



There are Lots of Us!

Ever feel like you're the Lone Ranger? (For those of you under 40 who have no idea what that question implies, a visit to www.endeavorcomics.com/largent/lr1.html will enlighten you.) Get the feeling you're the only person on your block who operates from a spiritual base, who reads the Bible, who prays? Well, you're not as alone as you think.

The Barna Group is a privately-held corporation that does research on a variety of topics including church-related issues. New data just released by Barna suggests that there are more of "us" than you might think. Consider these statistics:

- 47% of Americans read the Bible during a typical week. This number sank to a low of 31% in 1995 and has been slowly climbing back up to a figure that is now the highest since the 1980's.
- Church attendance has increased slowly in recent years. Today 47% of Americans attend church at least once a week.
- Participation in a small group that meets for Bible study, prayer, or the developing of personal relationships now stands at 23% of the American population. Ten years ago only one out of every six adults was a part of a small group.
- Sunday school attendance had seemed to take a nosedive in the 1990's, but has climbed from 17% of Americans on a given weekend in 1995 to 24% in this year's survey.
- Volunteerism (ranging from teaching a Bible class to serving in a food pantry) stands at a figure of 27%.
- 84% of Americans say they have prayed over the past week.
- For people who say they are "born again Christians," the survey asked if they had shared their faith with non-Christians during the past twelve months. 60% said yes.

Contrary to what we might think (and especially as we might infer from the entertainment media), a significant number of people around us not only have a personal faith, but they express it in ways we are comfortable with: Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, sharing their faith with others. Faith will probably not always be so widespread in our lifetimes, but for now, God has given us many fellow travelers on the journey of faith. *G. Crowe*

CSC Upcoming

It seems like this year has come and gone faster than I could imagine. As we close out the year at the CSC, there is still much to do. The whirlwind of fun begins and does not stop until finals are over.

This coming weekend, the students and I will be traveling to the Country Lake Christian Retreat Center for our spring retreat. We will be joining University of Kentucky, Western Kentucky, Indiana University, and Indiana State University. Brad Stone, college minister from Southland Christian Church in Lexington, will be our speaker this year. Please pray for renewed hearts and a time of rest for our students.

Following our spring retreat, comes the annual Root Beer Keg Party at the CSC on April 21. This year's party promises to be incredible! We have more people than ever involved. Root Beer keg stands, live music, weird guitar video games, and something really big that is inflatable.....what more could you ask for?

The year will then close out with our Spring Banquet honoring our graduating seniors. This will be held at the Seattle Beanery at 7:30 pm, Saturday, April 29. You are more than welcome to join us! It might be nice to come and sit with your adopted student. It will be a great time! The cost will be \$10.

Lots to do, and the clock is ticking on this semester. Thank you for sharing in this ministry. ~Dan



A.J. Wilson, 9-month old son of Leslie & Carl Wilson, had tests last week. They hope to learn the results of those tests this week....**Argie Verett**, Pauletta Smith's mother, is not doing well. She had medical tests last Friday....**Tara Eby**, Andrea Browell's daughter in California, remains in the hospital following an appendicitis attack.....Continue praying for **Kaden Koebcke** (now at IU Medical Center NICU), **Madeline Stewart**, **Willard Farmer**, **Phyllis Simmerman**, **Noah Powlen**, **Sarah Bird**, **Natasha Risley**, **Amber Tolle**, **Phyllis Gray**, **Ryan Woolard**, **Mark Eddy**, **Marie DeWoody**, **Anna Dale**, **Delpha Allen**, **Carrie High** (Regency Place Nursing Home), and **Irene Fox** (George Davis Manor Nursing Home). Those in Rosewalk Village: **Paul & Ruth Marks**, **Minnie Scott**, and **Burnell Gulden**.

Serving in Iraq: **Jon Kiefner**, **Loren Sniffen**, and **Brad King**. Serving in South Korea near the DMZ: **Amanda Martin** (Phyllis Simmerman's niece).

Thank You!

