



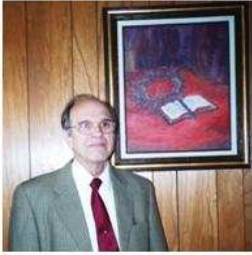
# Arthur Church of Christ

415 West 4th St., Arthur, IL 61911-1303



## The "Sower"

October 18, 2009



Ron Bartanen, Minister

### Times of Worship

Bible Classes-----9:30 am

Morning Worship-10:30 am

Evening Worship—6:00 pm

Wed. Bible Study---6:00 pm

**WELCOME** to today's Bible class and/or worship assembly. If you are a **VISITOR**, we especially appreciate your decision to meet with us. It is our hope that you will return at every opportunity.

**Have you checked our web site lately?**  
[www.arthurchurchofchrist.com](http://www.arthurchurchofchrist.com)

Be sure to visit the "Apologetics Press" link, now in both English and Spanish. Also newly added: Sermon Outlines and "Family Minutes" (Dale Smith).

## Lessons From God's Word

"**CHRIST'S WORDS TO TROUBLED DISCIPLES**" will be this morning's message, with John 14:1-3 as the text. The evening lesson will be, "**Worshiping In Singing**," the concluding message in the series on **Worship**. The text will be Colossians 3:16.

## For Your Information

**THE SHULTS-LEWIS CHILDREN'S HOME VAN** is to be here tomorrow. Items you wish to donate should be here by tonight. Items suggested

are pantry items (see bulletin board), education box tops, printer and copier cartridges and donations.

**GOSPEL MEETING: Highway church, Sullivan, Oct. 25-27, 7:00 p.m.**

**IN OUR PRAYERS:** Paul; Lester; Woody; Rodger; Inez; Linda; Lyla; Mary's mother; Inez's sister (Guinn); Charles Moore (Tex.); Lewis & Mary Carter (Ind.) our service men and women, and our nation's and world's leaders as a way for peace is sought.

## CHANGING PUBLIC OPINION PUTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AT RISK

Religious freedom is at risk, according to Dallin Oaks, a top leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Oaks cited vandalism of temples and intimidation of members in California following the Prop. 8 victory in November, which amended the state constitution to protect marriage.

- "The tide of public opinion in favor of religion is receding," he said, "and this probably portends public pressures for laws that will impinge on religious freedom."
- Groups like the Alliance Defense Fund and Liberty Legal Institute see a similar trend involving all faiths that hold a conservative view of marriage.
- Hiram Sasser, senior attorney for Liberty Legal Institute, said he has plenty of cases to prosecute involving evangelical churches.
- "The cases are getting more difficult to win," he said, "because there's less and less appreciation for the role religion plays in society and less respect for the religious freedom that protects that role."  
--Montana Home

(NOTE: A direct attack is being made against traditional and biblical moral standards, and those who hold them, in the “hate crimes” bill now before the Senate, attached to a Defense Appropriations bill. While, as Christians, we are to love, not hate, we are also to defend righteousness and oppose evil. The “hate crimes” bill will greatly and adversely affect our ability to do this without fear of arrest and lawsuits. Following are some faults with such bills:

- 1) **It criminalizes one’s thoughts.** For the first time in our nation’s history, criminality is to be based on thoughts, not actions. Penalties will be more severe when thoughts and motives do not conform to political correctness.
- 2) **Freedom of religion and speech are endangered.** As other nations have enacted such laws, the result has been harassment, intimidation and punishing of people of faith who defend the biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality.
- 3) **The American principle of equality under the law will be destroyed.** Discrimination will be made against heterosexuals by providing them with less protection in law than victims that engage in nontraditional sexual behaviors. (Cont. next column)

If this bill passes the Senate, it is virtually guaranteed to become law. Saturday, October 10, the president is reported to have pledged to the largest homosexual organization in America concerning this bill, “I can announce after more than a decade, this bill is set to pass and I will sign it into law.”

We are at that point in our nation’s history in which we, like Israel before Judah’s exile to Babylon, are subject to Isaiah’s declaration of woe for the nation: *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”* (Isaiah 5:20). –Ron)

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## WHERE IS EVERYONE?

I am sure many of you receive the Parade Magazine with your Sunday newspaper, but most likely a lot of you don’t get to read it because of your busy schedule. So, if you did or if you didn’t, let me share with you the results of a survey that appeared in Parade Magazine, October 4, 2009. The survey polled 1,051 adults and asked questions related to one’s spirituality. Let me spotlight several things—knowing that this survey may appear more liberal than, say, one from Barma Research.

- Twenty seven percent said they do not practice any kind of religion.
- Fifty percent said they rarely or never attend religious services.
- Twenty percent said they attend religious services anywhere from once a month to a few times a year.
- Thirty percent said they attend religious services once or more in a given week.

The real truth, according to some, is that only about one-half of those who claim to attend weekly actually do. You know how I estimate who goes to church? I just walk out into a neighborhood and take a look at the houses on a given block. Most are not in church. What is the point of a survey such as the one Parade Magazine published? It just points out what we all know—that fewer and fewer people are attending church these days. How do we stem that tide?

- 1) I think each local church must take responsibility for its own “turf,” so to speak, and develop creative ways to stimulate its people to become genuine salt and light.
- 2) Next, I believe the church must be built on a foundation of biblical truth rather than spiritual entertainment.

- 3) And, finally, I really believe we must be working hard to close the “back door.” We need to know why people do not, or no longer, attend just as much as we need to know why some do attend.

Honestly, the Parade Magazine article was troubling, but it really was not surprising. “Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25).

Be blessed, and be a blessing.

–HBL, submitted by Ron Thomas, Sullivan

(NOTE: Obviously nonattendance has been a perennial problem from Acts 2 to the present time. The above article, however, brings out the disturbing fact that the problem has become more acute in recent years. We are constantly being made aware of declining membership and attendance at churches throughout the United States, and even of churches having to finally close their doors. While secular humanism and Islam are gaining active adherents, the number of those who have committed their lives to Christ, and continue steadfastly, is decreasing. Unlike early disciples who “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42), excuses for nonparticipation multiply. Apparently these believe separation from a body of believers is inconsequential.

How does God view the situation? We might illustrate it from an Old Testament event, inasmuch as “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). In a time of conflict as Israel engaged in battle with her foes, all should have felt responsibility in defending their country. God granted His people victory, but in the Song of Deborah one town is singled out for chastisement—Meroz. Judges 5:23 reads, “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” Meroz had apparently not conspired with the enemy. The citizens had simply not heeded the call to duty. They chose not to get involved in the struggle. One is made to wonder, if God was to raise up a prophet today, as the church struggles against the forces of evil and some have chosen to be AWOL from the Lord’s army, what would the message of the prophet be to these? Would the prophet say, “Curse ye \_\_\_\_\_...because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty”? The apostle Paul wrote that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). God’s army today is not armed with swords, as was Israel, but with what Paul called “the armor of God” that we might do battle with “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:11-13). Deserting the church in the time of battle is spiritual treason. They cannot share in the final song of victory who have not engaged in the battle. This battle is waged as we seek to encourage one another in assembly and bear witness by word and example (Ron)