

**State of the church
1/19/2014**

Old Testament

Isaiah 61:1-11

New Testament

Heb 2:8-10 8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

1 Cor 15:22-26 2 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

INTRODUCTION

It is my intent each year to make some comments about the local, national and international church. It is good for us to remember where we have come from and from this to get some idea where we are going. That is somewhat of an impossible task but having come from somewhere, with Jesus, we know that wherever we go, it will also be, with Jesus.

Furthermore, in thinking about the National Church and the International Church, it is good for us to try to think beyond ourselves for a moment. We know, by faith, that God is doing something grand in the world. So, we should be looking for it, even it is difficult for us to relate to in our own situation.

I started doing these sermons several years ago based upon statistics that were valid up to the year 2000. Remarkably, those statistics, especially in Sub Saharan Africa have changed dramatically since that date.

INTERNATIONAL

ARAB SPRING of 2011- The jury is still out on whether this had any impact on the Kingdom of God. I believe it will as all major events in the

world are governed by the hand of our Sovereign God. Even in the last few months, we have seen one terrible aspect of the Arab Spring, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, already come full circle. The Muslim Brotherhood has been ousted from power and after much persecution and burning of churches, the Christian Copts are now protected by the Egyptian government.

At the very least, the Muslims in these countries feel a yearning for freedom. However, until they realize that such freedom only comes in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, their fortunes are unlikely to change much. So, we must pray that God will break the blinders from their eyes and give them faith to see that God has a Son and His name is Jesus.

Global Statistics

The Marriage rates are declining in the Western Christian World and the Median Age is increasing. This means that industrialized Christians are divorcing or not marrying and not having babies. But there is great growth of the church in South America, Sub Saharan Africa and Asia.

Based upon Pew Research numbers from 2010.

Christian vs. Other Religions

2.2 Billion Christians (32% of the world's population), 50% Roman Catholic

1.6 billion Muslims (23%)

1 billion Hindus (15%)

500 million Buddhists (7%)

14 million Jews (0.2%)

Those five religions make up over 77% of the Earth's population.

1.1 billion have no affiliated religion (16%)

The Asia-Pacific region also is home to most of the world's Muslims (62%). About 20% of Muslims live in the Middle East and North Africa, and nearly 16% reside in sub-Saharan Africa.

Of the major religious groups covered in this study, Christians are the most evenly dispersed. Roughly equal numbers of Christians live in Europe (26%), Latin America and the Caribbean (24%) and sub-Saharan Africa (24%).

Fully 97% of all Hindus live in the world's three Hindu-majority countries (India, Mauritius and Nepal),

Nearly nine-in-ten Christians (87%) are found in the world’s 157 Christian-majority countries. This report listed 232 countries in 2010, so 67% of the world’s countries are a majority of Christians.

The top ten Christian countries make up half of all Christians.

The top ten Muslim countries make up 66% of all Muslims.

Muslims are a majority in 49 countries, including 19 of the 20 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Only 21% of the world’s countries are majority Muslim.

The greatest share of the global Christian population is in Europe (26%), followed closely by Latin America and the Caribbean (24%) and sub-Saharan Africa (24%). Significant numbers of Christians also live in Asia and the Pacific (13%) and North America (12%).

The largest share of all Christians live in the United States (11%), followed by Brazil (8%), Mexico (5%), Russia (5%), the Philippines (4%), Nigeria (4%), China (3%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3%), Germany (3%) and Ethiopia (2%).

As a whole, Christians are older (median age of 30) than the overall global population (median age of 28). Among the six regions analyzed in this study, Christians are youngest in sub-Saharan Africa (median age of 19), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (27), Asia and the Pacific (28), the Middle East and North Africa (29) and North America (39). Europe has the oldest Christian population (42).

350 Million Pentecostals in the last 100 years.

From 10 Million to 516 Million African Christians since 1900.

From less than a few million Chinese to as many as 100 Million today.

