

The Christian Courier

Published by the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship

“The Literary Voice of the National Lectureship”

VOL 4 Number 3

www.africanamericanchurchofchristministerslegacy.org

October 2015 Special Edition

“Houston, We Have A Problem!”

A Biblical Review of the So-Called “One Church One Body” Event

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There has been quite a bit of stirring lately in our brotherhood of African American churches of Christ. Within this meandering stream of liberalism, apostasy and legalism, a massive advertising and marketing campaign is underway to entice members of churches of Christ to attend an event that is scheduled to take place in Houston, Texas, July 14-17, 2016. This event has been billed as One Church One Body Family Conference and Retreat Presented by Churches of Christ, a “gala and epic event!” I shall hereafter refer to it as such by that denotation.

I have been asked along with other gospel

preachers to take a biblical look at it, as well as other digressions from the Apostles’ teaching and to make comments relative to its structure, intent, and design. Herein is my “first response and findings” based upon careful research of the “One Church One Body” movement in light of apostolic fiat. I have chosen the topic phrase for this article, “Houston, We Have A Problem” because the topic indicates the “results of my findings” after carefully considering the published and public data dispensed to the public by the said organization.

The Phrase:

The phrase or title sentence for this article is used as a cliché to indicate a major problem and a doctrinal drift from apostolic fiat. Historically, it harkens back to our seventh manned 1970

Such an “attempted” design is not new. We have seen and successfully met such attempts by brethren who sought to do good but in the wrong way. The Apostle Paul spoke to this principle and he admonishes us to be vigilant in what we do and how we do what we do!

American Apollo 13 Space Mission. The intent of this mission was to land on the moon; but the

lunar landing was aborted due to an explosion of one of its oxygen tanks, crippling the Service Module (SM) upon which the Command Module (CM) depended. Despite great hardship caused by limited power, loss of cabin heat, shortage of portable water, and the critical need to jerry-rig the carbon dioxide removal system, the crew returned safely to earth on April 17th (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). This opening statement will have more meaning as we develop the argument, “Houston, We Have A Problem!”

WHAT I AM SAYING: I AM saying, based on the written record, the One Church One Body Family Conference and Retreat as herein described, is NOT authorized to biblically exist for the purpose herein intended! By its own admission it is “another organization” seeking to do a work for which it has no biblical authority!

As the history of the “phrase” indicated, in spite of the life threatening situation that ensued with the aborted American Apollo Space Mission, the crew returned safely to earth! That is the first overriding intent of this first article; that we might return safely to Bible principles and without rancor to the foundational

principles of biblical and apostolic teaching! (Lev. 18:30; Deut. 4:2; I Cor. 11:1-4; Gal. 1:7-9; II Cor. 11:1-4; Rev. 22:18).

According to the organizers of this “gala and epic event,” the organization that controls, coordinates, directs, plans and selects the program participants for the event is NOT the local churches of Christ in Houston, Texas (more on that later in this article).

Such an “attempted” design is not new. We have seen and successfully met such attempts by brethren who sought to do good but in the wrong way. The Apostle Paul spoke to this principle and he admonishes us to be vigilant in what we do and how we do what we do!

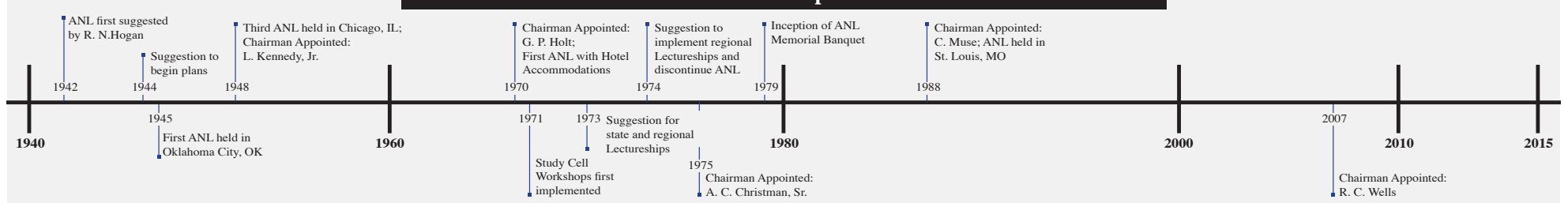
“And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just” (Rom. 3:8).

We have seen such drifting before. We have seen previous attempts to “secularize the sacred” and “sacralize the secular!” Such humanism was wrong then and the same such like is wrong now! The “new attempt” to resurrect this humanistic theological organizational relic of unscriptural origin differs only in genre and generation. There is amongst us (our brotherhood) a mindset that the wise old sage and prophet Isaiah aptly described in the Hebrew Tanakh (Ish. 30:9-10).

“That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:” (Ish. 30:9-10)

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Annual National Lectureship Historical Timeline



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“Houston We Have A Problem!” Continued...

The wise man Solomon adds his admonition to Israel that rightly depicts, in many ways, what we are faced with at this juncture in the African American brotherhood of churches of Christ. Hear him!

“There is a *generation* that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a *generation* that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a *generation*, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a *generation*, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men” (Prov. 30:11-14).

WHAT I AM SAYING: I AM saying, based on the written record of the One Church One Body “gala and epic event,” it is a schismatical and heretical formulation and production of an organization other than the Church to do “the work of the Church” and should be avoided!

I rise therefore to say, we in this brotherhood are at a tipping point. Clearly, this point, without question, forces warriors of the “one faith” to do several things which will be forthcoming, which may be seen in some quarters as “bossy” or “popery.” Nonetheless, the old ship of Zion is taking on water and the “breach” as in the days of Israel, must be repaired or closed!

“Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I [am]. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And [if] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness [be] as the noonday: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The *repairer of the breach*, The *restorer of paths* to dwell in” (Ish. 58:9-12).

To the degree that faithful men of God are willing to be “legalistic” enough to stand four-square without fear or favor on the grand old Book and against that which the grand old Book “does not teach,” yet “progressive” enough to not be bound by traditions and the sleight of men whose God is their belly (Phil. 3:18-19), it will be to that degree that the “leak” from the temple will become what Ezekiel described in his vision:

“And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine” (Eze. 47:12).

Now, to the Question at Hand:

Is the One Church One Body Family Conference and Retreat as advertised, constituted and structured a work of the Church of Christ as set forth in the New Testament? For those who do not wish to read further, my answer is NO!

Frankly and truthfully, I had paid no previous attention to this “gala and epic event.” Houston, Texas, since the early days of R. N. Hogan, has been a Mecca of sound preachers and sound churches. Therefore, I felt no urge or need to be concerned about what Houston was doing (not really my immediate business anyway). However, when I began to receive urgent phone calls from around the brotherhood from ministers and members who had serious questions about it, I became concerned. They reminded me of all the young and older preachers who were supporting it and appearing on the program of the event.

