

CONTENTS

Preface	ii
A Survey of Students	1
An Introduction to How the Results Are Reported	3
Table 1, Levels of Involvement in Local Congregations	4
Table 2, Frequency of Church Attendance	5
Table 3, Reasons for Attending (or not attending) Church Services	6
Tables 4-14, Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University	7-17
Comparison of Reasons given by Members of Churches of Christ and Others	18
A Survey of Alumni	19
Report of Results, Tables 1 and 2	20
Table 3, Levels of Involvement in Local Congregations (while attending school)	21
Table 4, Frequency of Church Attendance (while attending school)	22
Table 5, Present Religious Affiliation	23
Table 6, Involvement in Church Leadership/Service Roles (with cross-tabulation by gender, Table 7)	24
Table 8, Marital Status	25
Tables 9-16, Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University	26-33
Comparison of Reasons Given by Members of Churches of Christ and Others	34
Estimating Some Numbers	35
College Enrollment of Recent High School Graduates in the United States	35
Projected College Enrollment of High School Graduates in the United States	36
Estimates of High School Graduates 1997-2006 in All Churches of Christ and in "Mainstream" Churches of Christ	37
The Size of the Entering Freshman Class at CHEF Schools (with the number and percent who came from Churches of Christ)	38
A Church Statisticians Perspective on ACT and SAT Lists	
Why the ACT and SAT Church of Christ Numbers Are So Large	39
Why the ACT and SAT Church of Christ Numbers Have Declined	40
A Survey of Congregations	41
Method	41
The Research Packet	42
Results	43
What They Did About College and Their Present Religious Affiliation	44
Retention Rates (with "The Danger of Comparing Apples and Oranges")	45
The Importance of the Local Congregation	46
Another Outcome: Preparation for Marriage	47
Preparation for Church Leadership and Service	49
Church Data	50
Suggestions for Continuing the Research	51
Expand Student and Alumni Surveys	51
Complete the Cluster Sample	51
Try Again on the Campus Ministry Survey	52
Follow-Up Studies	53
Differences in the Kind of People Who Are Leaving Churches of Christ	53
Differences in the Kind of Congregations They Are Leaving	53
Growth and Decline Among Churches of Christ in the United States, 1980-2006	Appendix
(A three-page alphabetical listing by states)	
States Ranked by Growth or Decline in the Number of Congregations and Members	"

PREFACE

Introduction

There is good news and bad news in this preliminary report. The good news is that the bad news is not true. The bad news is that the good news is not as good as it ought to be.

There are at least three groups of people in Churches of Christ who may find it difficult to believe some of the things in this report.

There may be some people who advocate changes that others believe to be wrong. In order to establish their case, these advocates of change must first establish that there is a need for change. They may find it hard to believe parts of this report indicating that things are not really as bad as they have claimed.

There may be some others who defend the *status quo* and oppose all change—no matter how much some improvements might be needed. Their strategy often is to deny that there is a need for a change. They may find it hard to believe parts of this report which suggest that there are serious problems and things are not as good as they have claimed.

A much larger group includes people who share a natural human tendency to notice a few dramatic cases that they have observed and project them onto Churches of Christ throughout the nation. They know several members of their generation who have left Churches of Christ. They know several who have divorced. Most of the congregations that they know personally are declining as the young members leave and the average age in the congregation increases. It is hard for such people to believe Churches of Christ throughout the nation may not be like the congregations in their limited field of experience.

The only thing that I know to do is to ask those who are skeptical to study the report carefully.

Executive Summary

This report may be longer and more detailed than some of the presidents of Christian colleges and universities, with all their other duties, have time to read just now. The following “Executive Summary” highlights just a few of the more important findings of this study.

How many students from Churches of Christ attend a Christian college or university?

Several of the presidents of Christian colleges and universities have expressed concern over the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT Reports. A few years ago those numbers were up around 23,000 and now they have declined to around 18,000. Those numbers, however, are far too large to match what is known about the number of adherents among Churches of Christ in the United States. According to the directory *Churches of Christ in the United States 2006*, this fellowship included 12,963 congregations with 1,265,844 members and 1,639,495 adherents (members plus children not yet baptized). One percent of the U.S. population graduates from high school each year and around two-thirds of these attend college. The study involving congregations found that one percent of the adherents in Churches of Christ graduate from high school each year, but of these 16,395 only 13,116 attend college. The problem with the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT lists is that their forms do not include an option for the fellowship identified in almanacs and yearbooks as “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.” Half of the

congregations in this fellowship of independent and conservative congregations that use instrumental music call themselves “Christian Churches” and the others call themselves “Churches of Christ.” What seems to be happening is that some of the students from this fellowship are checking the “Church of Christ” box on the ACT or SAT forms. That is why the numbers are so large. The decline in those numbers, however, is real and may indicate a growing number of young people in both of these fellowships who may not continue to affiliate with Churches of Christ or with Christian Churches/Churches of Christ after they graduate from college and are on their own.

