

The Pine Torch



Volume 14 Issue 5
September 2011



Please pray each week for one of our Neches River Association Pastors/Churches. Following is the list for September.

St Luke	Pastor	Larry Mouton	Aug 28-Sept 3
San Pedro	Pastor	Tommy Hutto	Sept 4 - Sept 10
New Scrub Creek	Pastor	Dudley Austin	Sept 11 - Sept 17
Shady Grove	Pastor	Terry Gibson	Sept 18 - Sept 24
Shady Grove 1st	Pastor	Dr. Charles Lowrey	Sept 25 - Oct 1

DIRECTORS THOUGHTS

TOGETHER WE CAN...

It hardly seems possible but August is gone and school has started. People are settling back into the "routine of life." I have been guilty of and have heard other pastor's say, "I'll be glad when we can get back to our routine." As I have thought about this, my prayer has become, "Lord, don't let us ever get settled into the routine of life." Why am I praying this way? Because "the routine of life" leads to complacency and we all need to get on the cutting edge of ministry. So often we are guilty of settling for the good when God wants us to move on to becoming great!

I hope that as this new school year begins that you will become intentional on not settling in for the routine of life and becoming complacent in your worship and your service. My prayer is that you will look at this time as a time of great opportunity to impact your ministry area with the gospel. We are in the life-change business! Let's be busy as Jesus was, "about the Father's business."

Let me remind you that this year's NRBA Annual meeting is just around the corner. It will be the last Tuesday of September and will be held at Westside Baptist Church in Crockett, Texas. The program will start at 2:30pm. This will be a time of awesome reports, good music, great preaching, fine food, and wonderful fellowship with other churches in our association. I hope you will make every effort to come. This meeting is for pastors, staff, and ALL church members!

Finally, this is the 5th of our articles on Church Revitalization: **Revitalizing churches must approach outreach, new member assimilation, and discipleship as a single seamless process.** A key question is, "How does our church move people from being an uninterested lost person to becoming a born-again, growing, and multiplying disciple?" Unfortunately, very few churches can answer that question with clarity and certainty. Most churches have some broken and weak links in their Outreach-Assimilation-Discipleship chain.

Gaps at various points in the "O-A-D" process, however, can be devastating to a church. For example, a church can have great programs and glorious worship services but not see any numerical growth if people aren't engaging lost and un-churched folks. (We will have much more to say about effective outreach and evangelism in next month's article.) Widespread apathy and spiritual immaturity among the members often betrays a weakness in the church's "D."

If a church does not give attention to assimilating new members, it may have guests almost every week, but it may not see many people join the church or stick with the church more than a few weeks after becoming a member. Gary McIntosh has written that a high-growth church will retain one out of every three or four first-time guests. A moderately growing evangelical church retains one out of every six guests. A declining church, however, will retain only one out of every twenty guests. So, if, primarily due to a lack of outreach, a smaller church only gets a handful of guests each year and, primarily due to weak assimilation, it retains only one of twenty of these guests, it may take **YEARS** for it to hang on to a single new member or family. Ouch!

Most declining churches mistakenly blame those who don't join or stick around after they join for these problems. They say things like, "If those people had been more committed or spiritually-minded they would have stayed." Many times, however, I have personally observed people who dropped out or drifted away from one church become highly active members in another church that was just a little more intentional in moving people along in their spiritual journey.

There are many biblically valid ways churches can move people from spiritual lostness to maturity, but the process must work and it must have continuity.

For example, many declining churches are counting on their Sunday School classes to reach people, assimilate them, and disciple them. Unfortunately, some Sunday School classes never do any outreach, which puts the weakest link right at the beginning of the chain.

Some classes very, very quickly (often in less than 18 months from launch) can become sociologically closed groups that have difficulty absorbing new people. The "Rule of Sevens" developed by the church growth movement in the 1970s suggests that every new member needs to develop seven significant friendships within a seven week window of time in order to stick with a church.

If Sunday School classes do not relationally connect with new members, then they will probably drift away from the church within a matter of weeks. Moreover, if new members only attend worship services and never join a Sunday School class, they may never really get plugged into the life of the church. It is no wonder that a full 80 percent of the people who do not join a Sunday School class or small group will not be attending the church five years later.

Some classes have a level of Bible study that is way over the heads of many new members or use teaching methods that just aren't well suited to discipling new Christians. Sadly, many devoted and respected teachers do not realize their well-intentioned methods may actually be driving new members away.

If a revitalizing church continues to count on the Sunday School for outreach, assimilation, and discipleship, it must address these problems. In some cases, it may be easier for a church to implement a 12-week new member orientation class that meets during the Sunday School hour and that is focused on assimilation and discipleship than to fix all that's broken in the Sunday School program. The key is for the church to have a biblical and intentional O-A-D process and continually strengthen the weak links in the chain.

**Awaiting the Shout,
Brother Bill**

**NRBA
ANNUAL MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
2:30 PM
WEST SIDE BAPTIST
CHURCH
CROCKETT**

**COMMUNITY WIDE REVIVAL
OLD LOVELADY GYM
SEPTEMBER 11 - 14
JON RANGLES, EVANGELIST
SUNDAY SERVICES: 11:00 AM
7:00 PM
MON - WED 7:00 PM
EVERYONE IS INVITED!**

**NECHES RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 995 Crockett, TX 75835
Phone: 936.544.3754
Fax: 936.546.9183
email: nrbaoffice@valornet.com
website: nechesriverbaptist.org**

DOM.....Dr. Bill Jones
Home phone 936-544-0555
Cell phone 936-222-1965

Moderator.....Keeney Dickenson
Vice Moderator.....Carl Standley
Treasurer.....Arnold Winkler
Administrative Assistant.....Linda Schaeffer

Home phone 936-544-1280
Cell phone 936-546-8005

**OFFICE HOURS
MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
Afternoons (Contact Brother Bill by cell)
Closed Friday afternoon**



Non-Profit Org.
US Postage Paid
Crockett TX
Permit No. 79

