

# Evangelistically Speaking

Volume 12, Issue 10

October 2003

*Special points of interest:*

- Additional pictures from the summer mission trips will be posted to the website along with this issue.
- Please remember to notify us of address changes as soon as possible following a move. This will help us manage costs.

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## From Ted's Pen

"God uses ordinary people to carry out his extraordinary plan." I don't know who first made that statement, but I like it. I am glad that God saw fit to use ordinary people to do the work that He wants to accomplish upon the earth. And, I am so happy to be counted among those ordinary people who consider it a great privilege to be involved in that task.

I often talk about our "work" but actually the life that I live is one of great privilege and I am honored to have been blessed to be a gospel preacher. Recently a schoolmate of years gone by asked, "When did you decide to be a preacher?" I responded that I had always

wanted to preach and that is true. I never remember wanting to do anything else except preach the gospel. I was blessed to have parents who were dedicated Christians and my mother, who will soon be 92 years of age, remains a faithful Christian. Yes, I am glad that God uses ordinary people to do His great work.

I gave a report on our work and then preached at the Hoxie, Arkansas congregation on Sunday, September 7. We have a long and very pleasant relationship with the brethren at Hoxie and they have been very good supporters and encouragers of ours through the years. On September 9 I



hosted the beginning of the fall and winter session of the Area Wide Fellowship here in central Arkansas. 106 people assembled from twenty-four congregations to enjoy an evening of good food, great singing, and fellowship. We meet at a restaurant at Plummerville, Arkansas each month except June, July, August and December of every year.

*(Continued on Page 2)*



## Marty's Thoughts

I will keep my thoughts brief this month. As you are aware, the months of June—August were a blur of activity for me and my family. We took a bit of a breather in September and it was greatly needed.

In a separate article, I will share some thoughts with you regarding my motivation and the need for the Spiritual Project Management workshops. Now more than ever, I am convinced that many churches of Christ are in crisis. And I'm not referring to a doctrinal

crisis—although some are experiencing those types of problems.

The crisis to which I refer is one of leadership, vision, and focus upon God's purpose for the church. I hope that SPM can help find solutions.

I also want to emphasize that I am available for preaching appointments and weekend meetings. Please let me know if I can be of assistance to you in either of these ways. May God bless you!

As I gather my thoughts on this beautiful early fall day, I thank God for His blessings! In the past several days I have had a number of people offer words of encouragement to me—specifically about this publication. Dad and I really do appreciate your kindness. We work very hard to keep *ES* from becoming stale and routine and hope that it is an encouragement to you.

Spiritual Project Management Website  
<http://www.spiritualprojectmanagement.com>

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## From Ted's Pen (Continued)

If you have the opportunity to join us on October 7 for the next one you would be glad that you came.

It is hard to describe the pleasure which we enjoyed in being with the congregation at Farmerville, Louisiana on September 14-17 for a gospel meeting. I had preached there in June of this year for one Sunday after having been there in gospel meetings many years ago.

My brother worked with the church at Farmerville beginning in 1969 and his was the first family to live in the preachers house. He died in 1978, but his memory is still very much alive there and his influence for good

continues to this day. His wife, Eta, still lives there and she made arrangements for our meals and other times of fellowship with the brethren in their homes. I believe that the church there has a bright future and we look forward to being with them again in the future.

On Sunday, September 21 we enjoyed being with the Pine Street congregation in Heber Springs, Arkansas. We have had a long and enjoyable relationship with these brethren as well. Brother Lance Mays and his family has recently moved to Heber Springs. We felt that a very good spirit prevailed and that the future looks very good for the

church in Heber Springs. We closed the month of September with a meeting at the Central Avenue congregation in Batesville, Arkansas. This was my first time to preach at Central. Long-time good friends J.B. and Jessie Milligan worship there except on Sunday mornings when J.B. preaches at a nearby congregation. Carlos and July Smith are also long-time friends and Carlos leads the singing for most of the services there. Brother Royce Pendergrass has preached at Central for some time and continues to do a good work with them.

