcut
 Devo.....David Anderson
 PrayerJarred Spivey

Upcoming Events 2023

March

23-24- Evangelism Seminar at FSOP
 26----- Fellowship in Service
 30-----Area wide Sing, Orange St. C of C

April

1----Egg Hunt
 1----Ladies Day Kissimmee church of Christ
 2-6-- Gospel Meeting Central C of C, Clearwater
 7-9 --Lads to Leaders Convention
 11--- FSOP Ladies class w/Susan Stearsman

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Mar. 05.....\$9,697.00
 Mar. 12.....\$5,214.00
 Mar. 19.....\$5,486.00
Contribution Average.....\$7,146.00
Weekly budget \$7,410.00

Lessons from I Timothy

Family Relationships (I Timothy 5:1-2)

"Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity."

There is not an individual who cannot plug themselves into these verses. Go and do likewise.

VD

Polishing The Pulpit

Some have expressed interest in chipping-in with other SFA members to rent a cottage in the area and attend. If you are interested, please let the office know by [April 1](#).

Dear Church Family,

Words cannot express how much we appreciate the acts of love and kindness shown to us during Bob's sickness and passing. We thank you for the prayers, calls, visits, cards and beautiful flowers and food. We are grateful for our Christian family for being there for us in every way. May God bless each one of you!

*In Christian love,
Bea, Jeff, Bobby & Irene*

Fellowship in Service is this Sunday evening (March 26) following the evening service. Bring a snack to share and join us as we sign cards to encourage others and as we fellowship with one another! (Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are doing. 1 Thes. 5:11)

Be the Change

Be that change forsaking a life of sin
Allowing God to transform you from within

Be the change you want to see
Planting seeds of love and not animosity

Be the change by showing Christian love
A reflection of our Father up above

Be the change in someone's life
Pointing them to the way of eternal life

Be the change with the word of God as your guide
Encouraging others as you run the Christian race side by side.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Gospel Meeting

Eagle Lake Church of Christ
Speaker: Eddie Gilpin
April 16-19, 2023
Sun. 9:30, 10:30 and 1:30
Mon-Wed 7:00 pm

Gospel Meeting

Central Church of Christ
Clearwater, FL
Theme: Reigniting the Fire
Speaker: Allen Webster
(author and editor of House to House Publication)
April 2-6, 2023
Sun. Friends and Family Day

www.SouthFloridaAvenueChurchOfChrist.com
Email us: SFA.church@gmail.com

For sermons and podcasts, find us here.



South Florida Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST

1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28*



If you prefer to receive the bulletin via email, contact us.