

Falls Fellowship



“The Changing Landscape of Churches and the Future of Falls Baptist Church

Part 1

Something has been happening to churches during my lifetime. Churches which used to thrive are dying and new megachurches are sprouting up. For example, dramatic change has occurred in the church of my childhood. That church no longer exists. Oh, the building is still there, and a group gathers there every Sunday; however, it is not the same church. The church I grew up in had a vision for the community and the rest of the world; it was a fellowship of believers in Christ that cared for

each other and ministered in his name to the community. Something has changed about church in today’s world.

Gallup, the Hartford Institute of Religion Research and other organizations which compile statistics on religious life in America report that about 40 percent of the US population attends church weekly. However, when you count actual bodies in church on Sundays the number drops to less than 20 percent. One study in the *Journal for the Scientific*

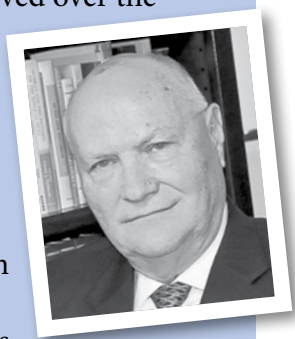
See Landscape on page 2

God Has Plans for Us

Cheryl and I appreciate the many expressions of love and appreciation we received over the holidays.

We received Christmas cards, gifts and a generous monetary gift from the church.

Each one was received with love for you and with appreciation for God’s bringing us together as pastor/wife and congregation. I have been with you for more than two years now and I am humbled by the leadership of the Lord as he led us together. Falls Baptist Church was unknown to me prior to serving as your interim pastor; now I cannot think about my life without thinking about Falls BC and the blessings God has brought to me and Cheryl through our service here. Now we move into a New Year with the promises of God that he will be with us and, if we can



See Plans on page 4



Men's Breakfast Cancelled

Because of the volume of events for January, there will be no Men's Fellowship Breakfast this month. However, it will return in February. See you then!

2020 Offering Envelopes Delayed

Due to a company problem, offering envelope boxes will be available later in January. Packets of envelopes to use during January are available in the vestibule.

Nursery Workers Needed!

We need volunteers to help work in the nursery during Sunday services. If we have more volunteers the burden will not fall on just a few.

Please sign up on the sheet in the vestibule. If you have any questions or need more information please contact Angie Harris.

Event Calendar

- January 1 — New Year's Covered Dish Luncheon 12 Noon
- January 5 — Deacons Meeting 4 PM
- January 5 — Sunday Evening Bible Study 6 PM
- January 12 — Sunday Evening Bible Study 6 PM
- January 19 — Quarterly Business Meeting 12 PM right after Church
- January 19 — Sunday Evening Bible Study 6 PM
- January 26 — Sunday Evening Bible Study 6 PM
- February 8 — Valentines Dinner 6 PM please sign up!

Continued from page 1

Landscape continued ...

Study of Religion, reported 17 percent of Americans attend church weekly. According to Thom and Joani Schultz in their book, *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore*, 2.7 million church members become inactive every year. About 4,000 churches annually close their doors in America. Southern Baptists are not immune to this downward trend for church attendance. According to Thom Rainer, former president of Lifeway, ninety-four percent of our churches are losing ground in the communities they serve. Established churches, those who are 40-190 years old are on the average declining the most rapidly. At the current rate of decline in church attendance, by 2050 the percentage of the US population attending church will be half of what it was in 1990.

I stopped talking about church growth a long time ago and started talking about church health (I wrote a series of articles on this subject for Falls' newsletter). I contend churches which grow are not necessarily healthy because their growth may be created through methods which really do not honor Christ. Examples are choosing an entertainment driven model for worship services; manipulating people with guilt; offering a prosperity gospel and offering an easy, stress-free life. Some churches I call healthy are not growing in numbers, but they are growing in the ways of Christ and that's what makes them healthy. They are healthy because they are effectively ministering in their communities even while their communities may be losing

January Birthdays

- 3 Courtney Mayerick
- 8 Jessica Jackson
- 10 Linwood Barham
- 13 Sara Powell
- 13 Sandra Brown
- 15 Joey Groves
- 16 Bruce Williams
- 19 Gloria Crudup
- 20 Frank Powell





Just part of the spread of food enjoyed at our annual New Year's Day Luncheon. A large crowd enjoyed fellowship, desserts, and good wishes for a new year in addition to the above goodies.

population. I worked with a church in Eastern NC which had an impressive array of missions and ministries in their community. They had a vision, and they articulated it and lived it out in their community, but they were declining in attendance because the population of their community was declining. The pattern was for children to grow into adulthood and leave home because there were no jobs for them at home. The church was healthy, but its membership was in decline because the community around it was dying.

