



**THE
FOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**

www.thefountaincc.org

Depth in Love, Truth, and Life



*The
Fountain
Christian Church*

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Reaching People in a Hi-Tech Culture

By Pastor Sam Sears

I began ministering in small, rural churches in Kentucky. I can't even recall a soundboard at the first church in which I regularly served. I was aware of a single microphone at the pulpit that had a power button, but there was no dedicated soundman, and I can only recall two small speakers. Folks who couldn't hear well sat quietly in reverent duty, without being able to really receive what messages were given or to fully participate in worshipping through song. Those songs were often a cappella, with members holding their own hymnals.

I was briefly a youth pastor at a church where it felt like technology had taken a leap forward. They had a dedicated Audio Visual area, a soundboard, multiple mics, speakers, and even a projector and a few small, older TVs in the kids' area. The technology brought in young individuals who connected with the different style, but unfortunately the moral failure of the senior pastor led me to resign and leave to go to another church.

I also served at New Hope Community Church in Corbin, KY, in several different capacities. First, I was a regular guest preacher, then youth leader, and finally assistant pastor. As of my last visit, their technology was the same as it was 13 years ago: a few microphones, a soundboard, and a dedicated Audio Visual volunteer. The congregation was primarily older, with the most of the younger individuals who grew up in the church leaving it sometime during their high school or college years.

Later, I was able to attend and serve other larger churches, including two Calvary Chapels and Community Church Oxford. All three were more youthful and multigenerational. Each had many volunteers serving in different roles. Each utilized multiple forms of technology.

Technology has changed drastically in my lifetime. While I grew up in a rural area in a lower-than-average income home, I can remember owning a black and white TV; now I carry a much more powerful smart phone in my pocket. Tech site ZDNET.com reports that the average American spends 5.4 hours a day on their mobile phone alone. This has pushed out some TV time, but they also overlap, as well. If the average person outside the church communicates through technology — specifically, screens — what does that mean for the church?

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 records Paul adapting to cultures as he moved through the ancient world on missionary journeys.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under

the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (NASB 1995)

To reach a “techy” generation, we, too, must communicate the Gospel in a techy way. Matthew 28:19-20 tells us, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” **In today's world, to “GO” means going online.**

The problem with being a tech-savvy church? It takes time, finances, and people. It's not just a matter of equipment. Software and even rights to images and songs cost money, as well. In some ways, individual churches are “nickel and dimed” to death. As costs for churches have consistently risen, different things are required. Training on equipment to takes time and skill. The demands on church staff have also increased now that they are even more readily available to those they serve locally, as well as having a wider area of impact in a world that is more connected.

This is the biggest factor currently impacting the small side of what is called “The Church Squeeze.” This “Church Squeeze” refers to a perceived sweet spot in the health of churches: large enough to meet the needs of their members, but small enough to not be saddled with too much debt. The small end of the healthy size is usually estimated at 200, so by these metrics we are experiencing the squeeze from the small side: too many things we need to do to effectively serve our body and reach out into our community, and not enough volunteers to do all those things, as well as expensive technology which can have a bigger budget percentage footprint at our size.

Approximately 20% of churches that existed at the beginning of 2020 closed their doors by the end of last year. Many, if not most of those who did close, didn't have google business profiles, Facebook pages, online giving, streaming, or even websites. Quite simply, they weren't speaking in an area where people were listening, and they were trying to a reach world that no longer exists.

Beyond technology, there is a rising list of regulations that churches must comply with in terms of their building, staffing, volunteer training and insurance coverage. There are more hoops to jump through to get a youth pastor into a school or any staff to be allowed to

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visit a hospital.

What does all that mean? Said more simply, to be effective at reaching the lost and equipping the Christians in their doors already, churches need more volunteers than ever before, and running a church costs substantially more than even 20 years ago. It's been fascinating to watch the increasing obstacles and demands pile up over just my nearly 20-year ministry career. (Remember, I started very young.)

How do we overcome it? Step 1 is honest communication. **Step 2** is living out 1 Peter 2:9 which informs the church, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" (NASB) This means both serving inside the church, and living a life that tells others about the Gospel. **Step 3** is making sure that we follow Romans 2:11 and treat each individual as having the same value. That means that we need to make sure multiple generations feel welcome here. It's a give and take that requires delicate balance. **Step 4** is continuing to adapt.

