

# Report of the 2023 Work of the Trilacoochee church of Christ

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. It is authorized by God
- B. How the work of the Lord is to be supported,
- C. The uses made of the contribution as instructed in The New Testament,
- D. How Evangelism is to be supported,
- E. How Edification and Limited Benevolence are to be supported,
- F. The scriptures authorize a public report of the work of the local church.

## I. HOW THE WORK IS SUPPORTED

- A. The work of the Lord is supported by the freewill offerings of Christians, as instructed in the Word - 2Cor. 8:1-5
- B. The members of this congregation do so with purpose of heart, pleased to do the will of God without public acknowledgement - Matt. 6:1-4
- C. The uses made of the contribution as instructed in the New Testament:
  1. Evangelism: teaching the Gospel to the lost.
  2. Edification: building up Christians through preaching and teaching (includes providing and maintaining a place for worship and Bible study)
  3. Limited Benevolence: ministering to the physical needs of poor saints.
- D. How evangelism is supported:
  1. Phil. 4:16-17; 2Tim. 2:2
- E. How are we to fund the preaching of the Gospel?
  1. What are the scripturally authorized means and methods of supporting the work of the church?
  2. 1Cor. 16:1-2; 2Cor. 8:1-6, 7-12
- F. How edification is supported:
  1. Who is to support this work and who is to do this work? Do the scriptures supply a plan?
  2. Every member of a local congregation has a Christ-ordained role and purpose - Eph. 4:11-13, 16
- G. The Bible authorizes a public report.
  1. Do the scriptures authorize a public report of the work of the church? Should we keep these matters hidden or speak openly of them?
  2. Acts 14:21-23, 26-27

## II. 2023 EVENTS AND WORK

- A. Rejoiced at the baptisms of Chandy & Maria Jacobs and Don & Eila Meusling - four new members of our family.
- B. We witnessed a few fallen disciples restored by confession.
- C. We were delighted to receive as members of this congregation persons who placed membership with our family: John and June Krenzelo, Tom and Michelle Weatherly, Hannah and Rebekah Richardson, Elijah Dean, Lilly Sullivan, Jared Sink, and Olivia Dann -- ten new family members.

- D. Sadly, we were compelled to exercise local church discipline for two who departed the faith: Verlyn Bullington and Teri Walker.
- E. In addition, Ron & Janice Byers began worshiping with us after assembling in Brooksville for a time.
- F. We mourned the passing of our dear sister Martha Laine in November, as well as others among our extended family and friends.
- G. We had two Gospel Meetings with Kent Heaton in the Spring and with Jeff Himmel in the Fall.
- H. We planned for our annual sing and diligently spread the word about it; and, recently held it with a considerable number of folks from neighboring congregations and lot of young folks from Florida College. 144 in attendance; very likely a record attendance for Trilacoochee.
- I. Until he became ill last fall, we had the custom of having Doug Sanders present a sermon on fifth Sunday evenings, for which I am grateful (four times each year). We look forward to Doug recovering enough to resume this.
- J. We also enjoy the practice of having many different brethren present Wednesday invitations. We encourage others to participate as well.
- K. We were delighted to hear Haden Black present a sermon and look forward to hearing more.
- L. We had challenging Bible studies in the adult Bible classes. We are currently studying Ephesians through 2Thessalonians, and The Life that is to Come.
- M. Our Thursday Indepth Bible class on second and fourth weeks each month typically has about fifteen persons in live attendance, and about ten who view the live stream. However, within a week, we have between 150 and 300 persons who view the class online.
- N. The Women's Bible Study meets on first and third Thursday afternoons each month at the Melton residence and usually has fifteen or more in attendance. At present, Katrina Bracewell is directing this class.
- O. We currently have an archive of over 900 videos of Bible classes and sermons on Facebook available to anyone who wants to view them. We average between 80 and 400 viewers each week.
- P. We updated our website, and according to the raw data get over 110,000 hits on it per year. All sermon recordings, including outlines and charts, all classes, invitations, and bulletins are uploaded weekly.
- Q. Our daily Bible message has grown to well over 1,700, and we get an average of 200+ views per day including an average of six shares.
- R. Our world has changed; electronic media is the way people are most commonly reached today. Here at Trilacoochee, we seem to have made the transition well. At the same time, personal, face to face contact is still the most effective means of reaching people.
- S. Without prompting or specific organization, the family here looks out for each other. When someone is ill or injured, someone, and often several, take the initiative to send them a message, or a card, or a call to encourage and let them know that they are loved. Their needs will be addressed, whether food, rides to the doctor, or help at home. This is a true manifestation of

benevolence and love, and is as an important part of the authorized work of a church family as is evangelism and edification.

- T. We experienced an increase in our attendance over the years of 2019 through 2022. Our increase over the past year has been substantial and consistent.
- U. We noted a considerable increase in our offerings in 2023.