See page 37 for the figures on the number of high school graduates and the number who are college-bound among all Churches of Christ and among the “Mainstream” Churches of Christ where Christian colleges and universities are most likely to recruit students. The available pool of these is around 11,400 each year. Sixteen Christian colleges and universities in the United States and two in Canada provided data on the number of entering freshman students each year, 1997 through 2006, with the number and percentage of these who indicate “Churches of Christ” as their religious affiliation.

The “Church Survey” part of this study found that approximately:

**20% of their members who graduate from high school do not attend college;
30% attend a Christian college or university; and,
50% attend a public institution.**

That 30% figure is a lot higher than the 15% that many previously estimated.

What is the current retention rate among members of the Churches of Christ—especially among those who attend a Christian college or university?

The estimate based on the current study is that:

60% continue to identify “Churches of Christ” as their religious preference;
20% have left Churches of Christ and now are members of some other religious group; and,
20% have left Churches of Christ and now have no church affiliation.

That is better than the 45% drop-out rate reported by Lewis, Dodd, and Tippens in the early 1990s. It is a little lower than what I was finding several years ago (55% never drop-out, 33% drop out and never come back, and 12% drop out but come back after they settle down, get married, and have children). My studies in the last three decades of the 20th century found that few were leaving Churches of Christ to join other religious groups. Those who dropped out had no church affiliation. Today 20% are leaving Churches of Christ and affiliating with some other religious group. *There are some indications that these include some of the most spiritually-minded and evangelistic of the young people in Churches of Christ.*

How is local church involvement while in college related to the retention rate?

The studies done through the “Church Survey” and the “Alumni Survey” both indicate that local church involvement while in college is the most important factor associated with staying in Churches of Christ.

Students who attend a Christian college or university but who have no meaningful connection with a local congregation are less likely to stay in Churches of Christ after they graduate than are students who attend a state-supported college or university but also get involved in a local congregation while they are in school.

Results of the Student Survey on this matter indicate that:

25.1% of students at Christian colleges and universities who are members of Churches of Christ are actually members of a local congregation and most of these live close enough to the school where they are

enrolled so that they continue to attend their home congregation. Only a few actually place membership with a local congregation after they enroll in the school that they attend. **52.5%** have never placed membership, but at least have one congregation that they attend regularly. **22.8% have little connection with any local congregation.**

15.0% visit various congregations depending on where their friends are going, what special classes or speakers are scheduled, etc. They shop around like consumers.

6.5% occasionally visit various congregations but do not attend regularly.

1.3% do not attend church services at all.

What is the divorce rate among members of the Churches of Christ—especially among those who attended a Christian college or university?

In the “Congregational Survey” part of this study, among those who graduated from high school 1997-2006, most had not yet married or were still married to the first spouse. Only 4.2% had divorced. In the U.S. population, 8.1% of those who graduated from high school 1997-2006 have already married and divorced. That is almost twice as high as the divorce rate among these young people in Churches of Christ.

In the “Alumni Survey” part of this study, among the alumni who are members of the Churches of Christ:

22.1% are still single (never married).

71.7% are still married to their first spouse.

Only 5.4% have divorced.

The remaining 0.8% are single again or remarried following the death of a spouse.

That means that 77.9% have married and 6.9% of them have divorced. But that divorce rate is far lower than the national average.

What is the greatest difference between Christian young people who attend a Christian college or university and those who attend a public institution, a private secular school, etc.?

In this study the greatest difference was in preparation for church leadership/service roles. Among the Christian young people who graduated from high school in the past ten years and then attended a Christian college or university, 56.1% are already involved in some kind of church leadership or service roles. That figure drops to only 21.4% for those who attended a public college or university, private secular school, etc. That figure drops even more to only 7.4% for those who do not go to college.

What remains to be done in this research project?

Some schools may want to increase the number of their students who have taken the Student Survey and also increase the number of their alumni who have taken the Alumni Survey.

A few slots still need to be filled in the cluster sample of congregations.

Two kinds of follow-up studies might be useful.

One would focus on differences in the kind of people who are leaving Churches of Christ.

The other would study differences in the kind of congregations they are leaving.

The final report of results from this study should be available in time for the 2008 meeting of the presidents of Christian colleges and universities.

**RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION**
Part One
A Survey of Students

During the 2006-2007 academic year, students at eleven Christian colleges and universities were asked to respond to an anonymous online survey. In some of the schools, students were given printed surveys that they filled out and turned in. Then clerical workers at these schools entered the data in the online format. Responses were received from over 3,000 students.

The introduction explained that “The Christian Higher Education Foundation includes several colleges and universities serving a constituency among Churches of Christ in the United States. Students at participating schools are taking this anonymous survey.”

The first two questions were included to facilitate cross-tabulation studies.

1. Which Christian college or universities do you attend?

This was followed by a listing of the schools.

