

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Terry Carter, Editor



Warning... "There's a Preacher Shortage!"

By Shane Capps

Part 1... Is there a shortage of Preachers in the Christian Church/Church of Christ?

Christianity is dying in America. In Europe, Christianity is only 1% of the total population that attends church. In America Christianity is only 17% of the total population that attends church.

It has been said that within ten years church attendance will be down to 10%. If that comes to pass, it will be the worst spiritual condition our nation has been in since the Revolutionary War of 1776. Christianity and our churches in America are dying. How about our preachers in the full-time ministry?

I listened to a survey from a non-instrumental Church of Christ preacher. He asked and then answered the question, "Is there a preacher shortage among the non-instrumental Church of Christ?" He said...

1. 15% of preachers said that their next move in ministry was to retire from ministry.

2. 44% of preachers said that their next move in ministry was to quit the ministry.

This group said they were going to get out of the full-time ministry. The preacher that was giving this survey was alarmed at these findings.

That means, if these findings are right and they come true, down the road the non-instrumental Church of Christ will lose around 59%-60% of their preachers. 60% of their preachers will be gone. Only 40% of the preachers will still be standing! Only four out of every ten will be left.

That got me thinking! I have always heard that we as the Christian Church/Church of Christ were losing preachers... but are we?

Is there a preacher shortage among the Christian Church/Church of Christ? If there is, how bad is it?

That's what I set out to research, examine, and find out.

These are my findings! I hope they move you as much as they did me. I hope it moves all of us to action!!!

Part 2... What are some of our Bible Colleges saying about a Preacher Shortage?

Here are the three questions I asked the presidents or other staff members of the Bible College on our topic. (See chart below of responses.)

- How many men are in your preaching program with hopes to go into the preaching ministry after finishing their degree?
- How many graduated this year in this program?
- Do you think we have a shortage of preachers?

Before we got off the phone or in their email, I re-asked the third question and added to it.

Name of College	No. in Program	No. of Graduates	Is there a Preacher Shortage?
1. Louisville Bible College:	12	2	Yes
2. Summit Theological Seminary:	6	2	Yes
3. Northeast Ohio Bible College:	5	0	Yes
4. Mid-south Christian College:	3	1	Yes
5. Manhattan Christian College:	22	3	Yes
6. Ozark Christian College:	40	40	Yes
7. St. Louis Christian College:	10	6	Yes
8. Central Christian College:	12	4	Yes
9. Great Lakes Christian College:	?	?	Yes
10. Kentucky Christian University:	10	10	Yes
11. Johnson University:	113	36	Yes
12. Carolina Christian College:	5	8	Yes
13. Alberta Bible College:	3	3	No

Here is the question...

Do you think we have a shortage of preachers? If we do have a shortage, how bad do you think it is? What are your ideas on this topic?

The following is the list of colleges, with the names of the persons I spoke with, and what they said.

1. Louisville Bible College

Spoke to... President Kerry Allen

"Yes, there is a shortage of preachers. It is noticed more in the small rural churches. They can't pay! Churches that are conservative are finding it hard to find preachers that are conservative."

2. Summit Theological Seminary

Spoke to... President Terry Carter

"Yes, there is a shortage of preachers in the church. I get calls all the time from churches looking for a preacher. Churches are also looking for men to do internship preaching ministries."

3. Northeast Ohio Bible College

Spoke to... Dean of the College Don Cooper

"This school only focuses on training preachers for the local ministry. We have a hard time getting students. The younger students want to go to the bigger colleges that are accredited. So NEOBC gets a lot of the older students. Many don't finish the program due to churches hiring them."

"There is a big-time shortage. We are in real trouble!"

4. Midsouth Christian College

Spoke to... President Larry Griffin

"Yes, there is a large preacher shortage. Why? The push for youth ministry, which was good at the start, has now separated the youth from the preacher and church in many ways. Also, the church is no longer raising up boys to be preachers. The push in many of our churches for a great worship experience does not allow for young boys to get into the pulpits. Also not having Sunday night, and Wednesday night, does not allow the chance to get into the

pulpit." Larry often tells the church... *"You send me a man that wants to preach, and I'll train him to preach."*

5. Manhattan Christian College

Spoke to... President Kevin Ingram

"Yes, there is a shortage, and there are a lot of churches looking. Our churches are not preparing men to go into the ministry. There is a need for those who are just going to be preachers."

6. Ozark Christian College

Spoke to... President Matt Proctor

"To answer your other question, yes, I do believe there's a preacher shortage, not only in the Restoration Movement, but across the globe. Of course, many US churches try to find a well-prepared preacher (and other ministry positions) and can't seem to find one. But I'm more haunted by the fact that SO many have yet to hear the Gospel worldwide. The harvest is still plentiful, and the workers are still few. We need many thousands of more preachers, so I say: Godspeed to the work you're doing at Summit! As I pray for Ozark, I pray also for you--that the Lord would use you to send a tidal wave of Gospel workers into the harvest field. Blessings, brother."

Professor of Preaching Mark Scotts added...

