

# **THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE FACILITATES THE COMMUNITY CHURCH TAKEOVER OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

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## **WHAT IS THE *CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE*?**

The *Christian Chronicle* is published by Oklahoma Christian University. It is Edited by Bailey B. McBride. Glover Shipp is the Senior Editor. It is published monthly and has a worldwide readership.

## **WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY CHURCH?**

Currently the best known expression of the Community Church is the model of Bill Hybels out of Barrington, Illinois, near Chicago called The Willow Creek Community Church. However, a Baptist preacher named Rick Warren while denying cloning Willow Creek has built The Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California, which closely parallels Willow Creek, and has written a more understandable guide for duplicating the Community Church entitled *The Purpose Driven Church*.

These are denominational churches loosely affiliated with the group from which they came which merely have shrouded themselves with the name "Community Church." The cardinal rule among them is to appear non-traditional. They are characterized by a casual dress code, "contemporary" music, non-distinctive public speeches which endeavor to focus the attention of the assembly on a celebration-type atmosphere, inter-denominational acceptance, small group organization, personal testimonies, praise teams, and in their inception stages a brazen acceptance of financial support from churches they intend to take over.

## **HOW DOES *THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE* FACILITATE THE COMMUNITY CHURCH?**

*The Christian Chronicle*, March 2000, speaks in the most glowing and favorable terms of the Community Church with only the exception of a very few scant references to the contrary. Of the six articles on the subject only one writer ventured to ask a few questions, and even he dared not speak one word of criticism, just alarm while advising a "wait and see" posture. Also, of the writers

selected one has helped plant a Community Church in Searcy, Arkansas, another presented the view that "this change is our historical commitment to nondenominational Christianity," another said he believes their purposes to be "God-given," and yet another currently is the minister for a Community Church in Amarillo, Texas. The three pages devoted to the Community Church are clearly weighted in favor of it. Additionally, the editor of the feature, Lindy S. Adams, provided the Web site addresses for Willow Creek and Saddleback, facilitating their use. Two of the writers are professors at Harding University, one is adjunct instructor for Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, one is president of Rochester College, two are self-styled church growth experts, and, as mentioned earlier, one is a minister for a Community Church. The selection of people with connections to schools supported by churches of Christ who will not oppose the Community Church to write the articles facilitates the movement by lending the impression of acceptability to the articles.

### **TELLTALE MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE EDITOR**

The editor of the feature is laboring under at least two misconceptions regarding the church of Christ. One, in the introduction Adams wrote, ". . . the church they worked diligently to create. . . ." Men did not create the church of Christ; it is of divine origin (Eph. 3:9-11, 4:1-5, 5:23-25). Without doubt this misconception is why such liberties are being taken with regard to the church. The view seems to be if men created the church of Christ and it is not now what men want it to be, then just simply change it to fit the wishes of men today. Two, denominational church growth models can be adapted and altered to cause the churches of Christ to grow. The church of Christ is not a denomination (I Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:4). The one responsible for its growth is God himself (I Cor. 3:6-9). The method of its expansion is the preaching and teaching of the word of God (Mk. 16:15, Acts 6:7). The church growth expert who teaches at Harding and has helped start Covenant Fellowship Community Church wants the readers to believe these Community Churches are "still within the 'Church of Christ mainstream.'" How can anyone expect that to be so when they do not even so much as retain the name Church of Christ? Their attempt at worship and congregational organization is a departure from the truth, yet they demand their followers to insist that they are center of the strait and narrow road. A Christian may have no fellowship with the unfruitful (I Cor. 1:10, Eph. 5:11). Their means and methodologies have nothing to offer the Lord's people. (I Thess. 5:5). Light and darkness have no communion (II Cor. 6:14). Brethren need to wake out of sleep, get back to teaching and preaching the word of God, and Christ will give all the light needed to advance his cause (Eph. 5:14).

## HOW TO DEFEAT THE TAKEOVER

In closing, four suggestions are offered on how to defeat the takeover. One, by exposing the error of the Community Church and those favorable to it. It is right to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order, hold fast the faithful word, exhort and convince the gainsayers, stop the mouths of the gainsayers, and rebuke them sharply (Titus 1:5-13). Jude 3 still calls for an earnest contending for the faith. Two, by refusing to fund the Community Church movement by withdrawing personal and financial support from those congregations and schools promoting the Community Church. Philippians 1:5 and 4:15 proves that those whom we support financially we are fellowshiping. If one is contributing into a church treasury, he is in fellowship with that which is supported out of that treasury. When the leadership of a local congregation is dedicated to the planting of Community Churches all of the members of that congregation are responsible for the planting of the Community Churches. By withdrawing personal and financial support from that congregation the take over will be thwarted. The Community Church begins as a parasite feeding off a thriving organism. A paradoxical phenomenon is occurring with the Community Church. Older, established churches of Christ are funding the vehicle of their demise when they support the Community Church. It is very sad to note that if this continues, the children and grandchildren of members of the churches of Christ will not know the truth about the church of the Bible because the Community Church advocates are changing everything about it under the pretense of church growth.

Three, by evangelizing the lost (Matt. 28:19, 20). No matter what the problems and challenges faced by the churches of Christ the gospel of Christ must continue to be preached to a lost and dying world. Many problems and challenges besieged the early church, yet the gospel was advanced to the point that Paul could write in Colossians 1:23 that every creature under heaven had the opportunity to hear it. The method authorized by God to reach lost souls is preaching (I Cor. 1:18-21). Imagine if *The Christian Chronicle* were dedicated to such a noble purpose instead of promoting the latest denominational craze. The millions who could be taught the Bible through that paper who are instead being coaxed into error make these developments all the more a shame. Four, by edifying those who are Christians (Eph. 4:15, 16). Paul said that by edifying "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). Through edification the Christian dons the whole armour of God in which he stands against the methods of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