They began to hurl labels at them for their support of this event. Labels are part of the territory in this preaching business, so even that did not prime my theological pump. It was not until I received a few calls from Houston preachers who I know personally as men of “the Book” who posited grave concerns. During this period, the organizers of the One Church One Body event called me and very kindly and respectfully asked me if I would consider serving as an “advisor” for this “gala and epic event.” They assured me there was no need for my concern.

He informed me that his production company had worked with T. D. Jakes and his “MegaFest” and he was desirous of doing the same for the Church of Christ in the same way... For those who may not know, MegaFest is owned by T. D. Jakes. The Church of Christ on the other hand is owned by Jesus Christ our Lord.

When this was made known to me, I immediately requested from the organizers who called me to send me a mission statement of the One Church One Body movement. I was not at that point concerned with all the “good

stuff” that was program intended. Since the Houston planners and advisors were appealing to me to encourage members of the Heights and the brotherhood to attend this “gala and epic event” to receive this “teaching,” I needed crucial information. They also requested if after reading their mission statement, I found no problem(s) with the organization intent, design and purpose, would I serve as an advisor? I thanked them for the confidence in asking me to serve, but I would withhold any commitment until I had received their mission statement. True to their word, they forwarded to me the mission statement which clarified their purpose, intent and design. The mission statement was clear and concise. The mission statement began with the following:

“The organization responsible for the coordination of the One Church One Body Family Conference and Retreat is a Professional Production Company...”

Having read the opening salvo of the mission statement, I was more than sure, “Houston, we have a problem!” That this is true, I spoke personally with the head/owner of the “Production Company” who informed me that his company was indeed in charge of this “gala and epic event.” He informed me that his production company had worked with T. D. Jakes and his “MegaFest” and he was desirous of doing the same for the Church of Christ in the same way.

Be advised, I am NOT saying this event is wrong because T. D. Jakes does it. It is wrong because spiritually it is counter to New Testament teaching! For those who may not know, MegaFest is owned by T. D. Jakes. The Church of Christ on the other hand is owned by Jesus Christ our Lord (Acts 20:28). Now, for the sake of further clarity, I resort to the profundity of simplicity (John 10:24; 11:14; 16:25, 29; Heb. 11:14). I will distinguish between what I AM saying (contending) and what I am NOT saying!

I am NOT at this point and in this first article, perpetrating a tirade against well-intended preachers who did not or have not looked into the organizational structure of this “gala and epic event.” I am NOT in this article or in any future articles, instituting a personal attack on the Production Company who admits complete responsibility and control of this “gala and epic event.” I am NOT at this point attacking the wisdom of “advisors,” brethren who say they are gospel preachers and yet condone the hiring of Seventh Day Adventist and Jehovah’s Witness presenters to be a focal and integral part of the teaching program of this “gala and epic event” for the African American body of the churches of Christ. I am NOT at this point questioning the fundamental wisdom of gospel preachers who would dare to allow themselves to support, encourage, appear on and be used in such a manner and in such a structure.

WHAT I AM SAYING: I AM saying, based on the written record, the One Church One Body Family Conference and Retreat as herein described, is NOT authorized to biblically exist for the purpose herein intended! By its own admission it is “another organization” seeking to do a work for which it has no biblical

authority! No Bible believing New Testament Christian must allow themselves to be led astray by the “sleight of men” (Eph. 4:14; Matt 15:14).

WHAT I AM SAYING: I AM saying, based on the written record of the One Church One Body “gala and epic event,” it is a schismatical and heretical formulation and production of an organization other than the Church to do “the work of the Church” and should be avoided! Anything which corrupts and defiles the purpose of God perpetuates a darkness that rivals the creation darkness of Genesis chapter 1. It is the case because it is sacrilegious – the profanation of the body of Christ, i.e. it becomes a pollution of that which ought to be pure as He who dwells in it (I Cor. 3:16; II Cor. 6:16) is pure.

Brethren, let us not stand idly by and allow “FACEBOOK,” online advertisements, and “radical magazine articles” to control our thinking and congregational fellowship. The venerable and prolific Apostle Paul spoke lovingly, yet pointedly, about the matter of believer’s gullibility!

“Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by *any means*, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his *subtilty*, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive *another spirit*, which ye have not received, or *another gospel*, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (II Cor. 11:1-4, KJV).

Finally, what we are seeing and hearing across our brotherhood is nothing new. We have seen it before! We have met it before (see my article in the *Christian Echo*, Sept. – Oct., 1994). It is “old liberalism” in “new clothes!” “Old moralities” in “new robes!” “Old legalism” with “new advocates!” Hans Christian Anderson’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes* rightly describes the intent of all those who would dare challenge the “purpose” and “plan” of our God and of our Christ for His Church.

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

Brethren, as in the case of the “Apollo Space Mission,” the explosion on board crippled the service module upon which the command module depended. However, absent from panic, egotism, and self-aggrandizement, they landed the ship! We can do no less!

Because of Calvary!
W. F. Washington, Ph.D.
National Lectureship Executive
Committee Chairman

END NOTE:

Prior to the publishing of this article, it was brought to my attention that a large contingent of ministers in Houston, Texas, and the Houston area have publicly denounced this movement. I have a list of thirty-one (31) preachers, elders, and leaders sent to me by Evangelist Cecil Herndon, who serves as acting chair of the Houston fellowship of churches of Christ preachers, attesting to the validity of this fact. I also have the words of several of our gospel preachers who have, for whatever reason known only to them, recuse themselves from participation in this One Church One Body “gala and epic event.” I applaud these warriors of The Faith! (Jude 3)

“An Attempted Second National Lectureship Among African American Members of Churches of Christ”

A Disposition Given by Dr. R. C. Wells, Minister Emeritus of the Harlem Church of Christ and Advisory Committee Chairman of the Annual National Lectureship

EDITOR'S NOTE:

It has been brought to our attention that Mr. H. Clay Williams of Houston, Texas, along with a few other unidentified persons, recently began to announce the formation of a new Annual National Lectureship among African American Churches of Christ. Having received information of this unjustifiable proposition, Dr. R. C. Wells, Minister Emeritus of the Harlem Church of Christ and Advisory Committee Chairman of the current historical National Lectureship, attempted to contact this group in response to the matter at hand. The Christian Courier requests that everyone throughout the brotherhood read the following letters entitled “Stop, Cease, Desist, Let Us Take the High Road of Peace” by Dr. Wells and forwarded to H. Clay Williams in particular:

First Letter from Dr. Wells:

“**R**egrettably, unfortunately, appallingly, and tragically, a meager, miserable attempt was initiated to begin a second Annual National Lectureship among African American members of churches of Christ in Houston, Texas, by some fly, sinister Ministers of churches of Christ in a closed closet meeting, met with a closed agenda.

“These brethren were already totally aware than an existing Annual National Lectureship among African American members of churches of Christ with a long history spanning some seventy years already functions. Apparently, this group has become dissatisfied with the existing Lectureship and has decided to start their own. Such an effort displays an attitude of self-centeredness (my way or no way).