In the Asia-Pacific region, which includes China, we have seen the Christian population grow from 28 million in 1910 to 285 million in 2010.

World Christian Breakdown	<u>%</u>
Roman Catholic	49
Pentecostal and Charismatic	26
Evangelical	13
Orthodox	12

Clearly, there is much work of reformation to do in the church throughout the world. But we must also recognize that the predominant

world religion is Christianity. In fact, we must even get beyond this and begin to think in the terms of Christendom. We must think of a world that is as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters that cover the sea.

NATIONAL

2014- The PCUSA and the American Episcopal Churches continue to bleed members and member congregations at a rapid rate. Most of these Christians and churches are going to more conservative churches and denominations. This is a return to the Bible and should be applauded.

American traditional churches are struggling and many of them are embracing more liberal views or simply modern, contemporary worship in an effort to stem the drain. The result is less Bible in the churches. We have yet to see significant reformation and revival in the United States.

The trending numbers on numbers of Christian affiliation seem to be somewhat steady. There are two notable movers. One, the number of non-denominational Christians is growing slowly but steadily. Also, the number of people with no religious preference is growing at about 1% per year.

Phil Robertson makes my list- The flap with what Phil said revealed a great deal about our cultural shift. The opposition to Phil's view that marriage and sex should only be between a man and a woman in marriage is now universally rejected in the mainstream media and academia. This rejection also includes the sports and entertainment world. Furthermore, this opposition extends in great strength to our government schools. There is no freedom to support anything Phil said or the reasons he said what he did. In the government school arena, Phil is just what Duck Dynasty had hoped to make of him, a neanderthal, a swamp-boy, a redneck, an uneducated bigoted, backwards, antiquated, extremist Christian.

That is the story told daily on the nightly news, the evening sitcoms, the government school public speak, and even on ESPN. This is so astonishing because most Americans still don't think this way. Most Americans are still somewhat traditional. But the left has been enormously successful in shutting down any public spoken opposition.

That is why the Phil Robertson deal was such a breath of fresh air. And we should all learn to speak the truth in love. Sure, we should love. I think we've got that part but we have been kowtowed into silence and we need to repent of that.

I hope we feel the weight of how much we have capitulated to the world. I know I do. Basic biblical beliefs about marriage, creation, God's

view of pregnancy and babies, are vehemently resisted and attacked in the mainstream media, the government schools and the sports and entertainment world. And for some reason, we shut down when these real haters pipe up. We need to get a bold voice!

A significant question is Do you think religion is increasing its influence or decreasing its influence in American culture? That number of Americans who think religion is decreasing in influence has grown from 39% in 2001 to 76% in 2013. No doubt some of that is the political winds but many Christians are very frustrated with what is going on in our culture. But instead of being bold and biblical, we keep our heads down.

Do you believe in God? 87% yes, 11% no

Do you believe in Heaven? This number is pretty constant 40 years, about 85% of Americans.

Do you believe in Hell? This number has grown significantly from 66% to 75%.

Do you believe in the devil? 1990-55%, 2007-70%

2012-13- Augustine Presbytery Church Planting Network- The CREC is doing well in the Reformation of Worship, Doctrine, Education and practical Christian living. We need to plant many new churches to grow this reformation.

LYNCHBURG

The church continues to grow wide and deep. The reformed churches are growing. Liberty University has very positive influence. Thomas Road Baptist Church and Jonathan Falwell are faithfully preaching and teaching the Bible.

Most of the Christians in Lynchburg confess the Bible to be the infallible and authoritative Word of God. This is great common ground and the basis of all reformation and revival. As we have opportunity to teach God's Word, we should expect dramatic results in individuals, families, churches and the entire city.

In our own denomination, many men from our own little CREC are having a tremendous influence.

PROVIDENCE CHURCH SPEEDBUMPS AND MILESTONES SPEEDBUMPS

We have had several ladies who continue to struggle with various health issues. We have also had a couple of families in crisis. Some elderly parents and grandparents continue to suffer or have passed away.