### **III. 2023 PHYSICAL WORK PROJECTS**

- A. We installed window blinds and removed dead trees from the parking area.
- B. Jay Winger cleans the outside of the building, he and Wendi installed the window blinds, and they prepare and provide the monthly financial reports.
- C. Work parties are eagerly attended to take care of maintenance. There were work parties to do repairs, improvements, and maintenance on the building.
- D. Max Campbell, Andy Castle, and John Krenzelok take care of mowing the lawn as volunteers.
- E. What often goes unnoticed, but should never go unmentioned -- the members in this congregation clean the building every week and maintain it beautifully -- as volunteers.
- F. And, every week the communion is carefully prepared without fail.
- G. Max & Jill Campbell, Dianna Kenaston, and Donna Heiden have done the work of providing pictures and updating information for our new directory soon to be published and distributed.
- H. They have taken over the work of printing and binding our handmade class books as well.
- I. And what is often taken for granted: Max and Jill arrive early to open up the building, and Scott Black lingers afterward to close it.
- J. Scott Black also keeps the records and uploads them to the members' area of our website.
- K. This is a fact that often goes unstated but should be repeated frequently: The bulk of all the work of a local church is not done by the evangelist; his role is only a minor portion of the sum total of all of the work accomplished. By a wide margin, most of the work of a local church is done by volunteers, members who give of their time and energy to do the countless things that need doing. The work of elders, deacons, teachers, song leaders, treasurer, members who encourage each other and share the Gospel with others, and all of those who give untold hours to maintain a place of assembly is done by unpaid workers in the Kingdom of our Lord. And in my experience, never has that been manifested better than it has been here. God bless you for this!

### **IV. THE WORK OF VOLUNTEERS**

- Treasurer, count offering, make deposits, pay salaries and expenses
- Count attendees
- Keep Insurance policies and inspections current
- Maintain baptistery garments
- Purchase cleaning and paper supplies
- Oversee well, plumbing and septic maintenance
- Assist with building security

- Records maintenance
- Maintain fire extinguishers
- Assist in opening and closing the building
- Maintain fire and carbon monoxide alarms
- Schedule teachers for classes
- Maintain First Aid Kit and safety supplies
- Order all class materials
- Taking attendance
- Schedule readers, waiting on the table
- Prepare for Gospel meetings and special services
- Cleaning the building
- Greeting visitors and making them welcome
- Prepare minutes of elder's meetings
- Record sermons and Bible classes
- Oversee lawn maintenance
- Assist with building security
- Maintain communion preparation schedule
- Prepare communion
- Maintain communion supplies
- Oversee heat and air conditioning maintenance
- Schedule song leaders
- Assist with building maintenance outside scope of janitorial duties
- Direct themed song services
- Assist counting offering
- Select scriptures for Sunday readings
- Maintain emergency call list
- Add prayer list and notifications to Facebook page
- Escort elderly and disabled in and out of the building
- Assist visitors to find seating and amenities
- Participate in emergency notifications
- Assistance during power failures

## **V. 2023 ATTENDANCE**

A. Average attendance was 57 on Sunday morning

1. Highest was 69 on 3/12 & 12/10

2. Lowest was 39 on 1/1

3. This represents an average increase of 7 persons per AM service.

B. Sunday evening average attendance was 41, an average increase of 2 over the previous year.

1. Represents a 28% drop from morning. This is good in view of the fact that most congregations with a Sunday evening service have a 40% drop in attendance. However, we can do better.

2. Highest was 55 on 4/2 & 12/10; Lowest was 23 on 2/26

- C. Wednesday attendance average was 36, an increase of 7 over previous year.
  - 1. This represents a 37% drop in attendance over Sunday morning. We must do better.
  - 2. Highest was 44 on 2/1; Lowest was 22 on 2/22.
- D. Moral issues created by live streaming:
  - 1. It is not a substitute for assembling for worship.
  - 2. It creates an opportunity for dishonesty for some.
- E. Average attendance for past years:
  - 1. 2019 Sunday AM 53; PM 41; Wednesday 33
  - 2. 2020 N/A (no report prepared and delivered)
  - 3. 2021 Sunday AM 42; PM 31; Wednesday 25
  - 4. 2022 Sunday AM 50; PM 39; Wednesday 29
  - 5. 2023 Sunday AM 57; PM 41; Wednesday 36
  - 6. It is evident that we are growing in number. Attendance averages for October 2023 through January 2024 represents even greater increase.
- F. Visitors -- We had over 830 visits from persons who are not members of this congregation.
  - 1. Many of the visits were from members of the church and their families.
  - 2. Non-member visitors received follow up contact when possible.
  - 3. Average of 16 visitors per week, with 5 visitors per service.
- G. Gospel Meeting average attendance: 50 at ten weekday services.
  - 1. High - 73; Low - 40
  - 2. Attendance by members - an average of 34 per service; high 40, low 29  
We must do better!
  - 3. Attendance by visitors - 16 per service
  - 4. High - 33; Low - 6 (Note: visitors outnumbered members at 3 services)
  - 5. Annual singing service in January 2023 - attendance.