“As current Chairman of the Annual National Lectureship Advisory Committee among African American members of churches of Christ in the United States of America, none of them have spoken to me about any dissatisfaction with the Lectureship. Your Bible still says, “Moreover, if thy brother

shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matthew 18:15). It must be therefore assumed that this is a ‘power move’ on their part to seize the Lectureship’s name, to discredit the Lectureship’s existence, to overrule the Lectureship’s influence, to influence the Lectureship’s constituency, and to divide churches of Christ. Apparently, this was all a part of their initial agenda.

“As an independent outsider, it seems to me that unity is the road we should travel, not division; peace is the avenue we should pursue, not disharmony; and the first item on any agenda between brethren is that of discussion. We must sit at the table of discussion and be content to smoke the peace pipe of examination of any and all issues. We should band together for a better, brighter, and greater Lectureship.

“These brethren were already totally aware than an existing Annual National Lectureship among African American members of churches of Christ with a long history spanning some seventy years already functions.”

“Abandon the idea of a second Lectureship, cease to walk the road of division and travel the path of peace. Let’s get together and let’s talk. Let us walk the high road of peace rather than

the low road of division. Let us work together for harmony. Let us work together for peace. Let us work together for a greater, better, more productive and prosperous Lectureship.

“I propose that we all get together at an agreed place and time and sit down together and work out any problems which may currently exist between us. Agree upon a scriptural decision and implement it with everyone leaving the meeting in harmony. Let us be determined to try this approach and let us see if this works.

“It must be therefore assumed that this is a ‘power move’ on their part to seize the Lectureship’s name, to discredit the Lectureship’s existence, to overrule the Lectureship’s influence, to influence the Lectureship’s constituency, and to divide churches of Christ. Apparently, this was all a part of their initial agenda.”

“If this suggestion is not acceptable, what then is the path to unity? If any of their group does not call me, the other approach is that of “MARKING THEM.” Your Bible still says, “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which



Dr. R. C. Wells
National Lectureship
Advisory Committee
Chairman

you have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

“Personally, I would not like to see this avenue utilized as I prefer the first alternative; that of sitting at the peace table and working this situation out. However, time will dictate their choice; I pray it will be the right one. Please feel free to call me at any time. My cell phone number is (917) 602-4158. Please let us work it out, I await your call.”

R. C. Wells, Chairman
Churches of Christ Annual National
Lectureship

EDITOR'S NOTE CONTINUED:

Having failed to receive any communication from the members of this group, a second letter was forwarded to H. Clay Williams from Dr. Wells and dated September 7, 2015. It reads as follows:

Second Letter from Dr. Wells:

“**T**his is my second attempt to contact you through the medium of correspondence. Obviously, my first attempt was totally unsuccessful. It did however, clearly set forth the position that I as Chairman of the Annual National Lectureship of churches of Christ among African Americans in the United States of America, am taking regarding the commencement of a second Lectureship.

“In that communication, I offered you and the group you represent, the alternative of discussing the issues as brethren [We be

brethren] (Genesis 13:8) concerned with truth, concerned with unity, and concerned with the Church that was bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ who is the Son of the Living God. It is still my personal conviction that discussion is the best approach and ultimately the best solution. However, obviously your opinion is different.

“Your lack of concern for the unity of our brotherhood, the people to whom we minister and the fellowship of the Church, appear secondary to your ultimate agenda of dividing our brotherhood by starting a second Lectureship, when we tragically do not adequately and consistently support the one which currently exists.

“In my first correspondence, I listed my cell phone number asking that you call me. Since I have not heard from you, I assume you do not accept my suggestion of sitting down discussing the issues which you believe divide us. This leaves me with no

alternative but to “MARK” you (Romans 16:17) and those you represent.

“Therefore, this correspondence is designed to officially notify you that as of the above date, you and those who are currently working with you to start a second Lectureship amid churches of Christ are ‘MARKED’ and should be ‘AVOIDED.’

“Therefore, this correspondence is designed to officially notify you that as of the above date, you and those who are currently working with you to start

a second Lectureship amid churches of Christ are ‘MARKED’ and should be ‘AVOIDED’ (Romans 16:17). To display such a flagrant attitude, dismissing the grand opportunity to share your concerns with interested persons who are willing to hear you, demonstrate ruthless spiritual arrogance.

“I shall continue to pray for you, trusting you will have a change of heart, of will, and love for the cause, allowing the spirit of Christ to rule and the truth of God’s Word to guide you. Please Stop, Cease, Desist, and rethink this matter of a second Lectureship. Let’s discuss the matter; it is really the better and the best way.

Yours very truly,
R. C. Wells, Chairman
Churches of Christ Annual National
Lectureship

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

Christian Courier Special Editorial

A Chicago Response to the Fallacious Revivalist Magazine - July 2015 Digital Edition

David C. Penn, Ed.S., Ph.D.

In the first July 2015 digital edition of the *Revivalist Magazine*, Herman E. Wesley III, who is identified as CEO and publisher of this journal articulated the following radical assessment:

“Brothers Marshall Keeble and G.P. Bowser had a great, legendary reputation for mentoring and shaping young men for ministry, and it was commonplace for most ministers across the country to be placed in one of these two ‘camps.’ A great camaraderie existed between these preachers and church leaders, elevated by their cooperative efforts in establishing the National Lectureship and Southwestern Christian College. These loyalties, however, have been waning over the past two decades as power grabs by one or two notable ministers began alienating a great majority of preaching brethren. This has prompted an overall decline in fundraising and student support for our school, Southwestern, and attendance at our National Lectureship, which reached a record high in Atlanta in 2014 and a record low in Chicago in 2015.”

A photo image of what he declared to be “Opening Night of the 2015 National Lectureship in Chicago, Illinois,” was also included by the *Revivalist* publisher. Having read this article and caption with a great deal of interest, I telephoned the publisher on July 27, 2015, and shared with him the erroneous inference he gave pertinent to “...a record low [attendance] in Chicago in 2015” and the image that was used to supposedly justify his claim. It was mentioned by yours truly that first of all, he was not present at the Lectureship in Chicago; therefore, he has no accurate primary knowledge as to who was in attendance and who was not. Moreover, since he did not personally take the picture, he can only parrot what was conveyed by another source.

Secondly, although the National Lectureship attendance in Chicago was not expected to compare numerically speaking with Atlanta, Georgia, (2014) because of congregational and demographic factors, it was NOT a “record low” as he falsely postulated. To be quite candid, the publisher himself was “conspicuously absent” from the Lectureship in Atlanta, Georgia, due to reasons we have chosen not to elaborate upon at this point. If the truth is told, some brethren are simply not in a position of probity to assail or revile the unfeigned objectives of others.

Furthermore, the attendance total in Chicago actually exceeded several Lectureships which have occurred in times past. Namely, Cleveland, OH (1971), Milwaukee, WI (1979), and most recently, New York City, NY (2011), along with Louisville, KY (2012). A glaring interpretation of this “muckraking” and incendiary “yellow journalism” will plainly reveal that if the matter of “low attendance” was a credible concern of the

publisher, why did he not voice his sentiments following the Lectureships held in New York City or Louisville? Obviously there is a hidden agenda at work which has nothing to do with “low attendance!”