Thank you all for the concerns, prayers and cards sent to Willard during this testing and surgery. It is truly a blessing to have a family like Elmwood. —Shirley Farmer

*Dear Friends of Elmwood Church,
Your outreach of sympathy to me during Ramona's long illness with Alzheimer's and at her recent death, was almost beyond my comprehension. The song service at the funeral was just great and Gayle Crowe's memorial message about Ramona's art work was something special. For the many visits, calls, cards, food, advice, and emotional support I am truly thankful. You helped me to take care of Ramona at home as long as she lived. Thank you very much. Flashes of Phil 1:3 and Col. 3:12-14 came to mind as I read the flood of cards I received. God bless all of you.* —Bill Farris

Yorktown Rd. Church of Christ Hosts Teacher Training April 29

Attention teachers of students ages 0 to 120: **Saturday, April 29, Tom Tignor**, Curriculum Editor for 21st Century Christian, will present three teacher training sessions that will revolutionize your teaching. The Northern Indiana Teacher Training Seminar begins with registration at 8:30 AM, followed by sessions that will run from 9:00 until noon. The seminar is free but space is limited, so if interested contact Rob Hall at Yorktown Road Church of Christ (574-753-2757) or Tom Tignor (800-251-2477) to reserve your spot. The seminar will be held at the Yorktown Road Church of Christ, 406 Yorktown Road, Logansport, Indiana. —Joe Ruhl

EYU



The food pantry is in need of **canned fruit and soup**.

Directory Pictures



If you didn't have the opportunity to sign up to have your picture taken for the new pictorial directory (April 14, 15, 25 & 26), Gail Ruhl and crew will be making phone calls to get you scheduled. Please consider participating as you will get a free 8 x 10 picture as well as a free directory.

*If you regularly attend Elmwood, and are not receiving the **Christian Chronicle**, please notify the church office. Your name and address will be forwarded to the publication office for you to receive the next issue.*

April 2, 2006
Class: 198 Worship: 270
Contribution: \$12,216
Budget: \$8,100



LTC

Easter falls later in the year this year, but it seems like LTC has snuck up on us. This Sunday evening at 6:00 we will be having our annual preview of some of our teams and individuals participating in this year's convention. I am very proud of what I have seen so far and I know you will be as well. Of course the best part is that the students know it isn't a competition, rather it is an opportunity to showcase the talents, gifts and abilities the Lord has given them. Plan to be here to be blessed by the presentations and then hang around for finger foods to follow. I would also like to encourage all of you to come over to the convention at the Marriott East (E. 21st Street in Indy) to see all the students. Events begin on Friday afternoon and run through Saturday night (April 14, 15). There is also a Celebration assembly on Saturday night at 7:30 and an awesome time of worship on Sunday morning at 8:00 at the hotel. It does not cost to come and observe, but you will need to register if you have not already. Before I forget, I want to thank Barb Tilley, Phyllis Simmerman, Rose Hunt and the coaches for their work this year – you thank them too, please. Also, thank you to all of you who will be coming over to Indy to help judge the various events... there are still events needing judges, so if you are interested, see one of the ladies listed above, or Sue McClain or me. One note, I mentioned that some of you might get to meet our Intern, Phil Travis, at the convention. Unfortunately, he will not be able to be with the group from Rochester (previous plans), so you can use the time to talk to the Rochester students to see what they think about Phil. No worries!

Senior Sunday

Senior Sunday will be April 16 at 6 pm. The seniors we are honoring this year are: Audrey Barnett (a new friend from Brookston), Peter Bell, Philip Devine, Jay Hodges, Danny Shields, Erin Simmerman, Heather Willison and Mallory Woody. We will have a video presentation and will follow that time with an Ice Cream Social (with cake) to honor our graduating high school seniors. We are in hopes the relaxed environment will give everyone a chance to visit with the seniors and their families. We need to make sure we have all the necessary Ice Cream flavors covered...don't forget, my favorite is peach...but I'm always open to trying new flavors, too. Mark your calendars now and get those ice cream freezers out of storage, please. The cake will be provided. – Lee

New Topic for Men's Class: FORGIVENESS

"Forgive him for what he did to me and my family, NEVER!!!! He doesn't deserve it." In a secular world, this is perhaps true. But, when everything in you wants to hold a grudge, point a finger and remember the pain someone has caused you, God wants you to lay it all aside and unconditionally forgive him as God has forgiven you.