Colossians 4:5 commands us to "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity." The speed at which our society is moving requires the church to be nimble and to think both quickly and long term if it wants to make an impact on our community. As the authors of *U Turn Church* let their congregation know, if they were trying to make an impact for Jesus in a changing world, there would have to be change there, as well. **There will be no change in the essential doctrines, but the way messages are conveyed, the technology, the look, the illustrations used in conveying truth, all might change.** I'm conscious that I'm on the younger side of our congregation's average age, and I already at times can relate to the difficulty of learning new software or making small changes that might not be my preference. Nevertheless, if it's necessary to remove an obstacle from people feeling welcome or participating, it's worth it.

We have already added to our Audio Visual team. Sometime ago, we officially hired Chris Sagastume for limited hours on Sunday in the sound booth, to help us in growing and training others, since he had experience using a digital board. Judy, Brent, Sheila, and others have spent LONG hours learning the new board and new software, and we have been adding new volunteers from youth group.

Since going online is essential, it's not only our sound, but also our look that is important. We need to be able to control our lighting for

the best possible online presentation. This is complicated by the diversity of screens used by those viewing the services. We are already seeing success in this area. Of 750 unique screens that have watched our services, not only do we have people watching our live services, but our edited-down, sermon-only videos have been watched for well over a thousand hours. Despite this success, feedback on needing to improve has been consistent. On a related note, younger individuals prefer a darker, more contemplative atmosphere. We have also had consistent feedback from visitors and church members that match this need. We have already started fundraising for an important upgrade.



When this church was constructed, the archway had curtains that rolled up and down. It was also designed with shutters for the overhead windows that had to be scrapped due to budget. We are fundraising to restore and improve the originally-intended function of the large window at the front of our sanctuary. For now, we have used a small screen to help improve the view for those watching online. We also plan to eventually centralize the projection. I've included a photoshop mockup (not final) of what the finished product could look like. We will still have it open for our classic service and be able to open and close it so attendees can enjoy our beautiful fountain, but we can also have a more welcoming and tech-friendly environment.

We have other building improvements in mind, which is why we have opened an optional area of special giving on our online giving portal, "The special building fund." It's one way to help, but it isn't the only way. While this is an important part of a strategy, each of us is an am-

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bassador for our Lord, and we must continue to impact our neighbors, one at a time, as we serve and interact with them.

I hope you share my excitement for what comes next in our journey. For 164 years, our congregation has been a unique community, willing to focus on the essentials, disagree on the non-essentials, and glorify God together. These adaptations are like many that have come before and will help us continue our impact into the future for the next 164 years — or until the Lord returns!

A poster for a tent camping trip. The background is a photograph of a forest with tall trees. In the foreground, there are several blue and yellow tents. Overlaid on the image is a blue trapezoidal shape containing text.

Fountain Youth
Tent Camping Trip

October 1-2
Spots still available
COST: FREE

Contact Romy for more information

A poster for Fountain Family Night. The background is split diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right, with yellow on the left and dark blue on the right. A white wavy line separates the top header from the middle section. A small white circle in the top right corner contains the start date.

Fountain Family Night 
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Starts September 15th

AWANA KIDS CLUB (AGES 4YRS - 6TH GRADE - SIGN UP ON THE 8TH)

Fountain Youth - Basics of the Faith

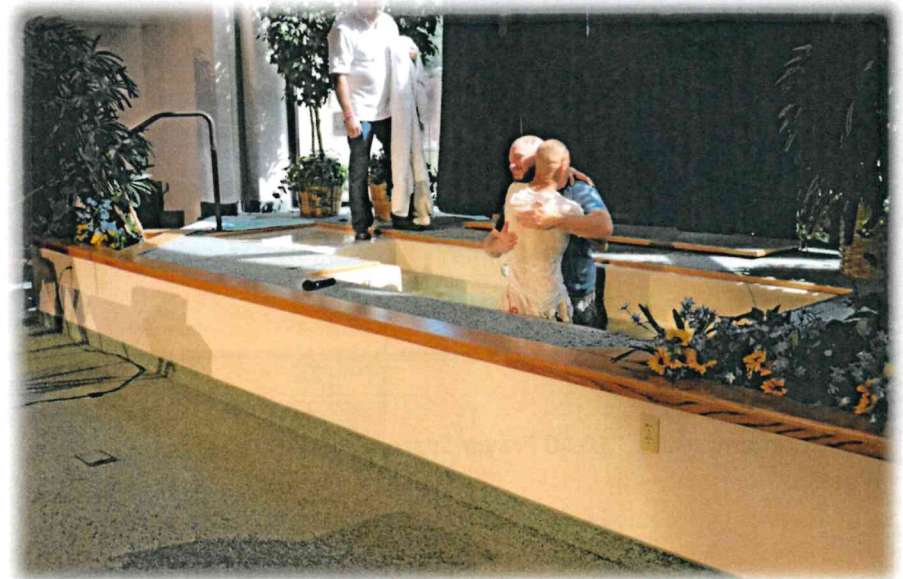
WOMEN'S STUDY - TRUE STORY: AN APOLOGETIC FOR CHRISTIANITY