It was mentioned by yours truly that first of all, he was not present at the Lectureship in Chicago; therefore, he has no accurate primary knowledge as to who was in attendance and who was not. Moreover, since he did not personally take the picture, he can only parrot what was conveyed by another source.

Third, we have in our possession a photo image with approximately one-hundred preachers and church leaders in attendance at the National Lectureship in Chicago (not including their wives). This number surpasses the amount of preachers and church leaders shown in photo images we have from National Lectureships held in Cleveland, OH, and Louisville, KY.

After receiving several telephone calls in reference to this incident, I proceeded to contact the publisher once again on August 4, 2015, to express my displeasure. An apology was given saying that he would retract his fallacious assertion in a soon to be released electronic edition. The retraction was provided, but the disparaging remarks have already been made. In essence, one cannot unscramble scrambled eggs!

To be quite candid, the publisher himself was “conspicuously absent” from the Lectureship in Atlanta, Georgia, due to reasons we have chosen not to elaborate upon at this point. If the truth is told, some brethren are simply not in a position of probity to assail or revile the unfeigned objectives of others.

Fourth, the article states: “Over the past five years, questionable moves have occurred even on the National Lectureship Board, which has

created a certain level of impotence among many long-time members as others have been appointed to an executive level to provide certain protections and comfort for those at the helm. This was not an effort to enhance the lectureship, but to enhance perceived power and influence.”

The process of inductive reasoning clearly indicates this is where the “real issue” lies – those who have recently been appointed to the Lectureship Executive Committee. Nevertheless, the guidelines that were approved by the Advisory Committee, gives the Advisory Committee Chairman the ability to recommend brethren to the Executive Committee based upon the need for such. True enough, no individual is perfect, but these men should exemplify Christian virtues and values; this is nothing new or unprecedented.

Nevertheless, the guidelines that were approved by the Advisory Committee, gives the Advisory Committee Chairman the ability to appoint brethren to the Executive Committee based upon the need for such. True enough, no individual is perfect, but these men should exemplify Christian virtues and values; this is nothing new or unprecedented.

Fifth, the publisher emphatically enunciated: “These loyalties, however, have been waning over the past two decades as power grabs by one or two notable ministers began alienating a great majority of preaching brethren.” The question now becomes “Who are the ‘one or two notable ministers’ that he is speaking of?” The history of the African American Church of Christ reveals there have always been “selected preachers” in our fellowship who used their influence to help guide and stabilize the brotherhood; this is nothing new or unprecedented either. The article itself is prefaced by mentioning the likes of Marshall Keeble and G. P. Bowser.

When the National Lectureship among African American Churches of Christ began in 1945, men such as R. N. Hogan, J. S. Winston, Levi Kennedy, Jr., and G. E. Steward were subpoenaed by G. P. Bowser to direct this effort among “a great majority of preaching brethren.” In addition, there has “always been” an Executive Committee that made decisions regarding where the National Lectureship would be held (contingent upon their application) and who would host the event.



Dr. David C. Penn
National Lectureship
Executive Committee
Vice-Chairman

The process of inductive reasoning clearly indicates this is where the “real issue” lies – those who have recently been appointed to the Lectureship Executive Committee.

According to the late R. N. Hogan, “The [Executive] Committee left it up to Kennedy to make the arrangements and decide what congregation would host the Lectureship after they applied for it. Once he gave up this responsibility due to his physical condition, he recommended G. P. Holt to make the final arrangements hereafter.” This statement can be substantiated and verified from an oral interview given by R. N. Hogan that we have in our personal files.

The overt and covert problem we are presently experiencing is not “ministerial guidance” but “ministerial respect.” Generational diversity has occupied a seat at the table of our fellowship today, wherein many have become adamantly disrespectful to preachers who have for the lack of a better term “paid their dues.” Organizational leadership management suggests that four distinct generations currently exists in the workplace (and in the Church). These include: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Millennials).

During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, it was unheard of (not to mention tolerated) for a young preacher in the African American Church of Christ to challenge the leadership of Hogan, Winston, Kennedy, and Steward.

(continued on page 5)

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“Christian Courier Special Editorial” Continued...

In like manner, these men “did not” and “would not” challenge the leadership acumen of Bowser and Keeble. Unfortunately, this same type of “ministerial respect” is not found among many Generation X and Millennial preachers of today.

In addition, there has “always been” an Executive Committee that made decisions regarding where the National Lectureship would be held (contingent upon their application) and who would host the event.

Sixth, the publisher stated: “*Brothers Marshall Keeble and G.P. Bowser had a great, legendary reputation for mentoring and shaping young men for ministry...*” This is absolutely correct. Yet, the young men they “mentored and shaped for ministry” were willing to listen and follow the advice given by these legendary stalwarts. They recognized

that Bowser and Keeble forged a climate of truth in a wilderness of denominationalism and never openly criticized their organizational competence.

The history of the African American Church of Christ reveals there have always been “selected preachers” in our fellowship that used their influence to help guide and stabilize the brotherhood; this is nothing new or unprecedented either. The article itself is prefaced by mentioning the likes of Marshall Keeble and G. P. Bowser.

One can surmise contingent upon the vilifying and dissident commentary afforded by the *Revivalist* publisher, that his antipathy seemingly revolves around who was appointed to the Lectureship Executive Committee and who was not. Specifically speaking, his categorical inherent question according to this writer is why was he not among those who were selected?

The only mandate given to non-believers is to repent and obey the gospel! Jesus Christ our Lord never implied, insinuated, or intended for non-believers to guide, counsel, direct, and teach believers in matters of righteousness.

Conjointly, allow me to say a word to the *Revivalist* publisher and his digressive position of having those outside of the body of Christ admonish members of the Lord’s

Church simply because they are celebrities or experts in a given field. Frankly speaking, the African American Church of Christ is blessed to have a number of “*experts from a variety of fields that can impact families, spiritually, emotionally, and financially.*” These experts in the Church of Christ include judges, attorneys, physicians, marriage and family therapists, financial consultants, entertainers, estate planners, health nutritionists, professional athletes, educators, and every vocation one can imagine.