### 2004 LECTURESHIPS

We are quite sure that the dates for the Fifth Annual Evangelistically Speaking Lectureship will be April 2-4, 2004. The Mars Hill church of Christ near Vilonia, Arkansas will again serve as hosts. Most of the speakers and subjects are confirmed and we have an outstanding program scheduled. The theme is always, "Building An Evangelistic Church." We have had four very good lectureships in the past and we anticipate this one being even better. We are asking brethren everywhere to please put these dates on your calendar and plan to be with us.

## Who Is In Charge Here?

By Kathy Knight Hall

In I Samuel we find the story of Saul and David. King Saul was trying to kill David because he was jealous of David's success. David naturally ran from him and in I Samuel 22:1-2 we are told that David's family came to him when they heard of the situation. We are also told that all the distressed, discontented, and indebted men came to David and he became a captain over them. They became David's army with which he would fight many battles and hide from Saul.

As I was reading this, I went back to make sure that I understood what the verses were saying. Do you realize how hard it would be to become a captain over 400 distressed, discontented, and indebted men? These were not the cream of the crop as far as society was concerned. I would also venture a guess that they were not the most encouraging group to be around.

In a way I cannot imagine how David must have felt, but as I look at the church today I wonder if we could use a few more dis-

tressed, discontented, and indebted people? What was it about the situation with David and these men that made it work and become successful? I know that part of it was because David was a great leader and he looked to God first. In I Samuel 22:3 we read that David took his mother and father to Moab and left them there, "till I know what God will do for me."

Another thing that made this band successful was that these men had reached the bottom. They were looking for something worthwhile in life. They wanted to be needed and they more than likely needed escape from the pressures that sin had caused in their lives. They were willing to be led. Today, we need to be willing to be led and turn our lives completely over to God and ask, "What does God have in store for me?"

You may say, "I'm not much of a leader." I would argue that if we all looked around we could find someone whom we know who fits the description of these men who were led by David. What about

the single mother of a teenager who could use some reassurance concerning the difficult decisions that comes with parenting a teenager? Do you know of a young family where the parents could possibly use a night out without having to pay for a baby sitter? Think of that single man at church who could use some friendship and a place to feel like he belongs. What about that couple down the street that has no church home and need to be taught the gospel of Christ?

For almost twenty years I have been the executive director of a group home for developmentally disabled men. In that time we have had many struggles and to this day there are hard times. We receive our funding each month at the same time and in June 2003 we had exactly \$5.20 in the bank when our funds came in. It did not matter because we survived the month.

There are many months like that. Sometimes the pressure of having nine people to provide services for in addition to two other families that depend on this for an income

can bring a lot of stress. I learned a long time ago that I can only be a successful leader in the direction that God intends for me to go.

It is easy to become one of the distressed, discontented, or indebted but a sure way to pull yourself up when you are feeling this way is to help someone else. Get out and be a leader! Teach a class; find someone to visit; mow someone's yard; clean someone's house or cook a meal for someone who needs it. It isn't hard to find someone in worse shape than you. If you pray, I promise you that God will provide opportunities in your life to be a leader. You may open some doors of evangelism that you were not even aware of. You may be surprised when you find yourself in charge just as I am sure David was.

So, ask yourself, "Who's in charge here, anyway?"

Maybe it's you, so get up and lead!

# Why SPM Is Needed Now

By Marty Knight

Over the past several months, I have been asked numerous times, "What is this Spiritual Project Management deal, anyway?" And I have spent some time in this publication attempting to explain what the program is and how it can help churches grow.

What I have not shared with you is the motivation behind the development of this program. In January 2002 I began doing some research on church growth and demographics. Since then I have reviewed material from at least four different studies on church growth patterns. The output from one of these programs stood out from the rest.

A two-year study entitled Faith Communities Today (FACT) was initiated by the Lilly Endowment in 2000. All religious groups were invited to participate in the study and the church of Christ was represented by two brethren from Abilene Christian University. Brothers Charles Siburt and Thomas Winter provided information on behalf of churches of Christ.

I found the results of this study to be sobering. Of significant concern was the data regarding church growth, leadership, and what characterizes us as a body.