I don't have a formula which will produce healthy churches; but I do think there are some issues we might think about as we enter a new year. I have observed some of these characteristics in churches that are declining in numbers and effectiveness.

1. The danger of self-centered church members. Some people have highly inflated images of themselves in church. They think the church is about them. This is not a new problem. Jesus's disciples argued over who would be first in his kingdom. Persons who think church is all about them create disunity in a church rather than unity. Thom Rainer in his book, *I Am a Church Member*, writes about what he calls inwardly focused church members. They argue over worship styles. They conduct unnecessarily long business meetings which deal with minutia. The facilities become a holy shrine where the greatest amount of resources is focused on keeping up the facilities. Their budgets are inwardly focused. They have inordinate demands for pastoral care. They have an entitlement mentality. More energy is spent on fighting change than spreading the gospel. Rainer says, "You have a responsibility as a church member. You are to be a source of unity.

You are never to be a divisive force. You are to love your fellow church members unconditionally. And while that doesn't mean you agree with everyone all the time; it does mean you are willing to sacrifice your own preferences to keep unity in the church."

— Tom Jenkins

Continued Next Month!

New library additions

Here is a list of the books we got in December — *Forgotten Bible Stories* by Margaret McAllister; *Men Of The Bible; Some Lesser-Known Characters* by George Milligan et. al; *All the People in the Bible — An A-Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* by Richard Losch. As always, please mention if someone has a book request to contact me at awwatkin@ncsu.edu or 919-793-5548. Thanks!

— Alan Watkins

Deacons

Linwood Barham, Chairman	919-418-1162
Hubert Jenks, Vice Chairman	919-270-8765
Alan Watkins, Secretary	919-793-5548
Kevin Barham	919-618-4214
Brandon Long	252-903-4662
Mike Harris	919-746-5697

Plans continued ...

faithfully follow, lead us to a year of growth together. I am reminded of one of my favorite verses of scripture: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope” (Jer. 19:11). God has plans for Falls, are good for us and the building of his kingdom. His plans “give us a future with hope.”

Let me remind you that on Sunday nights in January we meet for January Bible study at 6:00 PM. We will be studying the book of Jeremiah, the prophet whose ministry spanned forty years and who relentlessly called Judah to repentance. His words were not heeded, Jerusalem was destroyed and Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, carried some of the leading citizens of Judah into captivity in 587 BC. The fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies reminds us that God’s Word is to be listened to and heeded. The whole history of the Jewish people would have been different if the people had listened to Jeremiah, repented of their sins of idolatry and returned to God. The temple built by Solomon was destroyed and when a new temple was built after the captivity, it was only a shadow of the magnificent temple built by Solomon.

There are messages in Jeremiah for us to heed as followers of Christ. God does not tolerate rebellion and disobedience. There is a payday for stepping outside the will of God. In addition, there are messages in Jeremiah for us to listen to as a nation. We print on



our money, “In God We Trust.” What is the evidence that we truly trust in God? This year, 2020, could be a time of spiritual renewal, a time when our nation turns to God, repents of our sins and trusts God with a new level of obedience. Let’s work and pray toward that as the family of God gathers at Falls BC.

— Tom Jenkins

Former Pastor’s Passing

We learned of our former pastor Terry Ashe’s passing just as we were finishing this newsletter. Pastor Ashe served Falls Baptist Church from 1999 – 2016, the longest serving pastor in our history. In addition, he was a talented singer who periodically led our music ministry in addition to his pastoral responsibilities.

Services are not known at this time.



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