**MEN'S STUDY - "I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO BE ATHEIST"
BY TUREK AND GEISLER**

A Baptism and New Members

On Sunday September 5th we witnessed the baptism of Steven Hall and welcomed into our church family three new members!

Please welcome to our family Robert Valencia, Ruth Kurihara, and Steven Hall the next time you see them!



September 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 5:30 Awana Meeting	2 10:00 Berean Watchmen	3 6:00 Men's Group	4
5 9:00 Classic Worship 10:30 Contemporary Worship 11:30 New Member Class	6 LABOR DAY - office closed 10:40 Prayer Warriors	7 10:00 Staff	8  6:00 Awana - Sign-up Night	9 10:00 Berean Watchmen	10 6:00 Men's Group	11
12 9:00 Classic Worship 10:30 Contemporary Worship	13 10:40 Prayer Warriors 12:00 Women's Bible Study	14 6:00 Poling Place 10:00 Staff	15 6:00 Awana	16 10:00 Berean Watchmen	17 6:00 Men's Group	18
19 9:00 Classic Worship 10:30 Contemporary Worship	20 10:40 Prayer Warriors 12:00 Women's Bible Study	21 10:00 Staff	22 6:00 Awana	23 10:00 Berean Watchmen	24 6:00 Men's Group	25
26 9:00 Classic Worship 10:30 Contemporary Worship	27 10:40 Prayer Warriors 12:00 Women's Bible Study	28 10:00 Staff	29 6:00 Awana	30 10:00 Berean Watchmen		



Oct. 23rd Church Wide Yard Sale

Start sorting and setting aside things you no longer need/want! We will be having a -

Fundraiser Yard Sale on October 23rd!
Time: 6 am to Noon
In the South Parking Lot

Proceeds will go to restore our ability to open and close the curtains on the sanctuary window.

NEW Service Times begin Sept. 5

"Classic" Service at 9:00 a.m.

"Contemporary" Service at 10:30 a.m.

Awana™

September Calendar

September 1st - Leader Meeting 5:30PM

SEPTEMBER 8TH - 6PM - 8PM OPEN HOUSE NIGHT

* BUY TACO TRUCK DINNER

* GET KIDS SIGNED-UP

* SIGN UP FOR VOLUNTEER DUTIES & GET YEAR CALENDAR

**SEPTEMBER 15TH - 1ST NIGHT
OF AWANA**

**SEPTEMBER 29TH -
CRAZY HAIR NIGHT**



The Fountain Christian Church
thefountaincc.org



NOVEMBER

SIGN UP
ON OUR WEBSITE!

NOVEMBER 5-7

A FEW SPOTS
LEFT!

WOMEN'S
BEACH RETREAT

Trust God

By Romy Sagastume

*"For the Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!"
Matthew 6:8*

There are moments we live that become life changing, times where you can clearly hear God speak. I would like to share my Wilderness Escape experience since it prepared me to hear God's voice in a very different way. Prior to our VBS I had never attended one as a child. Most Hispanic congregations have multiple services during the week, which normally means one to two week-days. Therefore services are never cancelled. Going into it I was excited and a bit scared since I had heard how laborious it is. I have over fifteen years of experience in children's ministry, and I have three kids of my own, so I think it is safe to say that I love kids and don't feel put off by the thought of having fifty kids screaming all at once.



The week of VBS came faster than I could say chubby bunny ten times with a mouth full of marshmallows. There I was Monday evening in my authentic Israeli outfit excited to see it all unfold. I felt so proud of how we were able to completely transform our church to an Israelian desert. We had a marketplace, a red sea, an oasis on stage and we even had Moses and his sister Miriam make an appearance. The kids were quickly impressed with all the decorations. As many of you know, one of my other passions is music so I volunteered myself to become the lead choreographer for the music portion. I think the surge of Tik Tok this past year has really motivated a lot of kids to dance.

