



SACA NEWS

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HOW TO KILL A CHURCH

Lifeway Research conducted a study revealing that more Protestant churches closed in 2019 than opened — continuing a decades-long congregational slide that is only expected to accelerate. The study analyzed church data from 34 Protestant denominations and groups and found that 4,500 churches closed in 2019, while about 3,000 new congregations were started. The study also pointed to the hastening of church closures. In 2014, it found, there were 3,700 church closures, compared with 4,500 in 2019. The sad reality is that the onset of COVID-19 and now facing the post-COVID fallout, the number of churches closing has been greatly exacerbated. Why are so many churches closing and what can we do about it?

Author and church health expert Thom Rainer wrote a book in 2010 entitled, "Autopsy of a Deceased Church." Over the last couple of years, Rainer has updated much of the information and has discovered the most common traits of a church that closes its doors for good.

Now, it should be noted that there is a myriad of reasons that churches may face declines and even death. Rainer discusses many of these reasons in detail, but in his latest updates, he identifies two main reasons that were evident in virtually every church that ultimately hastened the demise of a congregation.

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Ministry Happenings. . .

Lees Chapel AC Church, Four Oaks, NC, held their annual "Ground Hawg Supper" on Saturday, Feb. 4th from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. They served pancakes and sausage.

Northside Community Church, Knightdale, NC, is hosting their 6th annual Pot of Gold 5 K on Saturday March 18, 2023. This supports the Northside Compassion Project and WE NEED YOU! If we get 100 Northsiders to sign up, Pastor Adrian will run the 5K in a green tutu (and who doesn't want to see that?!?) Registration is \$30.00 per person. Sign up [HERE](#) and be a part of a fun day that supports a great ministry!



Penny Crusade is the largest fundraising mechanism for Advent Christian missions. Last year, North American Advent Christians raised over \$550,000 to sustain ministry works in over 20 countries. We invite you to use these promotional materials not only to fundraise but to help cultivate a mission-minded culture within your church. This year's promotional focus is on the Tanzanian outreach to the Hadzabe people group in the Serengeti. Promotional materials may be ordered by clicking [here](#).

Each January, a Penny Crusade Packet is mailed to each Advent Christian church to help them organize a fundraising campaign for missions. In the packet, you will find Promo Posters, Weekly Bulletin Inserts that accompany each video, Goal Tracker, Promotional Stickers, Ministry Display Map and a DVD with six promotional videos. These materials are to be used together during your time of Penny Crusade Emphasis.

The first culprit was identified as most members became focused on their own preferences. Personal preferences in worship style, sermon length, sanctuary temperature, and order of worship represent some of the most common areas where members demanded their way. The mentality completely shifted from “how can I help this church reach the lost?” to “what can this church do for me?” 1 Corinthians 13, often used at weddings, really has more to say in how we are to conduct ourselves in the body of Christ. Our relationships are to be marked by conspicuous love. Consider this: *“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-7) In fact, Jesus said that we should be known by our love. *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:34-35)

The second most evident trait of a dying church was the simple denial that anything was wrong or needed to be addressed. Like the proverbial ostrich that buries its head in the sand, an astounding number of churches are content to ignore the warning signs of an unhealthy church. Declining numbers of conversions, baptisms, volunteers, and attendance are dismissed as being no big deal, or accepted as a sign of the times, with little or no thought of addressing the reasons for the mounting declines. Many congregations are simply unwilling to admit their shortcomings. The words of David come to mind as he came to a place of self-examination. He said, *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* (Psalm 139:23-24)

The encouraging news is that in congregations that humbly and prayerfully addressed these needs in their midst were able to begin a path of revitalization and found new life and ministry. A good place to start is to ask yourself, how healthy is our church? Where are we in need of new life, or a sharpened focus? Your region and your denomination both stand ready to assist you in assessing where you are currently and offer help in finding the path to where you feel the Lord would have you in service to your community.

Rev. Joe Pritchett

In addition, **Northside** held their first Family Fun Night of 2023 on January 22, 2023.

The event was from 5:00 - 7:00 pm and was a great opportunity to connect with others in the church family while having a lot of fun! Boxed dinners were provided.



Banner Chapel AC Church, Benson, NC, held a Chicken Pastry Supper on Saturday, January 28th from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm which was sponsored by the Women’s Mission Societies. Plates were \$10. They also held an auction that same night.

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Coming Events...

February 25	Eastern North Carolina Conference Meeting, Stones Creek AC Church, Four Oaks, NC
March-April	Penny Crusade
April 2	Advent Christian Retirement Communities Sunday

Philippians 1:4-6

⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.