

## NEWS

**Relda and Pat Marshall** made their trip to Houston and back last Monday and Tuesday. She got a good report and was told that she is still cancer free—**Catherine Moss** had two root canals done the early part of this past week. She had much pain associated with this—**Enoch Waldrep's mother** is much improved at last word. She has been taken off of the ventilator—**Paul Chapman** went to the Houston area the latter part of this past week to help move his mother into another facility—**The Rogers** went to Wichita, KS Thursday (continued on page 3)

### ELDERS:

**Bob Arnold** 563-2977  
**Leon Goff** 572-6809  
**Kendall Johnson** 572-9306

### DEACONS:

**Ron Burns** 577-9978  
**Ricky Davis** 572-9428  
**Ken Ferguson** 572-4135  
**Pat Marshall** 572-9347

### SERVICES:

#### Sunday

**Bible Study** 9:45 AM  
**Worship** 10:30 AM  
**Worship** 6:00 PM

#### Wednesday

**Ladies Class** 10:00 AM  
**Bible Study** 7:00 PM

### PREACHERS:

**Jared Rogers** 717-3788  
**Leon Goff** 572-6809

### ASSIGNMENTS FOR:

**August 30, 2015**

#### Serving The Lord's Supper

##### Sunday Morning

Scripture: Zach Willeford

**Paul Chapman**      **Randy Blackmon**  
**Colton Fulmer**      **Jeron McGough**

##### Sunday Evening

**Paul Chapman**      **Randy Blackmon**

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### PRAYERS

**Sun. AM—Alec Capel (Opening)**

—**Phil Brown (Closing)**

**PM—Richard Tapparo (Opening)**

—**Andrew Arnold (Closing)**

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**A.M.—Ken Ferguson**

**P.M.—Kendall Johnson**

(call Pat Marshall if unable to serve)

Southside  
Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 242  
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75456

**Think It Over**—If you were to die today...Where would you spend eternity? To all who love God, and to those who do not, but should, to all who are weary and heavy laden; to all who are lonely and sad; to all who sin and need a Savior, and to whosoever will come a hearty welcome is extended.

# Southside Church of Christ

## Bulletin

1220 E. Ferguson Rd. Mt. Pleasant, Texas 75455

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Website: [www.thesouthsidechurch.com](http://www.thesouthsidechurch.com)

Volume XXII

August 23, 2015

Number 34

## Experience Driven Church

By Wes McAdams

I stumbled across a blog post entitled , “Why are Churches of Christ Shrinking?” The author’s premise is that churches of Christ are shrinking because they fail to recognize our shift in culture. “Younger generations,” he says, “come into our worship services looking for an *experience*. And what do they get? A lecture. Information.” The author claims the churches of Christ will lose many of our 18-35 year olds if we don’t adopt, what I call an “Experience Driven Church” model.

As a member of the church of Christ, and one who falls into the 18-35 year old group, I have something to say about this.

First, to a certain extent, I agree with him. After all, we live in a culture which is experience driven. People value experiences. Theme parks, rock concerts, movie theaters, etc. all capitalize on our experience driven culture. All reports indicate that our economy is in a poor state, yet you wouldn’t know it by looking at ticket sales. People will still line up around the block and fork over unbelievably large sums of money for an experience.

Is it any wonder that this experience driven culture is looking for an experience driven church? It is inevitable that those religious groups, willing to offer a tailored experience, will grow numerically in our current experience driven climate.

Here are some things about emotional experiences which appeal to the masses:

### 1. An experience does not challenge.

It does not force you to alter your thinking, your life, or your behavior. An experience simply makes you *feel*; while asking nothing in return. There were certainly experiences in Scripture, and the crowds loved them! The Israelites miraculously crossed the Red Sea; that would be quite the experience, wouldn't you say? After the crossing, they sang, they danced, and they played the tambourine (**Exodus 15:1-21**). But, just a few short verses later, (when life brought challenges) the same crowd was dissatisfied (**Exodus 15:24**).

When Jesus fed the five thousand, healed the sick, and raised the dead, people flocked to Him. But, when Jesus challenged them, the experience driven followers left (**John 6:68**). In other words, those who stayed were those who were motivated by faith.

### 2. An Experience has no boundaries.

The aforementioned blog post encourages churches of Christ to incorporate mood lighting, video, music, body movement and social media into the worship experience. I'm sure he's right, this kind of experience will draw a crowd.

But, here's something to consider, experience driven churches will never be able to keep up with others in their experience driven industry. MTV and Disney will always have more money and will be

able to provide a more engaging experience. Those are the kinds of groups with whom these experience driven churches are trying to compete. They will always struggle, because people will always want brighter, faster, and more exciting experiences. After all, an experience has no boundaries.

But, when did our goal become to provide the most engaging experience in town? You see, I thought our goal was to please our Heavenly Father (**2 Corinthians 5:9**). While experiences have no boundaries, our Heavenly Father does, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace...all things should be done decently and in order" (**1 Corinthians 14:33, 40**). The question isn't, "What experience can we offer to keep people here?" The question is, "What can we do to communicate our praise to the Father in a way that is well pleasing to Him?"

### 3. An experience validates.

Experience driven churches leave their members feeling validated and justified. The Crowds interpret their good feelings as an indication, from God, they're doing alright. A person can go out on Saturday night, drinking and fornicating, but if they have a good "worship experience" on Sunday morning, they feel as if God has stamped His approval on them, saying, "You're still in my grace. You have nothing to worry about." However, this is what His word says:

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we many know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (**1 John 2:3-6**).

The test for being in Christ has nothing to do with feelings or a good experience in worship. The test has to do with faithfulness, doing our absolute best to keep His commandments and walk as He walked.

### Should We Become an Experience Driven Church?

I'm not advocating an emotionless, stoic, spiritual existence. I'm not saying that there is no experience to be had in New Testament worship. What I am saying is that we cannot be experience driven. We must be driven to please God. In pleasing God, we will have a substantive experience, rather than a shallow emotional experience.

Pleasing God is experienced by faith, rather than by a physical or emotional experience. I cannot yet see God's smile when I please Him. I cannot yet hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I cannot yet feel His loving hand upon me, patting me on the back.

But, by faith I have an assurance and conviction of the things I cannot experience with my flesh (**Hebrews 11:1**).

I will not put my confidence in the experiences of the flesh. Nor will I encourage others to do so, by promoting an experience driven religion. Instead, I will teach and preach the religion of Scripture; the religion of faith in Jesus Christ. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (**Romans 10:17**). "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (**Hebrews 11:6**).

### Gospel Meeting

**Dan Peters** is the speaker in the meeting next weekend, **August 28-30**, at the **Belt Road church in Texarkana, TX, 7:00 PM Friday and Saturday.**

**NEWS** (continued from back page) and Jared came home yesterday. Stacey's mother will bring her and the children back next Thursday—Remember **Kris Ferguson, Jr., Relda Marshall, Pat Brown, Dorothy and Charles Kyle, Deborah Brown, Tammy Willeford, and Judy Hinson**—Remember our **Shut-ins: Clayton Bellamy, Loyd Clark, Shirley Ferguson, Lenelle Latimer, Maurine Lee, Irma May, and Lelda Thompson.**