Another data set that alarms me is the rate of church growth in our local communities. The U.S. Census Bureau information to the right gives you a sense of how the local community that I call home has changed over the past 30 or so years.

While the local community has grown at phenomenal rates, I can say with confidence that the church in this area has not matched that rate.

By way of disclaimer, I should say that this is as much my fault as anyone's. I have called four congregations in this community "home" at one point or another in the past 20 years. I have served as a deacon in two of those congregations and have preached at six of them.

These churches are filled with some of the most wonderful people in the world. I love them dearly. These congregations are striving to be the true "bride of Christ." However, numbers do not lie and the church in Faulkner County has not grown as it should. And while there are rural churches in the area, the church does not have a presence within the city limits of Vilonia.

To assuage my brethren who are also my neighbors, I do not believe that this community is any different than many others in our world. I believe this same alarming trend exists across the U.S.

What should we do? That's where SPM comes into play! Is this one program going to provide all the answers? Certainly not! But, it will help church leaders begin to think—and be concerned—about the state of the church today. We know our challenge, the one given to us by Jesus in Matthew 28. What are we doing about it?

If I can be of assistance or if you have questions about SPM, please contact me.

## FACT Survey Information

- The majority of churches of Christ were established during a 20-year period between 1945 and 1965.
- We have started fewer congregations in the past decade than most other religious groups.
- The vast majority of our congregations remain segregated.
- We are significantly "more married" than most US churches
- We are significantly more concentrated with lifelong members than most US churches
- A vast majority of our congregations report few new members in the past five years.
- Churches that use visual projection, drama, special music or praise teams are not growing faster than those that don't.
- The fastest growing churches use worship services for the unchurched ("seeker services"); special ministries such as parenting and singles; and effectively use direct mail.
- The fastest declining churches use less personal media such as newspapers and radio.
- Conflict within churches of Christ are a result of two primary concerns: "power plays" over leadership and worship styles.
- We have substantial conflict over the leadership styles of elders, but relatively little conflict over their personal behavior.
- Churches of Christ appear able to work through almost anything except disruption by a minister over leadership.
- The following things do not characterize our congregations:
  1. A sense of responsibility for social justice;
  2. A desire to deviate from our ethnic identity;
  3. An openness to change;
  4. An openness in dealing with conflict; and
  5. A sense of having well-organized programs of work.

SOURCE: Faith Communities Today, Abilene Christian University Website

### TOTAL POPULATION

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Faulkner County	31,572	46,192	60,006	86,014
City of Vilonia	462	768	1,113	2,106

### POPULATION GROWTH (FAULKNER COUNTY)

	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1990	1990 to 2000	1970 to 2000
Difference	14,620	13,814	26,008	54,442
Percentage	46.3%	30.0%	43.4%	172.4%

### POPULATION GROWTH (CITY OF VILONIA)

	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1990	1990 to 2000	1970 to 2000
Difference	306	345	993	1,644
Percentage	66.2%	44.9%	89.2%	355.8%

Upcoming Schedule

- October 4  
Ladies Day, Maynard, Arkansas (Barbara)
- October 5-8  
Gospel Meeting, Salem, Arkansas
- October 12  
Special Lessons, Skaggs, Pocahontas, Arkansas
- October 16-25  
New England (Massachusetts and Rhode Island)

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LEVY CHURCH OF CHRIST  
P.O. Box 1297  
Conway, AR 72033-1297

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Ted**—ted@evangelisticallyspeaking.net  
P.O. Box 1297  
Conway, AR 72033  
Phone: 501.327.6116

**Marty**—marty@evangelisticallyspeaking.net  
70 Weaver Circle  
Vilonia, AR 72173  
Day Phone: 501.342.3541  
Evening Phone: 501.796.4124

We're on the web at  
<http://www.evangelisticallyspeaking.net>

Please send address changes to  
P.O. Box 1297  
Conway, AR 72033

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***GIFTS OF MEMORIAL AND HONOR***

In Memory of  
DR. CHARLES BRADFORD

by  
Sam and Jamie Query

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In Memory of  
HILARY RUSSELL  
by  
Lisa, Brittany, and Kyndall Knight