However, one thing the publisher is correct about is when he said: “*I was taught that our calling was to take the gospel to every creature.*” He is unconditionally right. “Our calling” as partakers of the divine inheritance is to “*take the gospel to every creature.*” The responsibility of “The Church” is to do the work of “The Church.” The only mandate given to non-believers is to repent and obey the gospel! Jesus Christ never implied, insinuated, or intended for non-believers to guide, counsel, direct, and teach believers in matters of righteousness. Why? Because this is without doubt... “*Our calling!*” DCP

African American Churches of Christ National Lectureship Founding Members “Serving the Brotherhood Since 1945”



G. P. Bowser
1874 – 1950



R. N. Hogan
1902 – 1997



J. S. Winston
1906 – 2001



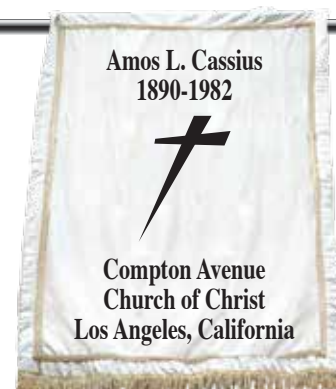
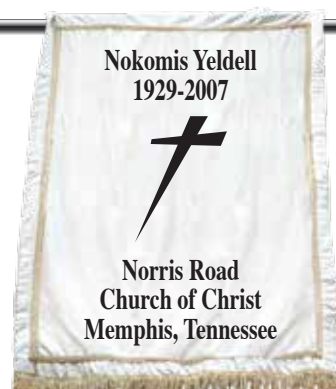
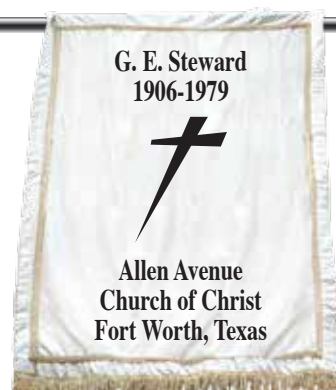
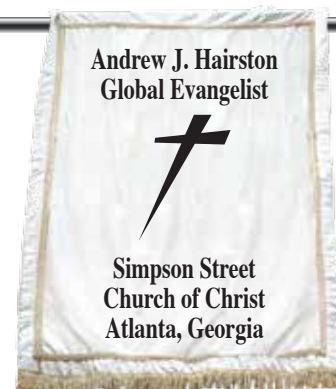
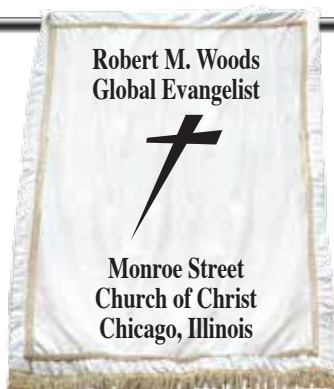
Levi Kennedy, Jr.
1899 – 1970



G. E. Steward
1906 – 1979

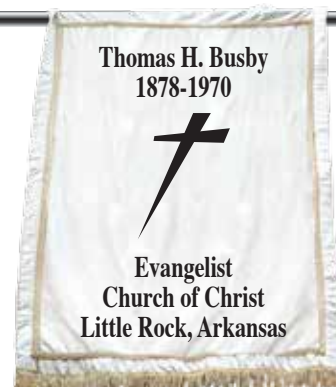
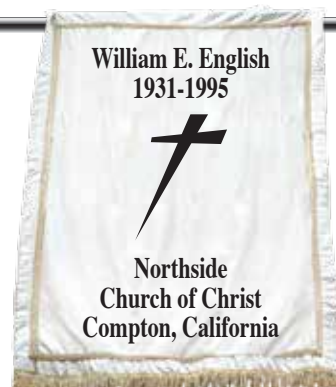
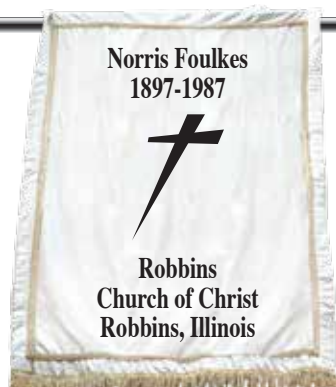
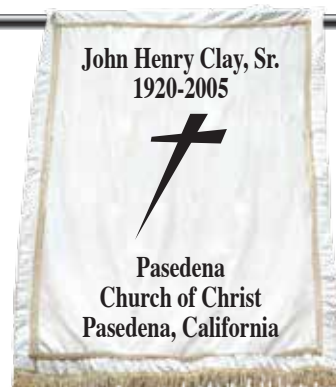
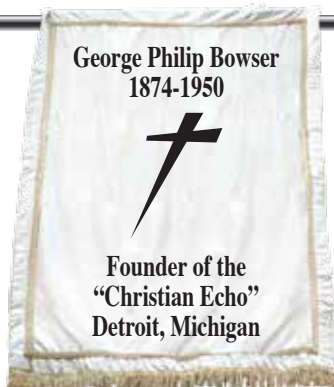
“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“And How Shall They Hear Without A Preacher?”



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“And How Shall They Hear Without A Preacher?”



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“Remembering the Voice from a Past Pioneer” The Late Dr. R. N. Hogan

Recently, several electronic messages and Editorials have been sent throughout the African American Church of Christ mentioning the names of pioneer preachers such as Dr. R. N. Hogan, Dr. J. S. Winston, Dr. Levi Kennedy, Jr., and G. E. Steward. The motif behind this communication is to suggest the “would-be” positions of the pioneers in relation to what is currently transpiring in our fellowship. It is rather interesting to note that several brethren who composed these reviews “never met” or had a personal conversation with any of the pioneers. Therefore, no genuine first-hand knowledge of whom they have referenced can be given and in some instances their names have been spelled incorrectly (i.e. “Stewart” rather than “Steward”).

The late Dr. Maya Angelou spoke much truth when she said “No man can know where he is going unless he knows exactly where he has been and exactly how he arrived at his present place.” As a result, understanding the history of the African American Church of Christ and the many sacrifices which have been made is paramount for comprehending where we are today in this millennium.

“It is rather interesting to note that several brethren who composed these reviews ‘never met’ or had a personal conversation with any of the pioneers.”

Having researched our exhaustive archives and reading primary source testimonies given by the pioneers mentioned above, this writer felt it necessary to share with others valuable information as it pertains to our “present place.” In addition, this writer knew and had an acquaintance with Hogan, Steward, Winston, and especially Kennedy. The following excerpt entitled “Current Issues Facing the Church” was authored by the late Dr. R. N. Hogan and taken from the April 1970

edition of the *Christian Echo*.

Hogan begins this article by saying, “One of the things that is outstandingly condemned in the Book of God is division. Yet, in the face of this fact there are those who claim to be servants of God that continue to make every contribution within their power to create and perpetuate division in the body of Christ. This thing is a sin. Those who engage in it are sinners. They claim to be Christians, servants of God, etc. Pshaw! Who do you think you are kidding? Those who engage in division are servants of the devil.

“Paul said, ‘For ye are carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?’ (I Cor. 3:3). Again, ‘Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (I Cor. 1:10). And again, ‘Now I beseech you brethren, *mark them* which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple’” (Rom. 16:17, 18).

“Yet, in the face of this fact there are those who claim to be servants of God that continue to make every contribution within their power to create and perpetuate division in the body of Christ. This thing is a sin.”

