

Noteworthy

Prayer Requests: Jo Anderson (*ongoing medical*), Margaret Blackburn (*pancreas and hip*), Joe Brown (*cancer*), Marian Church (*will have surgery at some point*), Mildred Church (*shut in*), Charles Goodall (*recent skin cancer removal*), Linda James (*Lakeland Nursing and Rehab*), Gus Johnson (*illness*), Paul Lloyd (*on-going medical*), Linda McKenzie (*medical*), Bonnie Meagher (*medical*), Butch Morgan (*ongoing medical*), Dottie Reynolds (*medical*), Suzette Stevens, Larry Wisdom (*illness*).

Family and friends: Nell Goodall (*Charles Goodall's aunt*), Chuck Goodall (*Charles & Vernita's son—cancer*), Ned Hicks (*ongoing medical*), Brian James (*cancer*), Wayne Ryland (*ongoing medical*), Ardis Tucker (*ongoing medical*). *Remember and encourage* others who are struggling.

Kid's Review Class: Will be *tonight* immediately following evening worship.

Group Meeting: Group 1 will meet *tonight* after the evening worship service.

Men's Training Class: The 4th Sunday of each month, beginning next week *January 28th* (5pm).

Winter Bible Classes: This Tuesday (*Jan 23rd*), 7pm, at Larry Wisdom's home. (*Five Lesson Series on Church History*)

Upcoming Meeting: The Trilacoochee Church of Christ will hold their Annual Singing Service Friday, Jan. 26th (*this Friday*) at 7pm. The Brooksville Church of Christ has an upcoming meeting with Brent Hunter Feb. 2nd-4th. (*See flyer on the bulletin board for details about meeting times*)

Out of Town: The Rice family will be traveling tomorrow, and returning next week. Jordan Lawson will be preaching in Ian's absence next Sunday (*am*).

4th Sunday: Larry Wisdom will be preaching next Sunday during the evening worship service.

Great News: We rejoice that Olivia Rice was immersed for the remission of sins last week (*Lk. 15; Acts 2:36-47*). Let us pray for her, and seek for ways to encourage her spiritual growth.

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 1/24/18

Song Leader: Clay Sadler
 Opening Prayer: Colby Sadler
 Invitation: Ronnie Henderson
 Announcements: Mike Sadler
 Closing Prayer: David Williams
 Recordings: Bob Marschall
 Usher: Leon Miller

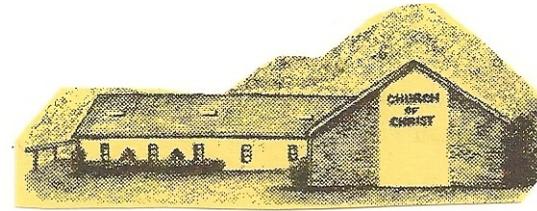
Sunday Evening: 1/28/18

Song Leader: Colby Sadler
 Opening Prayer: Keith Marschall
 Lord's Table: Larry Wisdom
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: Neil Miller
 Recordings: Trent Stevens
 Usher: Gus Johnson

Sunday Morning: 1/28/18

Lord's Table: Larry Wisdom (B)
 Bucky Day (C)
 Serving: Mike Sadler
 Colby Sadler
 Song Leader: Bob Marschall

Opening Prayer: Jordan Lawson
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: Joe Brown
 Recordings: Trent Stevens
 Usher: Gus Johnson



**Lakeland Hills
 Leader**

LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST

2510 Lakeland Hills Boulevard Lakeland Florida 33805 (863) 688-4336

www.lakelandhillschurchofchrist.com

ELDERS

Larry Hicks (863) 899-7405
 Leon Miller (863) 640-6378
 Larry Wisdom (863) 583-4311

SERVICES

Sunday
 Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
 Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
 Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
 Wednesday
 Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
 Michael Sadler
 Moses Stevens
 David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

Crucial Periods in Congregational Development

A local church must make plans for its future. It must develop an idea of what direction it wishes to go. If not, a terrible fate awaits them. Vision and foresight serve a church well. If a congregation just takes what comes along and is haphazard concerning plans for its spiritual growth and development, nothing good will result. If the Lord wills, the future will come. What we do at various stages of our existence will make a difference in what happens in the future. There are certain crucial periods in a church's life which will either cause the local congregation to be better, or be left for the worst. What are some of these crucial times?