The theme was Wilderness Escape with the focus on TRUST GOD. Monday we discussed God is with you, so trust God (Ex. 3:12). Tuesday we discussed God gives us whatever we need, so trust God (Mat.6:8). Wednesday was God gives us strength, so trust God (Phil.4:13). Thursday we discussed God saves us, so trust God (Jer.30:11). Friday we closed off with God guides us, so trust God (Psalm 16:7). I was also the MC, so I would get up on stage and yell "Trust?????" and I would hear the voices of over forty kids screaming "GOD!!!!!!". I wish I could insert a recording of that because writing about it does not capture what my ears heard.

Every day we would repeat that small phrase, TRUST GOD. On our car ride back home, my kids were still saying TRUST GOD. It became

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somewhat of a melody that we were all repeating. As the week went by, I fell in love with the whole thing. The kids, the unity in the volunteers, the transformation of the church, the dancing with the kids on stage and seeing how much they enjoyed it, to seeing our volunteers and our not so talented Pastor dancing as a child. I loved it all. Some would say it was a fulfillment of scripture when Jesus told the disciples to be more like children.

Everyday we would repeat that small phrase, TRUST GOD. On our car ride back home my kids were still saying TRUST GOD. It became somewhat of a melody that we were all repeating. As the week went by, I fell in love with the whole thing. The kids, the unity in the volunteers, the transformation of the church, the dancing with the kids on stage and seeing how much they enjoyed it. I loved seeing our volunteers and our not so talented Pastor dancing as a child. I loved it all. Some would say it was a fulfillment of scripture when Jesus told the disciples to be more like children.



I came out of VBS feeling great.....physically tired but so excited to take it on next year. A couple weeks went by and I was faced with a hospitalization in my family and a time of uncertainty came upon me. It is hard to sit here alone in front of my computer and write about it, but I want to share with you my lesson. Uncertain times are inevitable. Pain, suffering, tears, anger, sadness, and so many other emotions we go through when facing something difficult will come and go but the Lord's word will never pass away. In the peak of my desperation I could hear the voices screaming TRUST GOD. Trusting God isn't always easy. Our human nature wants things done now, the bad to go away immediately and the good to come now. But God's timing is perfect, and His ways are better than ours. It was easy to scream "trust God" in a time of fellowship and happiness but that's why I need to be reminded to be like a child. I never saw a kid come in that week worried about not having money to pay a bill, or mad because there was too much traffic, in them there was no other feeling at the time other than pure joy and faith. Faith. Faithfully trusting God.

My time of uncertainty isn't over but I have decided to fully TRUST GOD. I do not know what uncertainty you are living though or what prayer you're waiting to be answered. All I can say is He hears us. We are not alone. His perfect love cast away all fears. Therefore.....TRUST GOD.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

September 2021

Nina Suttles.....1	Mary Cosmey.....21
Jacob Gunning6	Carrie Guy24
Les Bittle.....8	
Sue Ritter12	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i>
Danny Frigulti.....14	
Margie Barlogio.....15	Mike & Glenda Gunning9
Danita Bittle.....17	Carl & Ruthy Shane.....10
Donna Romer.....19	Earl & Carolyn Subejano.....14
Jenna Shane19	Connor & Judy Jameson.....21

Attendance & Giving

August 2021



Date	Average Attendance	Total Giving
August	96.....	\$29,007.74

Prayer Concerns

September 2021

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith!
Our Nation and Leaders. Teachers & Students in Visalia.

Health

Ana Morales, Ashley Banuelos, Barbara Grant, Bill Switzer, Bonnie Henson, Cindy Marks, Donna Eastin, Frank Henley, Harold Hoppert, Jean Lamb, Jeff Rolph, Josiah Gaylord, Kevin Guy, Lynnette Johnson, Marilee Douglass, Pam Shattuck, Pauline Gurule, Rick Hamilton, Steven Hall, Fred Wilder, Sandy Zinger

Cancer

Al Stone, Charles Douglass, David Thomas, Hazel Bahrenburg, Jiggy Greene, Jim Shackelford, Joe Grant, Keith Moore, Matt Hurt, Michael Elder, Mike Brazil, Mike Gunning, Olly Ajluni, Sam Tomaino, Sandra Campbell, Shannan Ajluni, Susan Jacquez, Jamie Harp

Other Needs

Nina Suttles (Vision)

Military

Andie Richwine – Marine, Brett Boland - Virginia, Jason Mariel - Afghanistan, Matthew Calhoun - Fort Knox, Michael Reid – San Diego, CA, Preston Correa – Marine, Tyler Richwine – Marine