Hogan goes on to say, “With such stern warnings against division, I wonder how members of the Lord’s Church who claim to love the Lord, can have any part in divisions in His Church. Things are being advocated

in the Church that no dedicated servant of God can accept. Such things as the ‘New morality’ which is an excuse to legalize immorality. ‘Generation gap’ which is a shield for rebellion... We are builded together (Eph. 2:21, 22); we are knit together (Col. 2:2); we are perfectly joined together (I Cor. 1:10). These scriptures were not directed to just a certain part of the Church or certain groups in the Church to the exclusion of others. This applies to the whole Church, old and young, black and white, red and yellow, male and female, bond and free...”

Hogan goes on to say, “With such stern warnings against division, I wonder how members of the Lord’s Church who claim to love the Lord, can have any part in divisions in His Church. Things are being advocated in the Church that no dedicated servant of God can accept.”

Hogan further states, “The apostles [Peter and Paul] tell us how to respect one another. They tell the young how to treat the old and they also tell the old how to treat the young... They are together in Christ and are to work together in love (II Cor. 6:1). No such things was heard in the Church with reference to older servants of God as old foggies, antiques, etc. They related to one another with respect. We read of no young people starting division in order to take over that which the older brethren had worked, sacrificed and suffered to build up. It is getting to be a common thing for brethren to cause division in congregations to take over from older brethren and then get up and make confessions... These servants of the devil should be withdrawn from and exposed to the entire Brotherhood (emphasis mine). Paul did



Dr. R. N. Hogan
1902 – 1997

it (I Tim 1:20; II Tim. 4:14).

“Brethren, we must keep the world out of the Church. Just because we see all this rebellion on school campuses, take over of administrations, rebellion and take over by various union organizations, gives none the right to do these things in the Lord’s Church. The government of the Church is not a democratic form of government, which is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. We are in the Kingdom of God’s dear Son, which is a Monarchy type of government, which is an absolute sovereignty by a single Person and that Person is none other than Jesus Christ. God said ‘HEAR HIM’ (Matt. 17:5). He is our Saviour, but before He will be our Saviour, He must first be our LORD.”

Hogan, R. N. (1970). Current Issues Facing the Church. *The Christian Echo*, 67(4). Los Angeles: The Christian Echo Publishing Company.

African American Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship

In 1944, four men – R. N. Hogan, J. S. Winston, Levi Kennedy, Jr., and G. E. Steward [with the blessings of G. P. Bowser] met to discuss the need for an Annual National Lectureship. They agreed that it should be designed to encourage the extensive study of doctrine, to unify biblical teaching, and to encourage qualified congregational leadership.

In 1945, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, hosted the first Annual National Lectureship. The Lectureship continues, meeting in many of the larger cities across the United States (Hooper, 1993).

“We try each year to keep the purpose of the Lectureship before the people because we do not want to drift into anything that would in any way violate the doctrine, organization or government of the Church” (Steward, 1974).

“Our objective mainly is to unify our speech... It has made a tremendous contribution to [the] unity of our brethren on various subjects and it is still doing so. It is something we look forward to every year...” (Hogan, 1969).

R. N. Hogan: “Our first Lectureship was in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. What inspired it was that I was in Houston, Texas, and became aware that there were so many places in Houston that had not heard the gospel. I called all the leaders and preachers of the state together and devised a plan whereby we could reach the cities that had large Negro populations... Our objective mainly is to unify our speech... It has made a tremendous contribution to [the] unity of our brethren on various subjects and it is still doing so. It is

(continued on page 9)

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

something we look forward to every year...” (Hogan, 1969).

G. E. Steward: “The first of these Lectureships was held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in the spring of 1945 during my ministry with the East Seventh Street Church of Christ in that city... We try each year to keep the purpose of the Lectureship before the people because we do not want to drift into anything that would in any way violate the doctrine, organization or government of the

Church. It is the purpose of the Lectureship to strengthen and encourage the teaching program of the churches in the city and section where the Lectureship is being held... We simply teach God’s Word on various subjects, give Bible answers to Bible questions, and enjoy good fellowship among ourselves” (Steward, 1974).

Let it be clearly understood that the Annual National Lectureship is the oldest and most historical gathering held among African

American Churches of Christ. Not only does it provide an opportunity for brotherhood acquaintance and fellowship, but it also enables brethren to share like precious faith and their convictions concerning the Christ of our salvation.

Notwithstanding, in every epoch issues have surfaced in regard to the solvency of the National Lectureship. Such was the case confronting the pioneers of Hogan’s era and the same can be witnessed among the pioneers

of today. However, “this too shall pass.” There is but ONE Annual National Lectureship and with the blessings of God our heavenly Father, it shall remain!

Hooper, R. E. (1993). *A Distinct People: A History of the Churches of Christ in the 20th Century*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hogan, R. N. (1969, June 19). Chicago, Illinois, personal interview.

Steward, G. E. (1974). *History of the Lectureship. The Christian Echo*, 72(4). Los Angeles: The Christian Echo Publishing Company.

Churches of Christ 71st Annual National Lectureship Chicago, Illinois April 5-9, 2015



Mission Statement and Platform of the *Christian Courier*

The *Christian Courier* is a bi-annual publication established in the year 2012 by the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship. The overall and fundamental objective of the *Courier* is to share relevant information which pertains to the National Lectureship in particular and the African American Church of Christ in general.

Vision Statement and Intent of the *Christian Courier*

It is the visionary intent of the *Christian Courier* to publish articles that reflect sound biblical doctrine and those which emphasize the following frameworks:

- Theological foundations impacting New Testament doctrine and biblical interpretation.
- Historical perspectives pertaining to selected individuals and current issues in Christian ministry.
- Empirical and quantitative research that furthers our understanding of sound ministry practice.
- Acknowledgment of past and present ministerial contributions on behalf of the visible kingdom.
- Compassionate efforts performed by various individuals to help heal the hurts of humanity.

Let it be understood that the *Courier* does not promote any specific policies or ideologies that conflict with the Word of God. The Bible is our only standard of measurement in matters relating to religious faith and practice. Therefore, all articles submitted to the *Christian Courier* for publication should be thought-provoking, trustworthy, insightful and engaging. The editorial staff reserves the right to refuse any articles for publication in the *Christian Courier* that does not meet these standards set forth.

Christian Courier Contributing Staff Writers:

W. F. Washington, Ph.D. | Dr. R. C. Wells | David C. Penn, Ed.S., Ph.D. | Dr. Eugene Lawton
Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr. | Samuel Pounds | Dr. Harvey M. Jackson | DonBurnell Holly
Willie L. Rupert, Jr. | Conley Gibbs, Jr. | Dr. Steven N. Thompson, Sr. | Dr. Luis R. Lugo [Next Edition]

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“What’s Wrong With the Church of Christ?”

Samuell Pounds

Several provocateurs and dissidents within the Lord’s Church today are advocating removing the name “Church of Christ” from their places of worship. In an attempt to justify why they are engaged in this practice, it is interesting to note that they provide neither biblical authority nor proof for the change. So the question is raised and then becomes “What’s wrong with the Church of Christ?”