Beginning Wednesday night, April 5, in room 14, Kevin Walters will embark on a new topic of study in the men's class, **Total Forgiveness**. Come join other men as we learn what forgiveness is and what it is not. Uncover the physical, emotional and spiritual consequences of unforgiveness, and see why God adamantly encourages you to forgive others. Making the choice to forgive others allows us to step forward into a new dimension of freedom and inner peace.

–Chuck Brown

Men's Breakfast, April 22

The next Men's Breakfast is scheduled for **April 22, at 7:43 AM in A-2**. Men of all ages are welcome. If you plan to attend, please add your name to the sign-up sheet located in the Farris Foyer. The food is great and the fellowship is even better. Hope to see you there.

LTC Helpers Needed

A few judges and door monitors are still needed for LTC in Indianapolis on April 14 & 15. Talk to Barb Tilley (538-3270), Phyllis Simmerman (474-6277), or Lee Porter (447-2874) if you are interested.



- April 5, 7 PM...Bible classes for all
- April 7-9...College Spring Retreat, Country Lake Christian Retreat Center
- April 9, 6 PM...Leadership Training for Christ Preview
- April 16, 6 PM...High School Graduation service
- April 21...Root Beer Keg Party at CSC
- April 22, 7:43 AM...Men's Breakfast
- April 23 & 30, 6 PM...LIFE Groups
- April 29, 7:30 PM...College Spring Banquet, Seattle Beanery, cost \$10

Read:
Judges 1-2; Psalms 63-69;
Matthew 16-28

2006 Spiritual Adventure

Week 16: April 16-22

In this week's readings, Jesus presents us with what I call "crazy talk." Take a look at these quotations; I think you'll see what I mean.

- "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24-25).
- "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matthew 19:30).
- "[W]hoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20: 26-28).
- "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

All these ideas of becoming last to be first, of becoming a servant to be great, of losing life to find it do seem ludicrous. However, the value of these ideas completely changes when we read the end of Matthew's story. At the end, we see the awful death of Jesus demonstrating the extreme meaning of his teaching of humility and servitude. But it's not until Jesus' resurrection that we see this "crazy talk" gain totally new value. Here we see the ultimate authority of Jesus demonstrated and thus the ultimate authority given to his words. If we can believe that this man Jesus rose from the dead, then we can believe that his "crazy talk" really imparts words of truth and wisdom, words to live by, words on which to base every decision, and words of invaluable worth.

-Susan Huff



SOULFORCE VISITS ACU

Leroy Garrett

It is understandable if the officials at Abilene Christian University would be apprehensive about a visit from Soulforce, a task force of about 30 men and women, traveling by bus, whose mission is to “seek justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people through nonviolence, and changing the hearts and minds of anti-homosexual people.”

In what they call an Equality Ride, they will over a seven-week period call on a score of religious and military institutions that have discriminated, in one way or another, against gays and lesbians, as they see it. Among the universities – all professing to be Christian – are Liberty, Regent, Lee, Brigham Young, Oral Roberts, Oklahoma Baptist, Union, Wheaton, and ACU. The military institutions include Texas A&M, Air Force Academy, and West Point.

Soulforce complains that these institutions have policies that force hundreds of students to “closet” themselves lest it be found out that they are homosexual, and thus suffer reprisals and even expulsion. As they put it, they “seek freedom from religious and political oppression” for these marginalized students.

ACU was their seventh stop, and it was the first time they were allowed onto a campus and were received graciously and courteously. Lee University, located in Cleveland, Tennessee, provided them police escort from the county line to the back side of their campus, alongside a muddy football field, far removed from the central campus. There they were to stay. Some Lee students came to see the spectacle. Soulforce formed a small mound of dirt, and a former Lee student, who had been expelled for being engaged to another female student, stood on the improvised stage and preached “the Sermon on the Mound”!

