

Prayer List of the Sick and Afflicted:

Judy Coley is back home after a stay in the hospital to treat her for fluid around her heart.

Iris Hash's son, Bobby Epeards, is under hospice care with heart issues.

Delores Hendrickson is still struggling with a bad cough but is doing better.

Charlie Henard's niece, Brittany Henard, is battling terminal cancer.

Karen Sproles is still dealing with pain in her knee.

Jean England, daughter of Karen Sproles, is still having stomach issues.

John Richardson is battling with bloating and stomach issues.

Please pray for the safety of the Goshorn family in Peru, in the midst of some current political unrest and protests in the country.

Please continue prayers for victims of the recent storms in the south.

Pray For Our Shut-Ins:

Gloria Hale, Karen Sproles, Iris Hash, John & Terry Richardson

Pray For The Mission Works We Are Supporting:

John Grubb (Mission work in Asia), Daniel Goshorn and family (Mission work in Peru). See latest mission reports on the bulletin board in the back of the auditorium.

Benevolent Opportunity:

We will continue to collect boxes/packages of potato mixes (au gratin, scalloped, mashed, etc.) and gravy (mixes and jars) in preparation for Thanksgiving to stock the MSD of Martinsville food pantry for needy families.

Men's Business Meeting:

The next men's business meeting will be Wednesday, December 4th at 5:00 PM.

Monthly Pitch-in Dinner:

Our next pitch-in dinner will be Sunday, December 8, following the AM services. Following the pitch-in, at 1:00 PM, we will have a service in song. Note that this was moved from the typical first Sunday of the month to December 8th due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Radio Program:

Please remember to tune in every Sunday morning at 8:00 AM to WCBK 102.3 FM to hear our radio program which is entitled: "Preparing For Eternity".

God's Plan For Our Salvation

Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).

Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).

Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).

Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).

Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).

Faithful Christian Living, after the above five steps (I Peter 2:11, 12; Rev. 2:10).

November 10, 2024

MORGAN STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST

**540 E. Morgan Street
Martinsville, IN 46151
(765) 342-6027**



Schedule of Services:

Sunday

Bible Study – 9:30 AM

Worship – 10:30 AM

Evening Service - 6:00

Wednesday

Bible Study – 6:00 PM

Thursday

Ladies' Bible Study – 11:00 AM (March through October)

Radio Program:

"Preparing For Eternity"

Sunday Mornings 8:00 AM, WCBK 102.3 FM

Website:

www.morganstreetchurchofchrist.org

Gospel Preacher – Bob Hawkins

IS THE LORD'S CHURCH DYING? #2

In the previous article (Oct/24) we pointed out that even though churches of Christ are no longer the fastest growing religious body in the United States, the indications are that worldwide we are growing rapidly. There are at least three times as many members of the Lord's church today outside the United States as there are within its borders. This means the United States has 25% of the members of the church while the other 75% are scattered among the rest of the nations and territories of the world. In this article we shall look at the question: **“Why are churches of Christ in the United States no longer growing and appear to be declining in numbers of congregations and also of members?”**

A major factor in the declining number of congregations in the United States is due to a change in demographics. For more than one hundred years there has been a movement away from small towns and farms to the larger cities. Many rural churches began meeting in the country schools that were commonly built about four miles apart so that no pupil would have to walk more than two miles to get to school. When schools were consolidated, many of these congregations continued to meet separately rather than merge. There is no longer a need for churches to be in walking distance. People generally think nothing of driving ten, twenty, or thirty miles to work. Many are also willing to drive five, ten, fifteen or twenty miles to worship in a larger church in the city because they feel the larger church has more to offer them and their children. As a result, the smaller rural churches are losing members, especially younger families. Many of these churches are simply closing their doors because they have outlived their usefulness.

Population shifts within a city also account for the decline of some churches. Once flourishing residential areas have become industrial areas. Once peaceful neighborhoods can change and gradually become high crime areas. Many workers in the city like to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life at the end of the day. Therefore, they move to the outer suburbs. Churches which do not follow the exodus of their members may lose those members. I know of a once flourishing church in a large Southern city. The area around it gradually changed and declined. Crime increased. Many members moved away, but the church remained in its original location. Eventually it closed its doors. A nearby church, which was planted by the previous church, saw the decline as members moved to outer suburbs. They wisely followed their members and today are a flourishing congregation doing a good work.

Another major reason for the decline in the number of congregations and

the number of members is the increasing secularization of America. Since the Second World War, Western nations, particularly those in Europe, have become very secular. In England, Islamic mosques, community centers, gyms, and even taverns are now meeting in what were once church facilities. Membership in churches in the nations of Europe are declining rapidly. In Germany more than 500 Roman Catholic churches have closed since the year 2000. A poll in France revealed that 50% of the people do not even believe in a Supreme Being. A 2015 study in the Netherlands revealed that 63% of the Dutch people believe religion does more harm than good. Since 2000, 20% of all churches in Canada have closed. Only 53% of Canadians now identify as “Christians.”

Sadly, the United States is following the example of these countries in Western Europe and our neighbor to the north. The 1950s saw a religious revival in America with a great majority identifying as Christians and record membership and attendance in nearly all the congregations of most denominations. However, by the mid-1960s the revival had run its course and secularization began a rapid advance. In addition to growing secularization, “spirituality” among the “unchurched” is on the rise. A growing number of people do not claim to be “Christian” or adhere to any particular religion, but say they are “spiritual” in some vague, nebulous sense. A poll in the U.S. in 2020 revealed that only 64% of the American people identified even loosely as “Christians,” but 30% identified as “nones.” “Nones” do not claim to be part of any category of religious faith. They seem to have little, if any, interest in any religion or belief in the supernatural.

Not only are churches of Christ feeling the onslaught of secularization resulting in declining membership, but almost all the denominations have experienced the same decline. Between 1976 and 2022 the Evangelical Lutheran Church lost 30% of its membership. The United Methodist Church lost 17% of its membership in the same period. The Presbyterian Church USA lost 40% of its members during this time. A survey made in 2019 revealed that the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. lost two million members between 2000 and 2017. Among Southern Baptists, 5,771 of their congregations reported in a recent year that they had no baptisms during that year. Only Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Pentecostals have had increases in membership between 2003 and 2018, but these increases have been slight in comparison with past growth. Tragically, churches of Christ have not escaped the ravages of secularization! Our next article will conclude our study, “Is the Lord's Church Dying?” We will note some additional reasons the church has lost members and congregations. - *Rod Rutherford*