

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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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.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

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

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

Characteristics of a Strong Church

Hiram Kemp

Which congregation in the New Testament would you consider the strongest? When you read the New Testament, there are several congregations that have problems. The church at Corinth had issues with idolatry, division, and immorality. In almost every chapter of First Corinthians Paul was writing to correct an issue with that church. In the Book of Galatians, Paul spent six chapters warning those brethren about the danger of trying to be justified by the Law of Moses and the condemnation that awaits those who turn away from Christ (Gal. 1:8-10; 5:4). The church at Jerusalem enjoyed the success of thousands of conversions as well as the presence of the apostles. This no doubt made that congregation healthy and strong (Acts 2:47). Then there is the church at Philippi who Paul thanked God every time he thought of them (Phil. 1:3-5). Also, the Thessalonians were praised because their reputation had spread everywhere, and everyone knew of their conversion from idolatry to Jesus (1 Thess. 1:8-10).

There is a congregation in the New Testament that we can learn from who does not have a letter addressed to them and is often overlooked. They are a great example of a strong church. The church at Antioch of Syria mentioned in the Book of Acts is a blueprint of a sound congregation. We would be wise to learn some lessons from them. It was not until after Paul and Barnabas had worked with the church in Antioch for a year that the name Christian was given to identify the disciples (Acts 11:26). The church at Antioch enjoyed a good reputation in the first century though many are unfamiliar with them today. Congregations that would be healthy and thrive today should study and consider the lessons from the unknown church at Antioch.

A Variety of Teachers and Servants

The church at Antioch was a great congregation because there were many people in the congregation exercising their gifts and using their talents for the Lord. We read of prophets and teachers such as: Agabus, Simeon, Lucius, Manean, Paul, and Barnabas (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1). While we are very familiar with Paul and Barnabas, these other teachers are not as well known, and that is the point. For a congregation to be strong there must be several individuals equipped and willing to teach and serve in various capacities. Paul used the example of the human body to show that we need every area of the body doing his or her part (1 Cor. 12:12-24). Strong congregations do not rely on only a minority of the people to do a majority of the work. Instead, there is constant training and preparation (*continued on page 2*)

taking place so there are always willing and able servants ready to serve (2 Tim. 2:2). Congregations who would resemble the strength and faithfulness of the church at Antioch should develop and maintain plenty of Bible class teachers, men who can deliver lessons and devotionals, and those who can serve in other areas.

Zealous in Evangelism

It is true that in Christianity we either propagate or die. Congregations that are only inward focused with little or no attention given to how to reach the lost around them will not survive long. The church at Antioch, though strong within, also was very concerned with the lost without. Luke described the Christians at Antioch as “helping many to believe and turning many to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). Again, it is said that in Antioch many people were added to the Lord, and after Paul and Barnabas had been there a year, many people were taught (Acts 11:24, 26). The Holy Spirit identified Paul and Barnabas as those called to a special missionary work (Acts 13:1-2). The church at Antioch did not think twice but immediately sent Paul and Barnabas to teach the gospel in other places who had not heard it (Acts 13:3).

Strong congregations are evangelistic congregations. While there is an aspect of evangelism that takes place on Sundays from the pulpit, strong congregations do not rely on the pulpit alone. Members of strong congregations are at their jobs or in their communities engaging friends and neighbors in religious discussions and inviting them to study the Bible (Acts 8:4). Much like Philip after he found Jesus, Christians should be those who encourage the lost to “come and see” (Jn. 1:45-46). Not only locally, a congregation that would be zealous in evangelism like Antioch should be involved as much as people in worldwide evangelism. The apostles were charged with taking the gospel with them as they went throughout the world, and we have the same charge (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). We may never travel around the entire world spreading the gospel message, but when we support faithful missionaries in their work, we are joint partners in their evangelistic efforts (Phil. 1:5; 4:15-17). Antioch would later hear a report of all that Paul and Barnabas accomplished on their evangelistic trip (Acts 14:26-28). Antioch is a great example in both local and global mission work. Congregations who do not want to die are evangelistic. Strong congregations have visitors that frequent their services, as well as missionaries that come and make reports of the good being accomplished abroad.

Engaged in Spiritual Disciplines

Before Paul and Barnabas were sent on their first missionary trip, we are told that the church at Antioch prayed and fasted together (Acts 13:3). Strong congregations engage in spiritual disciplines individually but also collectively as a congregation. If the church had a pressing need or was preparing to make a tough decision, it would not be a bad idea to fast and pray together as a congregation. Fasting is not as popular as prayer, but it is just as Scriptural. Jesus expected that his disciples would fast, and the early church did (Mt. 6:16-18; Acts 14:23). While fasting is not a magical activity that guarantees we will be granted our petitions, it is a good spiritual discipline to occasionally engage in as we show God that we are more concerned about His work than our food and that we will pray to him and refrain from eating for a time.

Praying as a congregation is a great practice as well. Prayer is one of the avenues through which we worship God together, but prayer should not be limited to the Sunday assembly (Acts 2:42). When congregations face hardships and tragedies, prayer should be the first response, seeing that God can accomplish far more than we can (1 Pet. 5:7). Strong congregations are found regularly praying with and for each other. The members of strong congregations like Antioch know what is going on in each others' lives and are praying for upcoming procedures, promotions, and pressing concerns for each other (1 Thess. 5:17, 25). It also would be a good idea to have read through the Bible as a church or to use the same Bible curriculum throughout the congregation for a time. More than helping the church to be organized, when members of the same congregation are reading and studying the same material, it fosters spiritual conversations and creates healthy dialogue about the most important things. Husbands and wives are reading and studying the same things as their children and in turn they can more easily have home devotionals around those familiar topics. Antioch was a strong church because they practiced the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting together.