I am encouraged by your love, mercy, empathy and ministry to one another in these various trials. As far as a congregation goes, these sorts of trials are not going to go away. We will always have someone among us who is suffering at some level. This means that we need to learn to minister in these things for the long haul. Do not grow weary in doing good. And I commend you for the good that you have done for one another. Keep it up and learn love and mercy even more this year.

2013- We are learning obedience from the things that we suffer.

MILESTONES

Church Growth- We have the distinct advantage of bringing up children in a way that grows the church deep. And as God blesses the wombs of our wives and mothers, we can also grow the church wide.

Fellowship Meal 2!?

AS OF 2014-We now have 174 members of the church with a total of 194 regular attenders.

From our 31 child-bearing mothers, God has blessed them with 130 children. Of these, 122 are still living in the homes of Providence Church. That's a bunch! The average number of children per family in our church is now 4.2 and several of you are still in the child-bearing age. So, y'all are doing your job to be fruitful and replenish the Earth.

Replenishing the Earth is good but we want our fruitfulness to do more than that. We want it to increase the number of names in Christ's Kingdom on Earth and in Heaven. So, we are not just to have a lot of children. We are to multiply *faithful* children. This means that *you* must be faithful AND that you must raise them faithfully. Do not think you have done your job just to get them out of the womb and up to the baptismal font. That is good. It is glorious. And it is just the beginning. Make sure they love what you love and they will serve Christ all of their days.

Babies 2013- Rook Giles, William Harris, Averie Chrisman

Baptisms 2013- Those babies, plus Elisha Nelson.

Marriages 2013- Michael Phillips to Liz. Alex Mason to Andrea.

It is wondrous to receive children into our midst and a great glory to receive them into Christ's Church. We continue to have people join our church from Baptist backgrounds. This continues to amaze and please me.

We seldom argue or discuss baptism proper, or even the fine points of paedocommunion. Even without this, our people see the truth in the beauty of what we are doing here and embrace this goodness. This tells me that we are doing something right.

New Members 2013- Akers, Sweazey, Mason, Cassin

We also have about 20 new folks in regular attendance who may join the church in 2014.

We currently have 174 members and four babies on the way. If you recall, Anna Fletcher was our 100th member and we gave her a \$100 savings bond to commemorate the event. Savannah Santini was our 150th member and we gave her a \$150 savings account to commemorate that event. We are likely to hit 200 this year. So, the interval is getting shorter between growths of 50 members and we wonder who the recipient of the \$200 award will be?

Location- Want to stay here. Pray for wisdom.

Families leaving the church-Michael and Liz Phillips.

Providence Friday School- Going strong and growing.

Wilson Debate and Conference- none this year.

Reformation Day Ball and All Saint's Day Games- Our biggest celebration ever with multiple day games for men. Sunday games with two huge bouncy castles and games for all. It was a smashing success.

Excommunication 2013- Tracey Davis

Reformed Pastor's Prayer Meeting- Uh, well, limping.

The Keep- being used for sewing, ladies' studies, showers, men's prayer, elder and deacon meetings.

Men's Prayer Meeting- Much greater attendance since we occupied The Keep

Men's Forum- Between Babel and Beast-Peter Leithart, Life Together-Dietrich Bonhoffer, Death by Living- N.D. Wilson, Beowulf-Seamus Haney version.

Ladies Study- Tried to coordinate better with men's books doing Life Together and Death by Living.

This new year of 2014-We don't know but God does. Let us be faithful and leave the rest up to the Lord. We should refocus our minds on the fundamentals.

What is Success?- Bonhoffer. **NO Wish Dream.** Love Jesus, Worship in Spirit and Truth, Confess our sins, Forgive freely, Raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Practical obedience.

Christian Education- It is imperative that we keep our kids founded in God's Word for every area of their lives. Make sure they understand that

faithfulness in their studies is because they are before the Lord. God rules all of His creation. He is the Lord of history, biology, music, theology, philosophy, art, math and science.