## **VI. 2023 OFFERINGS**

- A. 2023 offerings = \$126,953.48
  - 1. Monthly average = \$10,579.46
  - 2. Weekly average = \$2,395.35
  - 3. Largest 3/5 - \$3,296.00; lowest 2/26 - \$1,752.00
  - 4. The Lord has richly blessed us and the disciples who were generous in their offerings.
- B. Average offerings over the years:
  - 1. 2019 offerings = \$98,650.63; weekly = \$1,897.13
  - 2. 2021 offerings = \$101,466.00; weekly = \$1,951.27
  - 3. 2022 offerings = \$113,906.60; weekly = \$2,190.51
  - 4. 2023 offerings = \$126,953.48; weekly = \$2,395.35
- C. Total expenditures = \$96,844.07 representing a gain of \$30,109.41
  - 1. Monthly average expenditures - \$8,070.03
  - 2. Weekly average expenditures - \$1,827.25 (53 Sundays in 2023)

## **VII. SUPPORTING EVANGELISM AND EDIFICATION IN 2023**

- A. We suspended our support for evangelists until such time as we grow in number and offering. At that time, this congregation will resume that good work. At the current rate of growth with which God has blessed us, that should be soon.
- B. Supporting Local Edification in 2023
  - 1. Two 2023 Gospel Meetings: Spring - Kent Heaton; Fall - Jeff Himmel
  - 2. Two additional men received compensation for preaching: Andrew McPherson and Jesse Flowers.
  - 3. Total for Gospel Meetings and guest speakers: \$3,230.81
  - 4. Total for class materials, Internet, and livestreaming of classes and services - \$2,031.98
  - 5. Paul Blake's salary as evangelist
  - 6. Total for local edification in 2023 - \$83,437.78
  - 7. As a percentage of total expenses - 86%. That means that 86 cents of every dollar contributed goes for preaching and teaching the word of God in this community.
  - 8. In 47 years of preaching in seven congregations, I have never seen percentages near that.

## **VIII. 2023 OPERATIONAL EXPENSES**

- A. Total expenditures - \$96,844.07
  - 1. Operational expenses - \$13,406.29 (14% of total expenditures)
  - 2. Operational expenses: electric - \$3,293.60, maintenance supplies - 1,241.84, insurance - \$4,380.78, and miscellaneous.
  - 3. In addition, we installed window blinds - \$1,090.07, and removed two dead trees from the parking area - \$3,400.00.
- B. 2023 Limited Benevolence
  - 1. There were no benevolent needs that required use of the local church treasury to relieve.
  - 2. There were multiple individual benevolent efforts by kind hearted and generous disciples here. Some known to me; most are known only to the persons involved and the Lord.
- C. Policy of Financial Disclosure: Jay Wininger, who serves this congregation as treasurer, generates a monthly financial report distributed in the business meetings, and it details every use made of the offering to the Lord in this place. We wish for all to be informed of the fact that all uses of the offerings are limited to scripturally authorized activities for the church.

## **IX. UPCOMING WORKS FOR 2024**

- A. We are working toward appointing more elders and deacons to serve with those who already labor here in those works.
  - 1. Currently Steve Melton, Larry Winn, Scott Black, and Paul Blake serve as elders. Sam Cooper and Jay Wininger serve as deacons.

2. We are in the midpoint of the careful and prayerful work of seeking men to fill those works. 22 members have made their recommendations for men they believe to be qualified.
  3. Each of these men will be visited beginning today by two or three witnesses to inquire the following:
    - a. Do you believe you are qualified to serve as an elder or deacon?
    - b. Are you willing to undertake this work of the Lord for this congregation?
  4. Following this, the names that remain will be presented to the congregation to consider whether any scriptural objections can be raised against their service.
- B. It is our hope that we will continue to increase in number, both by encouraging our own members to attend more faithfully, as well as reach out to others and gather them into our family here.
  - C. We are planning two Gospel Meetings for this year, and will be planning meetings for coming years as well. Spring Gospel Meeting is May 12-17, 2024 with Mark Copeland. The Fall meeting is with Brent Lewis on November 17-22, 2024.
  - D. We will complete our studies in Ephesians through 2Thessalonians on Sunday mornings, with Steve Melton and Scott Black teaching Colossians through 2Thessalonians.
  - E. We will complete our study of The Life that is to Come on Wednesday. Following these studies, the elders will choose more Bible studies. Requests are welcomed.
  - F. We encourage in home Bible study efforts to continue as well as to grow in the number of persons involved.
  - G. We will continue to handle our own minor repairs, maintenance, and cleaning, which will require volunteers. We have never seemed to have a shortage of volunteers here at Trilacoochee.
  - H. In view of the healthy and substantial offerings of the disciples here, we will consider whether we can offer some support to evangelists in other places.
  - I. As always, we strongly encourage you to be diligent in efforts to find persons with whom you can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

- A. May the Lord richly bless us with opportunities to glorify Him in this community, and may we eagerly embrace and engage them.
- B. Psalm 133:1