(continued on page 4)

ENJOY SPRING BREAK & REMEMBER TO KEEP SERVING THE LORD!

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Dorothy Trice had surgery last Friday. Also remember in prayer Bill Long, Faith West, Ginny Hamby, Jim Turner, Brenda Mask, Wanda Bruno, Margaret Coone and Carol Eason.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Evelyn Wyatt and Sharon Edler.

Others: Parker Hodson (Vicky Rapley's son-in-law), Warren Lane (friend of the Kirkland's), Gerald Cox (relative of the Kirkland's), Lynn Stevens, Bob McAnally, Rea Rice, Doris Smith, Elizabeth Tubbs Dean and her husband, Nellie Anderson and Joyce Stearsman.

Upcoming Events

March 30th- April 1st: Lads to Leaders convention in Orlando. Please continue to encourage and keep our youth in your prayers.

Sunday, April 1st: Fellowship in Service after evening worship.

Sunday April 8th: Homecoming at the Orange St. church of Christ. David Stearsman will be speaking. See the slide or flyer for more details.

Saturday, April 7th: Ladies Brunch here at SFA at 9:00 am. The sign up sheet for the food is on the bulletin board. *Please note: all SFA ladies are asked to stay immediately following our brunch to begin planning for our October Ladies Day event.

Saturday, April 7th: Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Bingle's at 4:00 p.m.

Sunday April 8th: Elders/Deacons Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday April 17th: F.S.O.P. Ladies class at 7:00 p.m.

Congratulations

We are excited to announce that Antonio Valdes was baptized into Christ last Wednesday March 21st. Antonio is a student at Florida Southern College; let us please welcome him into our family.

Thank You

Dear brothers and sisters at South Florida Ave. church of Christ. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly - and for every kindness. We really enjoyed being with you all. We are grateful for this opportunity to be blessed by such a wonderful congregation. May God be with you all as you continue to serve Him. Blessings, Jody & Evelyn Apple

Updated Address and Phone Numbers

Willard & Margaret Norman 4458 Pebble Point Dr. Lakeland, FL 33803, phone #863-500-1075. Bernetta Green's phone # 863-337-4352

Recent New Members

We have just started placing a picture of the recent new members on the bulletin board. We will be doing this in the future to help us recognize them. It will be updated once a month.

Visitors

Kimberly Borders and Becky Borders, Anne Liddle, Pearline Joseph, Larry Laster, Ray & Leana Palmer, McKenna and Andrew, Mr. & Mrs. Darnell Kirkland and Stacey Wilson

Monthly Fellowship Teams

A-D John McShane

E-K Jimmy Sweeney

L-P Wayne Shearer

R-Z David Williams

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

April

Stacey Paulin..... **Table** Josh Estridge
Vince Daugherty **Assist** David Anderson

Sunday, April 1, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Tucker Sweeney
Prayer..... Ken Walker

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Jimmy Sweeney
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Bobby Sheumaker
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Tim Croson
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Dave Williams
Opening Prayer..... Kyle Bingle
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Jeff Bingle
Sound Booth..... Paul Sweeney
Greeters Longfellows
Att. Cards..... Willcut Boy's
Open & Close Building David Anderson

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Kenny French
Closing Prayer..... Bobby Sheumaker

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911

Sunday, April 8, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Jim Turner
Prayer David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Jimmy Sweeney
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... John McShane
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Paul Romine
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Dave Williams
Opening Prayer..... Steve Hunley
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Tim Croson
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin
Greeters Fifes
Att. Cards..... Paul/Colby
Open & Close Building David Anderson

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

Song Leader..... Steve Hunley
Opening Prayer..... Kyle Bingle
Closing Prayer..... Charles Paulin

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

March 04.....\$6,487.13
March 11.....\$6,227.23
March 18.....\$5,485.96
March 25.....\$5,487.15
Contribution Average.....\$5,780.63
2018 Weekly Budget..... \$4,887.98

Characteristics of A Strong Church (continued)

Conclusion

Many of the things mentioned about the church at Antioch are true of the church here at South Florida Avenue. We have many capable teachers and servants, as well as evangelistic fervor, and we are engaged in spiritual disciplines together. Yet, we need to be sure that we do not become satisfied or complacent, but instead abound more and more in these areas (1 Thess. 4:1, 10). It is not enough to have been a strong congregation once upon a time, but to take the necessary steps to remain a strong congregation through the test of time. Ω

Why Wait?

Saul of Tarsus was told, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). The Ethiopian eunuch was also taught the Scriptures, and when he came upon some water, he said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36). When we know the right thing to do, we should do it immediately, especially when it involves our eternal salvation. Why is it that sometimes we know the right thing to do, but we delay? Perhaps there are some reading this who know they must be baptized, but have not yet done so. Why wait? Perhaps there are some who have been baptized, yet have not gotten involved in the local work. Why wait? Let’s do it! ❤️ Brian



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .



We rejoice that Antonio was baptized on March 21, 2018. He first visited during our Gospel meeting with Jody Apple. Let’s welcome Antonio to the family of God!



Pray for our young people and their chaperones as they travel to Orlando this weekend! They have worked very hard!

55+
Evangelism

If you (or your friends and relatives) live in a “fifty-five plus” community, we would like to evangelize it, but we need your help. Please see John McShane or Steve Hunley for some great ideas.

Special thanks to all who participated in our inaugural “church-eat-church” (i.e., morning worship service, then fellowship meal, immediately followed by an afternoon worship service). We also thank “Team Sweeney” for smoothly setting-up and cleaning-up the fellowship room.

Think souls! Let’s Invite our friends and neighbors to church assemblies and/or to one-on-one Bible studies!



May 19 -Work day at camp
May 20 -Day of prayer for the camp’s building projects