2014- We start the year off with five expectant mothers. We are excited about this because we believe God's promises to us and to our children. The Lord has clearly blessed us with many children and that is a blessing, OUR children are a blessing.

But we need to remind ourselves that the goal is not to have as many children as possible or even as the Lord blesses us with. The goal is to have as many faithful children as the Lord blesses us with.

Raising godly children is an immense amount of work but there is no greater work, no higher calling. Do not take your duties lightly. I also want to admonish those of you like me who have older children, some leaving the home and some rapidly entering adulthood. Do not stop being a parent. Your teens and young adults want and need you. Finish the course.

Husbands, love and appreciate your wives. We have the best women in the world and they should know that.

Wives, honor and support your husbands. We have the best men in the world and they should know that.

I feel privileged to be the pastor of such people who love Jesus, who desire to be obedient, who embrace the Church, Christian marriage, raising godly children, growing in grace, always reforming. And who do all of this together.

Wherever we are going, we are not there, yet. In fact, we never will be. We must continue to grow. We must continue to learn. We are likely to have more speed bumps along the way as we raise our children and as we expand our influence in the community. This will try us all. How will we deal with trials? How will we deal with temptations? How will we love one another when there are large and grievous sins to forgive? While I do not want to hasten any of these problems upon us, they will come. We must be growing up in the faith now, so that we have the ability to be godly then.

APPLICATION

Our task is not an easy one but it is a simple one. We must learn to worship God as God. This comes from understanding who He is according to His Word. We must understand what He has done in sending His Son to the earth to save it. We must understand the empowering work of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy of the calling for which we are called. If we do this then God will bless us and give us influence far beyond what we have

hoped for. He will rise up and fight our battles for us. He will prove victorious in our lives, in our homes, in our church, in this city and beyond. We must simply be faithful.

We have begun well. We must keep Christ before us as we seek to see His will done here on earth as it is in heaven. We must seek **to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**

Therefore-Paul follows this up in **Chapter 4:1-2** with a therefore. Based upon our text we are to do something. This something is vital to our faith which overcomes the world. Our message is simple and grand.

Be faithful where God has called you. This is living by faith. And it is our faith that overcomes the world. If you are a father, then father well. Mothers, do likewise. If you teach, do it with gusto. If you build houses, build them well. Do this with meekness producing the fruit of the Spirit. Learn Christ and worship the Father in His name and by His Spirit. This will produce a deep, broad Christian filled up with the fullness of God. That fullness is Christ, Himself.

Enjoy all of it. Teach this joy to your children. Live it out before them so that they grow to love and take joy in the same things you love and take joy in. Of course, our greatest joy is in Christ and His love for us. Then we find joy in gathering with His people, exhorting one another on to love and good works. This life of Christ in His Church is a joyous celebration of God's mercy and love to us in Christ. If you show this in the way that you live, your children will grow to love Him, too.

Our flesh sometimes recoils from such simplicity. We want to do something more because we still have not come to understand that having Christ is having everything. Until we know this and teach our children, we don't have a right to do anything else. When we master these basics, the Lord will be quick to give us the fruit of knowing Him. That fruit will be in greater works in God's kingdom, growth in the church, honor in the gate, influence in our city and culture and many other wonderful blessings. Let us first learn to love Christ and leave all of these outcomes up to Him.

Prov 3:13-18 13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. 17 Her ways are ways of

pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

When we understand the glory of our faith in transforming us into Christians, with all the meaning of that word evident and manifested to the world, then the Lord will give us riches and honor. He has already promised us everything in Christ. When we have got Christ, then everything is at our disposal. But why would He give us the world if we have not got Christ? Why would He give us the prize until we have been found faithful in the race? So, let us embrace Christ; all of Him; all that the Father has revealed in His Word to us by His Holy Spirit. Let us learn the vast riches of Christ and be systematically changed into His image. Then, and only then, shall we expect the Lord to bring us the great harvest of our labors.