The beginning of the church. How a particular church got started will often determine where it ends up. Did it result from a "swarm" of Christians from various existing churches coming together to form a new congregation in a needed area of town? Did it have the blessings of the elder-ships from those churches? Or, did the church begin as a faction? If a church begins because of disgruntled people with ill-will in their hearts, it will likely attract people with those same negative dispositions. If a church begins sinfully, as a result of carnal division, it does not bode well for the group. If a church forms as a result of

devotion to truth and maintains fidelity to the Lord's pattern, good can come of it. But if a church begins as a result of a trivial fuss among brethren, that church is likely headed for trouble.

The selection of leaders. So critical is this decision that the Holy Spirit gave instructions regarding the qualifications of elders, preachers and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). A church is determining its destiny when it selects its shepherds. The congregation will either be stronger or weaker dependent on who these men are. Some elders have no vision for the church beyond who will lead singing or prayers in next month's assemblies. This is not fit leadership for the people of God. Elders must prayerfully plan for the future of the church, including its leadership after they are gone. Decisions made today will have great impact on souls years into the future. The kind of preaching and teaching a church receives is determined by what the elders see the church needs. Leadership is crucial. There must be vision beyond just meeting the immediate, pressing needs of the church. Deacons must be men selected for the service they can render, rather than for political reasons. If deacons are mere figureheads, given their position to placate certain families who feel they should be given a "title", the church takes a detour from which it may never recover. Good, calm, steady leaders and servants are a necessity for a church going in the right direction. A congregation rarely rises above the level of its leadership.

The treatment of public sin. How will the church deal with unrepentant public sin? While there is scriptural pattern and mandate for discipline which might even result in a withdrawal of fellowship, some congregations are very good at observing the "passover" on these directives from the Lord. Every church is sooner or later confronted with whether they will practice discipline within its fellowship or not. Many Christians see no reason to practice discipline, having decided that it will not work anyway. Others would just rather not be bothered with it. Aside from displeasing God, a church which decides it will not publicly deal with public sin is destined for trouble. It may grow numerically as it attracts worldly Christians who wish to hide from their spiritual responsibilities to live morally and uprightly. But this is a crucial time in the development of a congregation. What would have happened in the Jerusalem church if Ananias and Sapphira had been allowed to continue their lying? (Acts 5:1-11) Would it not have brought the same result as at Corinth? There, the brethren became "puffed up" and did not mourn over a member who had taken his father's wife! (I Cor. 5:1-13) A church ignoring sin may be a popular congregation with large numbers. However, this "strength" could be the result of their disobedience to God concerning church discipline.

Their evangelistic outlook and emphasis. The lifeblood of a congregation is its evangelistic interest. We are saved to save others. The church is a lighthouse (Phil. 2:15-16). The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Some congregations are content to be a weekly worship place and nothing else. A local church meets for worship if it pleases God, to be sure, but a church must also seek opportunities to teach others. Will the church's resources be used for preaching and teaching the Gospel? Will the church see the lost souls living within the shadow of its meeting place? Will Gospel preachers be supported to do their work? Any congregation which does not emphasize evangelism is signing its own death warrant. Both the present and the future of a church depends on evangelism. Great congregations have always been evangelistic at home and beyond their borders, to the extent of their ability. In our time, some churches sealed their fate when they chose to abandon a spiritual focus for the "social gospel" and church-sponsored recreation instead of evangelism and spiritual growth.

These items are not the only crucial choices a congregation faces in its development. However, these matters are chief determining factors of the strength and stability of a local church. Each of us plays a part in the kind of congregation we are both today and tomorrow.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

- ◇ Jesus taught obedience (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; Matthew 28:20)
- ◇ Jesus taught that unless we believe in Him, we will die in our sins (John 10:31-39)
- ◇ He taught repentance (Luke 13:3; 24:46-47)
- ◇ He taught confessing Him before others (Matthew 10:32-33)
- ◇ He taught baptism as a necessity (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:5)
- ◇ He teaches faithfulness unto death (Revelation 2:10)