

IS THIS CHURCH GROWING?

It is exciting to be a part of a congregation that is growing in the work of the Lord! Rats jump sinking ships, but everyone wants to be a part of a success story.

It is important that we understand how to measure the growth of a congregation as we assess how we are progressing in our labors for the Master. Many times one will judge growth by the number of people who are attending services. While it is encouraging to have a growing number meeting to study and worship, a headcount is not the true assessment of church growth. The Scriptures are replete with thoughts regarding numbers, one of the most familiar being Jesus' words with regard to the broad and narrow paths (Mat. 7:13-14). The attendance may not reflect how many people are, or are not, living as a child of God on the other days of the week.

Some might suggest that growth can be evaluated in terms of the number of projects which the church is promoting, or the number of fulltime evangelists employed by the congregation. While the body needs to be active, it can be the case that all projects and works of the church are being supported by the same few members and not the body as a whole, or perhaps an increase in preachers will mean that they can manage to do the work for all members.

A glance at the weekly contribution might seemingly indicate that the congregation is growing because the Sunday collections are up. While the members should cheerfully and generously give to help the church abound to every good work (2 Cor. 9:6-8; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), it can be the case that the dollar figures are high because a few members give liberally, or else the membership does not mind paying someone else to do the work of the church.

We should evaluate church growth according to the entirety of New Testament teachings on maturity. Peter wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). In a similar vein, Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian congregation, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). *Growing* should incorporate the idea of *maturing*, and the mature congregation will be feasting **regularly** on the Word of God. The mature Christian will know and understand God's teachings and not be tossed about by different spiritual views (Eph. 4:15-16). The members are then prepared to live the life they profess (1 Tim. 6:11-12). As a result of increasing in knowledge of God's will, the growing congregation **will** have increased attendance and contribution, but also increased participation in the activities of the church. The mature Christian should not say, "What do I have to do now?" but "What can I do to help?" Soon, the work of the body is being done by **all** members, not just the same few repeatedly.

Also, the growing congregation sees its members present to support the body and worship God at all service times. How sad for a visitor to come and see that the members do not attend! Consistency is a part of maturity and growth. The number of visitors, those whom we can teach and convert, will also increase because growing members invite others to be a part of God's plan.

Growth involves more than just numbers, it involves a conscious decision on the part of **every** member to mature in knowledge and help accomplish the duties assigned the church by God. **Do you want this church to grow?**

Rick Brumback *from Beacon*

New Year Thanks

As we leave behind the Old Year and look forward to the New Year together, it gives us an occasion to express our heartfelt thanks for the blessings of our Heavenly Father and for the abundant goodness we have enjoyed together with those of like precious faith.

We are especially grateful for the good brethren here at Olathe and for the opportunity you have given us to labor together with you and other good works during the past year. We are grateful for your splendid attitude of unity and cooperation. We love you all and look forward to our labors together during this New Year as we continue to grow spiritually, reach out locally and support the work of the Lord through out the world. We firmly believe that with the Lord's help we are able to accomplish the work set before us.

We are grateful to our faithful brethren and fellow laborers in our great brotherhood and we wish to express our thanks for the opportunities of fellowship with you and to be a part in the work of preaching the Gospel and building up the church together.

We are grateful for the opportunity we enjoy to serve in the Online Academy of Biblical Studies and work with some of the finest preachers and teachers in our brotherhood. We are grateful for all who labor with us and support this good work: The elders at Phillips Street, who oversee OABS; Brother Tom L. Bright, Sr., our Director; and all of our Instructors and Students who labor together in this great work to further the Cause of Christ.

Finally, we are grateful to those who receive our bulletin, for your many kind remarks and contributions through out the year. We wish all of you the very best in this New Year!

The Thrashers — Ted, Julia, Trent and Leah

ILL

Sunday: Tom Tucker (AM). Ledgia Campbell, Julia's mother, had surgery for cancer on December 27 at Mercy Memorial Medical Center in Ardmore, OK and is in Room 336. Kathleen Camp's sister-in-law and Bo Marcum's sister are battling cancer. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Janice Carter, Allen Scott, Kim Clark, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

AT HOME

Bob Adams is at the Del Mar Gardens, Room 229. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Julia Thrasher is in Ardmore, OK assisting her mother in the hospital. The Simmon's are scheduled to return early this week from their visit in North Carolina. Janice Carter and children, Tammi Marcum and children, and Linda Thomas were in Louisiana visiting the Franklins last week. Several were away visiting with relatives last Sunday: Kathleen Camp was with her son, Myron Nebergall and the Nelson family were in Newton, KS, the Scott's were in Coffeerville, KS, and the Thrasher's were in Aurora, MO. Jeremy Keifer was away last week. The Parish family was away last week.

POT LUCK DINNER

Our monthly Pot Luck Dinner will be held next Sunday, January 8, 2006 following our AM worship. Please plan to come and enjoy the good food and company!

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 15, 2006 following our AM worship. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 45; Sunday PM, 41; Wednesday PM, 39.

Those To Serve

January 1, 2006

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Adams

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Joel Nelson
SONG LEADER..... George Thomas
OPENING PRAYER Charles Tullis
PRESIDE..... John Carter
ASSIST..... John James
ASSIST..... Joe Brewer
CLOSING PRAYER..... Gary Cole

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER John Dodson
CLOSING PRAYER..... Ken Greer
LORD'S SUPPER..... John Carter

WEDNESDAY 4th

SONG LEADER..... Jeff Nemechek
INVITATION Joel Nelson

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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