"Yes and No! We have a shortage of good preachers. Normally churches can fill the pulpit, but it doesn't mean that they have good preachers. At Ozark, women are being trained as preachers and teachers, but not as "The Preacher." Women are on preaching teams, within the church today."

7. St. Louis Christian College

Spoke to... President Terry Shine

"We do have a shortage!!! There are 350 ministry openings at any given time around the world. It will be getting worse, way worse. I get calls all the time from churches needing a preacher, but I can only tell a preacher that I know who wants to change ministries. The church is not raising up preachers, elders, and deacons. This will become a great problem."

8. Central Christian College of the Bible

Spoke to... President Fincher David
"Yes, there is a shortage! Churches don't want young preachers, and young men right out of college. That's why they go into youth ministry, and one day they will move into the preaching ministry. I believe women should be the youth ministers. Yes, over the high school age. I think young men need a mom not a big brother like a male youth minister."

9. Great Lakes Christian College

Spoke to... President Larry Carter

"Yes, there is a shortage! Most go into youth ministry because they can't get a ministry as a preacher. The churches don't want a young man as a preacher, or a young man right out of Bible College. The churches are looking for older men. There is also a shortage of youth ministers! There is a growing need for preachers. The small churches and country churches are dying."

I also asked this third question to Larry's secretary who puts out the open ministry list. She said, *"There is a large preacher shortage in the church today."*

10. Kentucky Christian University

Spoke to... Vice President Calvin Lindell

"Yes, we have a shortage based on the number of churches looking for a preacher. There has become a great need for good preachers. We need bi-vocational preachers because many of the churches can't afford a preacher. I don't see the shortage getting better anytime soon."

Many times, parents don't want their kids to go into the ministry. They think, 'What will happen to their kids?' 'Can their son make a living at being a preacher?' 'Will the churches treat their son well, or destroy him?'"

(Side note... Calvin and Peggy Lindell both were baptized at the First Church of Christ Peru, IN where the author of this article is preaching. Small world!)

11. Johnson University

Spoke to... Professor of Preaching
Jeff Snell

"As you probably know, most current students preparing for ministry start in an associate role and transition at some point into preaching ministry. Economic and lifespan factors have significantly impacted how "first ministry churches" think about hiring. Churches that were student preaching points or first ministries in the 80's when I was an Ozark student are now led by retired ministers looking to augment social security or avoid drawing it before turning 70 (or, I guess, compensate for opting out). I preached or taught 5 times per week in my student ministry during my last 2 years of college and preached weekly the year prior. Most of my students are youth ministry sponsors (not weekend youth ministers) and very few have any opportunity to even consider a weekend preaching ministry. Changes in church culture and the closing of small churches have created this more than student factors (although there's probably some of that in play as well)."

"Is there a current shortage of preachers? That's not a simple question. Most US churches paying a full-time salary have numerous options, though they aren't necessarily spoiled for choice when it comes to quality. There are some, such as the church I recently concluded a four-year intern ministry with, that receive numerous applications but not from candidates they wish to hire. The evidence doesn't support the assertion that there is a shortage of available preachers for existing full-time churches, but there may be a shortage of desirable ones."

12. Carolina Christian College

Spoke to... President LaTanga
Tyson

"We do have a shortage of young preachers meaning 25 to 30 years old. We need to be telling our students about the importance of going into the ministry. I hope it doesn't get worse."

13. Alberta Bible College

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Spoke to... President Stanley Helton
"Things are different here in Canada vs. the U.S. We have a shortage of churches not preachers in Canada. Our future in Canada is starting new churches, or church plants. The church in Canada looks compromising. Western Canada is doing well. We have 30 churches in the whole nation of Canada. We have 35 non-instrumental churches of Christ."

I tried to reach out to Dallas Christian College, Lincoln Christian University, Emmanuel School of Religion, and Boise Bible College, but after five or more attempts they would not respond back!

Part 3... What are some leading men saying about the Preacher Shortage?

There were two men I found that have looked into this topic...

1. Rick Shonkwiler - the director of CCL Network which is Christian Church Leadership Network. He is helping preachers and Christian workers find a ministry and helping churches find workers.

Rick said... *"We have a shortage of qualified preachers as well as all church staff (Associate ministers, youth ministers, Christian educators, etc.) to work in the Church."*

"Churches are calling everyday seeking all forms of ministry within the church as well as preachers. It seems the pipeline is really depleted when it comes to preachers."

Two things have happened...

- a. "Many of the baby boomer preachers are retiring from full-time ministry or getting ready to. With all the preachers that are getting ready to retire, retiring, or dying, there is a great shortage that is not being trained to take their place."
- b. "Some of the Bible colleges have closed down."

"70% of all those going into the ministry will be out of ministry within ten years."

That's not just the preaching ministry, but all those in every area of ministry.

2. Lee Mason - former editor of the CRA.

"You have this long list of churches looking for a preacher. If we have all these preachers, then where are they? We have a generation of preachers that are dying off. Lincoln used to say, 'The Preachers are coming!' Now, no one is coming! Many youth ministers are going into the preaching ministry. The problem is they are taking the fun and games into the preaching ministry. The churches are becoming immature."

Part 4... What has your author found out from his work about the Preacher Shortage?

