

So, How Are We Doing?

On January 19, 2008, the Christian Higher Learning Foundation, representing colleges and universities affiliated with churches of Christ, presented the results of a study performed by Dr. Flavil Yeakley at Freed-Hardeman University concerning our young people and their spiritual growth. Here are some of the statistics he shared about our fellowship in general:

- Churches of Christ constitute the 12th largest religious group in America.
- Churches of Christ constitute the 6th fastest growing church in America.
- Churches of Christ rank 4th in the nation in the number of congregations.
- Churches of Christ rank 5th in the nation in counties with congregations.
- Churches of Christ rank 1st in the nation in distribution of congregations.
- Churches of Christ rank 1st in the nation in weekly attendance among its membership.

That's a far cry from the gloom and doom propaganda that some have been preaching. So much for the talk that we must embrace certain innovations if we want to grow and remain relevant!

Another interesting tidbit from Dr. Yeakley's research was that the greatest retention rate of young people following graduation from high school comes from congregations who are described as "middle of the road," whereas the worst retention rates of young people comes from congregations who are described as "much more liberal."

While we certainly have room for improvement, these statistics prove that we've done some things right. While we need to be warned and sometimes criticized, we also need to be encouraged, strengthened, and patted on the back. Take a child from the time he's old enough to understand words, and give him constant criticism. Tell him how he's no good, and tell him he's worthless, and that he had not and cannot achieve anything worthwhile. What impact do you think this would have on the self-image and productivity of that child?

Likewise, take a church, and for an extended period of time do nothing but criticize it. Tell it how it is no good and tell it how other "churches" are better than it. Tell it that it is irrelevant, legalistic, and graceless. Now what kind of impact do you think this would have on the self-image and productivity of that church? I suggest the same.

These statistics aren't given so that you will have something about which to brag, but rather are given to encourage you to "keep your hand to the plow" and help you to realize that you are making positive impact in the world.

- Mark Ray (from the *Hartville Herald*, Hartville church of Christ, Hartville, OH)

A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows. - St. Francis of Assisi

News & Notes

BAPTISMS: Melvin G. Reed, and his and Charlotte's daughter, Carrie L. Wright were baptized Friday. We rejoice with them and ask God's blessings on them as they live for the Lord. Melvin's address is in the directory; Carrie's address is: 133 First St., P.O. Box 49, Georgetown, PA 15043. Phone: (724) 573-1605.

CARE & SHARE BEARS: Each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. Join the ladies and help prepare the bears for children.

PANTRY: Tuna & noodles.

LECTURES:

Greater Kanawha	Aug. 5- 8	St. Albans, WV
Ohio Valley	Aug. 18-21	(Harmar Hill) Marietta, OH

ENCOURAGE: Fred Larrimore, Jr., Dan Williams.

REQUEST FOR PRAYERS: Melvin Reed, Fred Rayl, and Rose Lockwood (Fred Rayl's sister).

REMEMBER THESE WITH PHYSICAL CONCERNS: Melvin Reed, Margaret Board, Yvonne Price, Carl Miller, Blondenia Orr, Jenny Rhodes, Pauline Clutter, Ruby Eddy, Rob Martin, Dan Williams, Bette Gentry, Ella Beagle (at Vera Groves'), Bob & Scharlotte Cyphers (with their daughter, Joyce Vantilburg); Phyllis Nelson (*stroke*) - David's mother; Anna D. Snell (*stroke*) - Jeremy's grandmother; Crystal Baker (*cancer*) - Connie Cowdery's daughter. Others confined to their homes and in nursing homes are listed on the bulletin board.

THE PERFECT CHURCH

I think that I shall never see
 A church that's all it ought to be;
 A church whose members never stray
 Beyond the straight and narrow way.
 A church that has no empty pews
 Whose preacher never has the blues;
 A church whose deacons always "deak"
 And none is proud and all are meek.
 Where gossips never peddle lies
 Or make complaints or criticize;
 Where all are always sweet and kind
 And all to others' faults are blind.
 Such perfect churches there may be,
 But none of them are known to me.
 But still we'll work and pray and plan
 To make this one the best we can.

- Author Unknown -