In studying the Church, let us consider what designations are given by the Bible. First of all, Jesus said: “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). When Jesus promised to build the Church, He referred to it as “my Church.”

This statement itself shows ownership. The Church *belongs* to Christ; it is His and His *only*. In Acts 8:1, we find that persecution arose against “the Church.” In this Scripture we have the expression used most frequently regarding this divine institution. It is merely referred to as “the Church” because at this time there was just one!

Today, man has initiated so many different religions that if someone asks you about your religious affiliation and you said that you are a member of “the Church” they would think that you are being evasive. According to I Corinthians 1:2, the apostle Paul says: “Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth.” In this text Paul was addressing a group of Christians who made up the congregation in Corinth and designated them as the “Church of God.”

Currently, there are some among us who seem to think the “Church of Christ” has such a stigma that it needs to be replaced... Yet, Paul was neither ashamed nor embarrassed to say “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16).

Let it be understood without fear of successful contradiction that the “Church of God” is the “Church of Christ.” In Acts 20:28, Paul admonishes the Ephesian elders to “...feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” Therefore, the God with the blood is the God who owns the Church. In John 4:24, Jesus affirms that “God is a Spirit...” and we know that “...a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). So again, the Church *belongs* to

the God who has blood and flesh was needed to fulfill His mission.

In Leviticus 17:11, it is shared “For the life of the flesh is in the blood...” Jesus is the only Person in the Godhead that possessed flesh (John 1:14) and He was called God by the prophets, by the apostles, and by His Father. “But unto the Son He saith, Thy Throne, O God, is forever and ever...” (Hebrews 1:8). One cannot deny that Jesus is God and the Church *belongs* to Him!

The Church is described in many ways throughout the New Testament. For example, it is called the “body of Christ” (Colossians 1:18); “the general assembly” (Hebrews 12:23); “Church of the first born” (Hebrews 12:23); “churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14:33); “the house of God” (I Timothy 3:15); “the Church of the living God” (I Timothy 3:15); “the kingdom of God” (Colossians 4:11); “the kingdom of His dear Son” (Colossians 1:13); “the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Ephesians 5:5); and the “family of God” or “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). However, we clearly see that when something is claimed within Scripture it is named!

Several provocateurs and dissidents within the Lord’s Church today are advocating removing the name “Church of Christ” from their places of worship. In an attempt to justify why they are engaged in this practice, it is interesting to note that they provide neither biblical authority nor proof for the change. So the question is raised and then becomes “What’s wrong with the Church of Christ?”

Jesus said in Matthew 26:26, “this is my body” and it was called “the body of Christ” (Romans 7:4). Jesus also said in Matthew 26:28, “For this is my blood...” and it was called “the blood of Christ” (Hebrews 9:14). In John 18:36, “Jesus answered, My kingdom...” He claimed it and it was called “the kingdom of Christ” (Ephesians 5:5). Therefore, when Jesus claimed the Church as “my Church” in Matthew 16:18, what else can we call it but the “Church of Christ”?

Currently, there are some among us who seem to think the “Church of Christ” has such a stigma that it needs to be replaced. Signs that once read, “The Church of Christ meets here” have now been changed to say, “Christians meet here.” Several congregations that were recognized as “The Church of Christ” for many years have dropped the designation “of Christ.” Yet, Paul was neither ashamed nor embarrassed to say “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). Why would we as the Lord’s people not want to be associated with Christ?

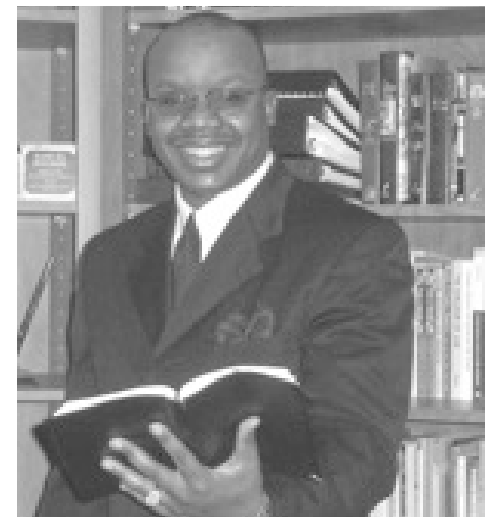
The Church *belongs* to Christ. He built it (Matthew 16:18); He purchased it (Acts 20:28); He is married to it (Romans 7:4); and He is the Head over it (Colossians 1:13). Why not just call the Church what it is – the “Church of Christ?”

The Church belongs to Christ. He built it (Matthew 16:18); He purchased it (Acts 20:28); He is married to it (Romans 7:4); and He is the Head over it (Colossians 1:13). Why not just call the Church what it is – the “Church of Christ?”

The Community Church Movement is deceptive. I do not believe the name “Church of Christ” is “an insurmountable barrier” as stated by Max Lucado who preaches for the Oak Hill Church (formerly Oak Hills Church of Christ) in San Antonio, Texas. He and a few others have dropped or de-emphasized the name “Church of Christ” in order to theoretically reach more people. Research indicates that people will not attend your congregation primarily because of its name. Perhaps some will but most will not. For the most part, people will attend because you get to know them, build genuine relationships with them and invite them to worship with you.

People will become Christians when you share with them the good news (Gospel) about Jesus. Studies also show that most people are not looking for a non-denominational church. It is not until they have been taught that they learn the importance of restoring non-denominational Christianity that is evidenced in the New Testament.

I do not believe that people are staying away because of the name “Church of Christ.” Some may be staying away because of what they think the name “Church of Christ” represents. They may object to our teaching about the necessity of baptism, weekly observance of the



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Lord’s Supper, singing without instrumental music, male preachers, elders and deacons, or something else. As a result, changing the name without changing these doctrinal practices will not attract those who are already prejudiced against us.

Sampling procedures taken from *Churches and Church Membership* in the United States, points out that approximately one-third of the people in America are active members of some religious organization. Most are uninformed about the “Church of Christ” and our core beliefs. If they know anything about us at all, they tend to see us as a conservative, fundamentalist Protestant denomination. A few may know that we do not use instrumental music and some may have heard that the “Church of Christ” believes they are the only ones going to heaven.

On the other hand, probably less than 10 percent of Americans who are informed about us have negative attitudes towards us. Their attitudes tend to be neutral and they are more likely to be converted, but not just because we change the name from the “Church of Christ” to another descriptive adjective! In summation, there is nothing wrong or inappropriate with the name “Church of Christ.” Congregations who continue in the doctrine and practices of the early Church should continue to wear this name.

Churches and Church Membership in the United States (1990). Lenexa, KS: The Association of Religion Data Archives.

Samuell Pounds serves as Senior Minister of the Hilltop Church of Christ in Winter Haven, Florida. He is a graduate of Bethune-Cookman University, Florida A&M University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He is also a member of the Churches of Christ National Lectureship Advisory Committee

The 40th Annual Ministers’ Institute Conference (MIC) will convene January 16-21, 2016, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The selected theme for this event is “The Case for the Bible.”

