



February 5, 2006 (Vol. 6)

The Community Church Movement

(CONTUNED)

Mark Dunagan

False Compassion. Even when these churches arise in the denominational world, the philosophy often is that the mainline group isn't warm or compassionate towards unbelievers. Doug Varnado, preacher for the Hendersonville Community Church, was recently forced out as a faulty member at David Lipscomb University because where he serves began employing, on a periodic basis, recorded instrumental music in worship. In an interview he noted, "It's unimportant if the church adds instrumental music on occasion. More important, is a faith community that shows compassion for people seeking God at the end of the 20th century". The trouble with this statement, and others that seek to downgrade doctrinal matters, is that true compassion means truly bringing people out of darkness into God's light, which includes God's view of things, including how He wants to be worshipped.

- Often people will try to justify the absence of any doctrinal or convicting preaching by saying that they want people to feel comfortable in the assembly and eventually these topics will be addressed. First, I have found that once one adopts this attitude, those topics never get addressed, for there is never a "convenient time" once you have bought into the idea that people should always feel comfortable (*2 Timothy 4:2*).
- True compassion means recognizing the facts that a person is lost, that they believe things that are false, and that until those issues are addressed, they can't be saved (*Acts 17:22ff; 3:14*). It is noteworthy, that Jesus didn't put-off confronting people with what stood between them and eternal life (*Mark 10:21*).

The Name. Various liberal congregations have dropped the designation "church of Christ", arguing that people are turned off by such terms. But such a name is Biblical (*Romans 16:16*). I have found that dropping the name virtually equals dropping what the name represents, that is, the church that is following Christ, New Testament Christianity, and the church that Jesus founded. Secondly, such is a deceptive practice. It is better to be honest and upfront with people, than try to lure them in under false pretenses (*1 Peter 2:1 "putting away all guile"*).

Targeting Your Audience. Far from going out and trying to save everyone (*Mark 16:15*), the community church movement often targets a select group of people whom they are trying to attract. MacArthur notes, "Why do you suppose nearly all the user-friendly churches identify their 'target market' as young suburban professionals and other moneyed groups? Why are so few of these churches targeting the poor and inner city? The answer may be obvious. One leading pastor in the movement says, 'A pastor can define his appropriate target audience by determining with whom he would like to spend a vacation or an afternoon of recreation'. It would be hard to imagine a ministry philosophy more at odds with the Word of God than that" (*p. 126*). Paul actually found that "suburban professionals", rejected the truth (*1 Corinthians 1:26; Matthew 11:5*).

False Growth. Willow Creek, which is held up as the model of church growth, recently did an internal audit, in which they found that only 2% of their growth consisted of new converts. The rest of the people simply came from other churches in the area. MacArthur observes, "User-friendly, entertainment-oriented, market-driven, pragmatic churches will probably continue to flourish for a while. Unfortunately, however, the whole movement is based on current fashion and therefore cannot last long. When the fickle winds finally change, one of three things may happen. These churches will fall out of vogue and wane; or they will opt to change with the spirit of the age and very likely abandon any semblance of biblical Christianity; or they will see the need to rebuild on a more sure foundation" (*p. 188*). (*See Acts 17:21; Ephesians 4:14*). Such congregations have made the mistake of giving people what they think they need, instead of what God says they need. "Those who advocate a contemporary style of worship

tell us that if we want success and growth in the church, and if we want to keep our young people, we must do things in new and different ways. But, consider this: When the 'new' wears off and the 'different' becomes customary, what happens then?" (*The Spiritual Sword, October 2000, p. 27*). One cry that was heard in the denominations and is being heard in liberal churches today is that "We are bored" with the same old songs, prayers, and preaching, but people also become bored with entertainment as well. People were bored with the Olympics, claim to be bored by the present World Series and so on. The truth of the matter is, as long as one is selfish, eventually everything will seem boring to you. I like the following comment: "Instead of attempting to renovate worship for our own benefit, what we need to do is cultivate our appetites for pure, New Testament worship (*John 4:24; Habakkuk 2:20*)" (p. 27).

[Again, I am not familiar with Mark Dunagan, but this article has been very informative to me and I hope also to you.]

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Home Bible Study** – Sat., Feb. 4th & 18th
- **Men’s Class / Ladies Class** - Tues., Feb. 14th @ 7 pm.
- **Business Meeting** – Sun. Feb.26 @ 5pm.
- **Debate on Security of Believer** - Sparta Civic Center on March 24-25, 2006.

PRAY FOR

Mag Bumbalough, Greg Capps, Sabrina Capps (tests), **Thelma Cunningham, Donald Eller** (recovering from neck surgery), **Wanda Frazier** (Life Care, room #207), **Holly**

Jernigan (Joyce Gardner’s niece has cancer), **John Ross Key** (Mary Cox’s son), **Roger Kline** (undergoing chemotherapy, slow progress), **Marci Miller** (Alisa Fletcher’s mother), **Monie Petty, Dave Poteet, Kenny Streeval, Rose Taylor** (recovering from knee surgery), **Sissy Wheeler** (friend of Marilyn’s, cancer), **Ed Williams, Dorris Williams, Ruth Williams** (Betty England’s niece).

Those in Iraq: Jason Zelenak (Alisa Fletcher’s brother), **Cary Matheny**.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday Bible Study	9 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6 pm
Wednesday Bible Study	7 pm

NOTES:

North Sparta church of Christ

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