

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

- Week of January 30, 2022 -

Sunday Morning Service -----	32
Sunday Evening Service -----	29
- No Wednesday Evening Service Due To The Snowstorm -	

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

- Week of January 30, 2022 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 783.97
Love Offering -----	\$ 50.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/30/22:	\$ 833.97

- Week of January 23, 2022 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,412.00
Love Offering -----	\$ 50.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/23/22:	\$ 1,462.00

- Week of January 16, 2022 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 946.00
Love Offering -----	\$ 50.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/16/22:	\$ 996.00

- Week of January 9, 2022 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,598.00
Love Offering -----	\$ 20.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/09/22:	\$ 1,618.00

- Week of January 1, 2022 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 2,038.00
Love Offering -----	\$ 50.00
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 01/02/22:	\$ 2,088.00

- Week of December 26, 2021 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,105.35
TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 12/26/21:	\$ 1,105.35

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, Who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*



THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!

During the early part this pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Sadly, some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing **THEMSELVES** of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, most of our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE:

1. *By mail* - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. *Drop it off* - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. *Online* - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithelive.com/give?c=433047>

**WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE!
YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR RENEWED OUTREACH EFFORTS!**

Church Directory

Todd W. White -----	Pastor
Lois Mae Floyd -----	Pianist/ Organist
Mickie Shatwell -----	Evening Pianist
Derek Quinnelly -----	Greeter
Larry Byars -----	S.S. Teacher
Larry & Mary Byars, Derek Quinnelly, Harrison White -----	Outreach
Bertha Segebart -----	Custodian
Shirley & Brenda White -----	Flowers
Seth White -----	Sound/Video

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SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY

REMINDER

Volume XXVIII

February 6, 2022

Number 6



Technology Cannot Replace Presence

Why the Church Will Always Gather

by Tony Payne

Here I sit, gentle reader, on one side of a screen in Sydney, Australia, with you (very likely) looking at another screen in some other part of the world — and I am hoping that something remarkable will happen. I am praying that, though separated by geography and time, we will nevertheless meet together for the next few minutes through words on the screen.

It's a miracle when you think about it.

If I write this piece well, you will "hear" my thoughts and my voice, even though, in fact, you may be hearing nothing but the soft whirl of the fan in your laptop. Whether it happens asynchronously (in a book or in an article like this one) or synchronously (in a Zoom meeting or on a phone call), we find ourselves able to connect, communicate, and relate to one another without physically being in each other's presence.

REMOTE, PARTIAL JOY

Humans have been connecting like this since the invention of smoke signals. God has given us this remarkable capacity to project our minds and hearts and personalities to other places, and even other times, through dispatching representations of ourselves in words or images.

The New Testament penmen, of course, made good use of this blessing. They saw their letters as an important vehicle for bringing their teaching, encouragement, and admonition to the people they loved and longed for from afar.

The little epistles of 2nd and 3rd John are a fascinating case study. In both letters, John rejoices to discover that his people are "walking in the truth" (II John 4; III John 3), and encourages and exhorts them to keep doing so. In both cases, however, he concludes by saying that although he has more to say, he'd much prefer to do it in person:

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full" (II John 12; see also III John 13-14).

There's real joy in hearing that someone is persevering in the faith, and a joy also in writing to encourage them. But it's a partial joy — a joy that anticipates its fulfillment when we are face to face.

TECHNOLOGY: RELATIONAL BLESSING OR CURSE?

The superiority of physical presence is so obvious that it seems strange even to argue for it. Who would be so perverse as to prefer a text message from our beloved to having dinner with her at our favorite restaurant? Or who would choose a phone call with our mother over the joy of a warm embrace and a leisurely conversation?

But we are strange and perverse creatures, with a long track record of choosing lesser joys over greater ones. As a result, we not only deny ourselves those greater possibilities, but in favoring lesser realities, we end up distorting and spoiling them.

As many others have pointed out, this dynamic seems to be happening in our cultural moment with respect to the virtual world of the Internet and social media. There is a disturbing trend to underplay the joy of physical presence, and to overplay the benefits of virtuality. We find ourselves so immersed in the captivating, constantly morphing, fast-paced stream of the virtual, that we have

(continued inside)

started to lose our taste for the solid ground of physical relationship. But like so many of God’s gifts, the blessings of virtuality, when misused or overused, become a burden and a curse.

It is not my task in this short piece to explore why or how this has happened, but I will briefly mention one important theological trajectory that relates to the importance of our physical church gatherings.

ISOLATION OF SELF

As Carl Trueman (among others) has recently documented, one of the strange aspects of our modern Western culture is the psychologizing of our selves and identities.

The steady, inexorable rejection of God as Creator and Lord in Western society has eventually thrown us back on ourselves and our inner lives as the source of morality, identity, and the self. It is hardly surprising, in a culture where we define ourselves by expressing our feelings and thoughts, that we should find virtual connections so attractive.

Our alienation from God and his created order has become a kind of rebellion against the bodily, physical nature of our created selves. And this rebellion leads to dysfunction, because our bodily nature is integral to who we are as God’s creatures. We are made to relate not only to God, creature-to-Creator, but also to one another, *creature-to-creature*. Our bodily existence is ordered for this purpose. As D.B. Knox puts it:

“The body is marvellously contrived to accomplish its ends in relationship, with all the pleasure, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual that relationship brings. The eye, the face, the language structure of our brains, are designed to express our inner being to one another.” (The Everlasting God, 52)

This relates particularly to the redeemed relationships that God brings into being when he re-creates us in Christ. We are restored not just to right relationship with God, but also to right relationship with one another. Jews and Gentiles can now break bread together, greet each other with a holy kiss, even marry one another — all unthinkable impossibilities before Christ broke the wall of hostility that divided us (Ephesians 2:14).