For more information go to www.ministersinstituteconference.com

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

“The Churches of Christ Salute You”

Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr.

The apostle Paul referred to several churches of the first century as churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). He acknowledged the Roman Church as faithful by virtue of the fact they are saluted in this passage.

These words evidence a brotherhood of unity and cooperation that should be characteristic of the Church in every age. The New Testament Church should always work to accomplish the mission of Christ in an atmosphere of unity, harmony, cooperation, and love.

Paul knew where the churches of Christ were located in his day. He was instrumental in the ongoing work and the establishment of many congregations throughout the provinces mentioned in the book of Acts. With exception to the focused work in Jerusalem, Samaria, and Cenchrea (Acts 2, 8, 10), Paul labored in virtually every region and city where Luke documents the inception of the Church.

The Christians in each of these congregations were undoubtedly in Paul's mind when he addressed the Roman believers saying “the churches of Christ salute you.”

We are familiar to some extent with many of the first century congregations ourselves. Most of Paul's first journey was in Galatia, in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13–14). This is the province we read of when we recognize the offering: “As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (I Corinthians 16:1). His second journey covered the Macedonian congregations such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16–17) and the Achaean churches in Athens and Corinth (Acts 17–18). His final journey was in the province of Asia (Acts 19–20), where he spent approximately three years in the city of Ephesus.

For example, there is a current trend among some of our brethren who seek to have favor with society at large. The Scripture they have used to justify this desire stems from Acts 2:47 where it says: “The church had favor with all the people.” But the question becomes “Why did the Church have favor?”

We know that the congregations in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaean worked together regarding the offering for the saints in Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1, 2; Romans 15:25, 26). This indicates that at least eight to nine churches labored together in unity across several provinces and cities

on a single project. It is amazing today that often we cannot find three churches to work harmoniously in the same city!

Unfortunately, some brethren today are determined that we do not see ourselves as a brotherhood of churches and faithful persons “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). We need to learn to “cease being better at being divisive” and focus our fight on maintaining unity. The truth of the matter is that it takes God's Spirit to lead us into proper relationships with one another. Churches of Christ must recognize the work of the Spirit in cooperation with the work of Christ in us (Romans 8:11).

Jesus Christ is the One who promised to build His Church (Matthew 16:18) and what He has established we should not disparage, deplore, nor denigrate. Jesus Christ is the undisputed Head of the Church and as long as He is Head, the Church is in safe and undefeatable hands (Matthew 16:19). Jesus Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for it so that He might present to Himself a glorious Church without spot and wrinkle (Ephesians 5:25-27). As a result, we have no right to engender controversy that fosters divisiveness among God's elect.

When Christ promised to build His Church, He gave us insight into how the faithful should relate to one another. We are called into union, communion, fellowship, and partnership with one another (I Corinthians 12:12-27). Those who work within the will and purpose of God must seek to sustain and maintain both the purpose and mission of the Church. There is no greater mission for any institution in the world other than seeking and saving the lost (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 19:10). There is no greater purpose for any institution in the world other than glorifying the God of our salvation.

Unfortunately, some brethren today are determined that we do not see ourselves as a brotherhood of churches and faithful persons “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

The Church of Christ from a universal and local perspective should be proud of its mission and purpose. Those who hold membership in the twice born community of faith should celebrate their association and fellowship with Christ and with one another. We must never forget that our significance does not come from the world, but from the Lord Jesus Himself and we must love the praises of God more than the praises of men.

However, this truth apparently has disturbed some members of the Church of Christ who are not comfortable with why the visible kingdom exists and why we are important in the world.

For example, there is a current trend among some of our brethren who seek to have favor with society at large. The Scripture they have used to justify this desire stems from Acts 2:47 where it says: “The church had favor with all the people.” But the question becomes “Why did the Church have favor?” Was it because they provided daily bread, clothing, shelter, counseling, and even community policing like some insist we do? This would hardly be the case. When the Church provided for others, those “others” were usually brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 2:45; 4:32-35; James 2:15-17; I John 3:17).

Churches of Christ do not become significant when we attempt to conduct our worship like others and praise like others. Churches of Christ have value, worth, and significance through the presence of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Even Matthew 25 cannot be called upon to justify churches of Christ gaining favor by community social programs. “These, the least of my little ones...” are to be understood in the context of the same “these” associated with “brethren” in Matthew 25:40. Consequently, it is possible to gain favor in how you treat those within your own fellowship. The historical record of the New Testament reveals that Churches of Christ were more often out of favor than they were in favor.

The desire for “favored son” status in the world must be given some credit for the tendency of many to disassociate themselves from the great heritage of faithful, God-fearing, Bible preaching, evangelistic, mission minded, Church building pioneers and preachers who worked to create unity among Churches of Christ. These men labored in writing, established schools, provided forums, and structured an agenda that was mindful of the brotherhood.

They were first and foremost concerned with building the brotherhood rather than trying to gain approval of their local neighborhoods. They were attractive to the world because they understood what their identity was about – faith in the will, plan, and purposes of God to win the world to Himself.

What gives the Church of Christ its



Minister Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr.
Carver Road Church of Christ
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

meaning, purpose, and significance? Are we just another religious denomination? Is there anything unique or distinctive about us? Let us remember that the Church is where the Spirit of God abides. We are a habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22). We are called into fellowship with one another acknowledging the work of God in us individually and collectively. Although God provides for the sinner and the saint, the just and the unjust, let us not forget that we are His sons and daughters with the right to call Him “Abba” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

Churches of Christ do not become significant when we attempt to conduct our worship like others and praise like others. Churches of Christ have value, worth, and significance through the presence of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We find favor with God only when our efforts are in concert with what God intends for the Church to be; a witness to His sovereignty and redemption in Christ.

Paul should be able to say to every New Testament Church in our modern-day era, “the churches of Christ salute you.” His affirmation should not provoke bitterness, suspicion, confusion, and disharmony. The faithful should know that they are saved and that they are not among those who cause schism and strife contrary to the doctrine (Romans 16:17).

Pray God that we continue to find ways that will encourage our designation as “Churches of Christ.” Pray God for a willingness to preach truth, live holy and godly lives, build up one another, and work together to win the world as Churches of Christ who salute one another. Pray God that as we live in our communities, we ask Him to give Churches of Christ the wisdom to know how to be His people and thereby accomplish His will.

Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr., serves as Senior Minister of the Carver Road Church of Christ in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He is a graduate of Southwestern Christian College, David Lipscomb University, Harding Graduate School of Religion, and Cleveland State University. He is also a member of the Churches of Christ National Lectureship Executive Committee.

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

Churches of Christ 72nd Annual National Lectureship

Memphis, Tennessee – “The Bluff City”

March 26 – 31, 2016

Theme: *“Preparation for the Next Generation”*
(Old and New – Tried and True)

Location:

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