While this was going on their bus was painted with anti-gay symbols, one being “Fag Mobile.”

Soulforce got a mixed signal from their proposed

visit to Oral Roberts University: “We love you, but don’t come onto our campus.” Nine of the group were arrested when they ventured onto the campus to talk to students.

They are apparently a talented group. When allowed – or even when not allowed – on or near campuses they hold prayer vigils and have sing-songs. When permitted – as they were at ACU – they show a video depicting the persecution of gays and lesbians, especially by religious people.

Royce Money, president of ACU, in anticipation of Soulforce’s visit, explained in a mailout that the university had two options. One was confrontation, which ran the risk of demonstrations and arrests. The other was dialogue based on love and reason. They chose dialogue.

Money said he wanted people to see from this that “Christians are kind, thoughtful, respectful people who can discuss any issue in the context of our spiritual values.” The university would make its position clear, that marriage is between one man and one woman, and that sex is to be only in marriage, Money said. The university provided several venues in which there was just that – dialogue – with both students and faculty.

By responding in this way ACU demonstrated that we can disagree without being disagreeable, and that we can be gracious to people without approving of their lifestyle. And Soulforce at last saw Christians who responded to them not only with Christian grace, but with both maturity and security. When we are mature and secure in our relationship to Christ, we will not fear people whose sins are different from our own.

You will notice the way I put that – we are all sinners before God, only in different ways. Paul’s lethal list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 has some interesting inclusions. He lists adul-

tery and fornication, but also name-calling or reviling. He includes homosexuality and sodomy, but also covetousness and greed.

And I suspect the apostle would see these sins as fairly equal in the eyes of God. He would not likely make a big deal of any one of them to the neglect of the others. It is altogether possible that pride, arrogance, selfishness, and greed are as offensive to a holy God as sexual sins, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

I can't help but wonder how a busload of fat and greedy business men from corporate America – and of course well-heeled – would be treated at Lee or Oral Roberts. And if their bus would be graced with "Greedy Fat Cats." And if they would be arrested for talking to students.

I suspect ACU would also welcome them to campus, sinners though they be. Would there be protests? – ACU welcomes greedy and covetous people to campus!

But with that said, it should nevertheless get our attention that of the ten sins listed by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 6, four are sexual in nature, two of which have to do with homosexual behavior – fornication or sexual impurity; adultery or breaking of marriage vows; homosexuality or effeminacy; sodomy or intercourse between two males.

It is remarkably informing that Paul the apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would include both homosexuality and sodomy in his list of ten sins. If they are sins for which one is responsible and must give an account, then they can't be natural or innate. If one is "born that way," then it could not be a sin, and the apostle would not have listed it. This conforms to findings of modern science. There is no more of a "gay gene" than there is a "greed

gene." Sin is always by choice or it is not sin.

That is not all. The apostle saw these ten sins as redemptive – people can turn from them and be changed. He goes on in verse 11 to give remarkably good news: "Such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Some in the Corinthian church had been homosexuals and sodomites, but they had turned from such sins by the power of the gospel.

Pray tell me, how could it be any plainer than the apostle makes it?

If Soulforce is interested in serious dialogue – and assuming they are Christians as they claim – then we invite them to come to terms with the biblical mandate for redemption from homosexual behavior.

If their Equality Ride means they want equality in terms of justice and freedom, and to be treated with common decency, then of course we are with them all the way. But if by "equality" they mean that homosexual behavior and gay marriage are to be accepted as equal to what the church has always stood for – God-ordained marriage between a man and a woman – then we take our stand against their mission.

The church cannot – and in my opinion will not – yield ground on this biblical principle. Like our Lord, the church will lovingly work for justice and fairness for all human kind – and we will abhor and repudiate all forms of tyranny and oppression. But also like our Lord, our prayer and our mission will always be, "Not our will, but yours be done."

–reprinted by permission