CHURCH IS A GATHERED PEOPLE

This gospel reconciliation is why the church — the gathered assembly of God’s people — is such a dominant feature of the new life we have together in Christ. In Christ, the Holy Spirit draws us together: to learn together from the word (Acts 2:42), to eat and drink together in Christ’s memory (I Cor. 11:23–26), to raise our voices together in prayer and song (Ephesians 5:18–19), and to encourage one another with loving prophetic words of exhortation, comfort, and admonition (I Cor. 14:1–3). All of these are creaturely activities, requiring creaturely presence with one another to fulfill their purposes.

I’ve often wondered if this thought lies behind the command of Hebrews 10:24, to not forsake meeting together. In much of his letter, the author of Hebrews emphasizes that the fulfillment

of God’s plans in Christ involves a movement from the old covenant (with its physical, earthly temple and priesthood) to the new covenant of Christ’s eternal, spiritual redemption, through which we now have access to the very presence of God (Hebrews 9:14; 10:19–22; 12:18–24).

Was the author of Hebrews concerned that the obsolescence of the physical temple and priesthood might lead his readers to no longer see the need for a physical gathering with one another?

We should not speculate too far, but it’s certainly worth noting the form of his exhortation. After urging them to draw near to the heavenly holy of holies with full assurance of faith, he then says,

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25).

“Exhorting one another” is the counterpoint to **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.”** It’s an essential activity that not meeting together prevents us from doing. And encouraging each other is so because it is the means by which we stir one another up to love and good works as we wait for Christ’s return.

Given the weakness and sinfulness still present in our bodies, including the desires of the flesh that assail us, we need to gather regularly with other bodies — so that we can teach and encourage and spur each other on with our whole selves. The various activities we do with our bodies when we gather in fellowship are oriented to this purpose. They are done in the worship of Christ, and to the glory of God, but they are also very much done with and for each other — especially in building each other up in love and good deeds.

PHYSICAL OR VIRTUAL?

This vital aspect of gathering together is much diminished, or in some cases ruled out altogether, by neglecting a physical gathering in favor of virtual ones.

For example, the value and experience of sitting side by side, listening to a preacher, is qualitatively different from reading a printed sermon or watching one on YouTube — not only because we pick up different aspects (in the voice and gesture and physical presence of the speaker), but because we are in a different place and posture as listeners. We are sitting **with each other** under God’s Word, listening **together** to the teaching and encouragement that his word brings us. **Your presence next to me is part of my listening.**

Likewise, when we sing, we sing not only to God for his glory and praise, but to one another for mutual encouragement and teaching (Ephesians 5:21–22; Colossians 3:15–16). We can sing joyfully to Christ anywhere, **but only in the gathering can we sing to one another, making melody in our hearts to the Lord as we do so.**

The same is true when we talk together and encourage one

another around the word. When we are physically together, we not only enjoy a richer engagement with each other, but we have more opportunities to see and hear what’s going on with the people around us. We can sense when someone is troubled or joyful or heartbroken or disengaged or lonely or just new to our gathering and hoping to meet someone. We can proactively love each other, and speak the words that spur one another on to love and good deeds.

JOY OF GATHERING AGAIN

Can these various goals be accomplished via email or a Facebook post or an article like this one? To some limited extent, yes — and what a blessing that is! But to allow the blessings and possibilities of the virtual to divert us from the joys and benefits of real, bodily fellowship would be a strange bargain indeed.

This has been the reality for us here in Sydney over the past eighteen months. We’ve had many months of lockdowns and other restrictions that have prevented us from gathering physically as churches. For about half of all the Sundays since March 2020, we’ve been stuck at home, trying to encourage one another as God’s people through virtual connections of various

kinds. We have certainly been very thankful for these mercies (even if they have sometimes felt like small mercies).

But the joy we are now experiencing is the joy of real, face-to-face fellowship. I pray that we, and you, will continue to treasure that physical presence with each other, and never be distracted or diverted from it by the good but lesser benefits of the virtual.

- Tony Payne, Publishing Director of Matthias Media



ATTENTION ALL MEN! PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE 2022 MEN'S ADVANCE



**Friday, April 29,
at 7:00 p.m.
and Saturday,
April 30,
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

The Men's Advance has been hosted by Bible Baptist Church of Stillwater for over ten years and is attended by men from all across the Midwest. The goal of the Men's Advance is to impact the lives of men spiritually to make a difference in their homes, churches, relationships and community.

The meeting runs on a two-day format, beginning this year at 7:00 P.M. on Friday, April 28, 2022 and concluding at approximately 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, April 29. Again this year, we will again meet at the Payne County Expo Center, just east of Stillwater. Meals are provided on-site to allow the men more time to fellowship with one another, and include a full smoked meat dinner Friday night, complete breakfast Saturday morning, and a great lunch Saturday afternoon. In addition to the Advance, a golf tournament is open to all attendees and precede the Advance earlier on Friday.

The service times and break-out sessions are the focus of the event. Here, the men are challenged to examine their lives in the light of God's Word. Both humorous and contemplative skits are interspersed to reinforce the truths presented. Special music provided by the Bible Baptist Church Men's Group and others adds to the wonderful congregational hymns, including the traditional "It Is Well With My Soul" finale.

REGISTRATION BEGINS SOON!