So, it is clear to see that we do have a great preacher shortage within the Christian Church/Church of Christ. How great is it, we don't know. If all the facts were in, I would say it would be worse than we thought.

The bottom line is we have many older preachers that are retiring, getting ready to retire, or going to be with the Lord. There are large numbers of preachers that are giving up or getting ready to give up on the full-time ministry.

With all of that said, there are very few men and young men that are going off to Bible Colleges to be trained to become a preacher and to serve in the full-time ministry. Only three in ten will still be in the full-time ministry after ten years!

My question is how many of those three will still be in the full-time ministry after twenty years? The Church is not raising up leaders in the Church to one day be elders, deacons, or preachers. Parents in the Church don't want their sons to be preachers for two reasons, (1.) What is the Church going to do to my son? (2.) Is my son going to be able to make a living being a preacher?

Young men are not thinking about going to Bible College to become preachers. If the young men do anything, they will become youth ministers; maybe to one day become preachers. We have a shortage of youth ministers, as well.

So, the next big question comes to mind.

Why are our Preachers Quitting the Full-Time Preaching Ministry?

Here is Shane's top ten list!

1. Stress:

Not only does the preacher have to deal with problems in life as we all do, but he must deal with everyone else's problems in the Church, and community. This stress has a way of breaking you down.

2. Little or no support within the church:

Some churches are not encouraging, helping with the work, or praying for their preacher. What is often the problem is the elders aren't pastoring the flock but ruling over them. The deacons are not ministers of mercy calling on the Church people but are concerned about the Church building. The preacher is left to do the spiritual work alone.

3. Money:

A man who has experience, good education, and who is good at being a preacher should get paid well. What does that mean? A man with a wife should make \$65,000 plus housing. That covers his pay, health insurance, retirement, etc. Some will say, that's too much money!!! You're right, that's why he's quitting so he can get a real paycheck and take care of his family!

4. Moving:

After a preacher has been at a church (let's say ten years), he may not want to change ministries, or locations. The preacher and his family get used to their home. They will have to give up their home, friends, city, community, and they don't want to move away.

Ministry can be like a circus. You go to a town, put up your tent until the show is over, and you pack it up and go to the next town. Wives get tired of that. If the kids are in a school, they don't want to move. If the preacher has grown kids that have gotten married who live in the same location, they may not want to leave them. Think if grandkids have come. So many times, the preachers don't move! His next move is outside of ministry.

5. Attacks and criticism:

This list can be as long as you want to make it. The preacher is too young, or the preacher is too old. The preacher preaches sermons too long, or the preacher preaches too short. The preacher is too hard of a person, or the preacher is too soft.

6. Unrealistic expectations:

One example is a church who said, *"We hired our preacher so the church would grow. We aren't growing! The church isn't growing because of the preacher."* The church isn't growing because in most cases, no one has served the Lord in the last twenty years within that church. This is just one example. The preacher's name is Shane, not Jesus! He can't do miracles.

7. Overworked:

He preaches Sunday morning. He teaches Sunday school, Sunday night, and again Wednesday night. He may lead small groups once or twice a week. He has to study, outline, and write sermons/lessons on each of these. He does this month after month, and year after year.

He performs weddings, funerals, and talks with people that have troubles. He also is seen, in some way, within the community. He makes time to go to nursing homes, jails, and hospitals. Remember, he still has a family at home! This doesn't even include the problems that arise unexpectedly.

8. Life in general:

This can be said for all of us. Life has a way of weighing all of us down

from time to time. You have marriage, kids, education, paying bills, and life's troubles. You throw ministry in with this, and life can turn into TNT.

9. No support in the home:

What often happens is you have a difference in spiritual growth within the home. The preacher is always studying, praying, serving, and growing. There are some preachers' wives who are not. They will say to the church, "You hired the preacher, not me!" They are right to some degree. Some wives, sadly, don't share their husband's spiritual desire. These types of women often leave their husband because they don't want to be a preacher's wife. If they do stay, they make their husband leave the full-time ministry. It happens all the time.

10. Sin:

This one I've seen too many times! The preacher gets himself into all kinds of trouble. He commits adultery. He starts drinking and getting drunk. He starts watching porn. You get the idea. What should a church do? Fire him, right? Here is a new idea, how about help him. Yes, the man has chosen to sin, and done wrong. How can we first save him as a person, and as a Christian man? He needs help! So many preachers have left the ministry over sin. Instead of helping them, the church finishes him off.

So, What Can the Church Do (RIGHT NOW!) to Raise Up Preachers for the Church Today?

1. Pray to the Lord.

Matthew 9:38 says, "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

2. Renew our commitment to the Lord.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear

from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

3. Start raising and training boys, young men, and men within the Church.

2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

4. Give them a place to grow.

1 Timothy 1:18 says, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight.”

5. Be the example.

Titus 2:7 says, “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified.”

Fixing this problem starts with me. It starts with you. With God’s help we can raise up a new generation of Christians, Christian preachers, and Church leaders.

Out of 115 graduates from the schools we looked at, only 33 will still be full-time preachers in ten years if things don’t change!



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