2. Most of the students attending the schools that are participating in this study indicated “Churches of Christ” as their religious affiliation when they enrolled. Is that your present religious affiliation?

- A. Yes
- B. No

The next three questions focused on patterns of church membership and attendance.

3. Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing where you attend church services and whether you are actually a member?

- A. My home congregation is close enough to this school so that I am still a member and continue to attend services at my home congregation—or—after I enrolled at this school I placed membership at a local congregation where I now regularly attend services.
- B. Although I have never actually placed membership, there is a local congregation where I attend services most of the time.
- C. Although I attend church services regularly, I visit several different congregations depending on where my friends are going and what special classes or speakers are scheduled.
- D. I occasionally visit various congregations, but do not attend church services regularly.
- E. I do not attend services at any congregation.

4. Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing how often you attend church services?

- A. Two or three times a week.
- B. At least once a week.
- C. Two or three times a month.
- D. At least once a month.
- E. Less than once a month—or not at all.

5. Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing why you do or do not attend church services?

- A. I am a member of a congregation and attend church services regularly because of my love for Christ and my need for association with other Christians.
- B. Although I am not a member of a local congregation, I attend church services regularly because of what church services do to help me spiritually.
- C. I attend church services when and where my friends go because I want to be with my friends.
- D. Chapel, Bible classes, and small group devotionals on campus meet my spiritual needs and I do not see why it would be necessary for me to attend church services.
- E. Religion is emphasized so much on campus that I do not want any more.

The remaining items on the questionnaire involve reasons various students have given for selecting the Christian college or university that they attend. Students were asked to "select the response option that best indicates how important each reason was in your decision to attend this school."

The response options in the remaining items were:

- A. The one most important reason
- B. A very important reason
- C. A relatively important reason
- D. A minor consideration
- E. Not a factor in my decision

The expressions of the various reasons were:

- 6. I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God's kingdom.**
- 7. I believed that the education I would receive here would prepare me for a career with a good income.**
- 8. The cost of attending this school is less than the total cost at other schools that I considered.**
- 9. This school offers the kind of degree program that I wanted.**
- 10. One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.**
- 11. I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.**
- 12. My parents encouraged me to attend this school.**
- 13. The preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.**
- 14. The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.**
- 15. I was attracted to this school because of the small size of the classes.**
- 16. When I visited, I was impressed by the friendly atmosphere on the campus.**

An Introduction to How the Results Are Reported

No report is included here regarding the number of students at each of the participating schools who responded. The figures on a particular school will be made available only to that school. The following report deals only with the combined data.

The following tables reproduce the questions and the response options. Statistical results (the number and percentage selecting each response option) are reported in three columns:

All Students Members of the Churches of Christ Not Members of the Churches of Christ

The statistics that best represent reality are the numbers and percentages of students selecting each response option. For some purposes, however, it may be useful to have some simplified report. There is a clearly implied order in most of the response options used here. Social scientists who have studied attitude assessment have found that when there is an implied order, most people see the two most positive responses as being very similar. They also see the two most negative responses as being very similar to each other. But they see a larger gap between either end of the continuum and whatever is in the middle. The Gallup organization, for example, in their reports combines the two most positive and the two most negative responses. As an illustration: *“In a survey of 300 economists, 70% agreed or strongly agreed that the interest rate should be lowered in order to encourage economic growth, while only 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed.”* That is the way summary statistics are reported in the following tables: Total Positive (A plus B percentages), and Total Negative (D plus E percentages).

In some situations it may be useful to have a single statistic that can be used to represent central tendency. One way to do that is the Net percentage, i.e., Total Positive minus Total Negative. The possible range of this statistic is from +100% to -100%.

A more familiar representation of central tendency is the mean. But calculating a true mean requires interval level data. What we have in questionnaire responses such as this is only nominal level data with an implied order. One can count such data, but the ordinary operations such as multiplication and division do not apply. In the social sciences, however, it is common to treat such ordinal level data as though it were interval level data. Personally, I regard that as a legitimate operation as long as one recognizes that we really are starting with numbers that we can count representing people who selected a particular verbal response. We then assign numerical values to the response options in order to calculate a “mean.” But it is important to turn that number back into the words it represents. For example, the response options for survey items #6 through #16 were:

Response	Value
A. The one most important reason	5
B. A very important reason	4
C. A relatively important reason	3
D. A minor consideration	2
E. Not a factor in my decision	1

The following are the ranges of the “means” and what each represents.

4.50 to 5.00	“The one most important reason”
3.50 to 4.49	“A very important reason”
2.50 to 3.49	“A relatively important reason”
1.50 to 2.49	“A minor consideration”
1.00 to 1.49	“Not a factor in my decision”

Some of the questions had different response options, but when there was an implied order the same system was used: 4.50 to 5.00 for the most positive response—to—1.00 to 1.49 for the most negative.

STUDENT SURVEY
Table 1

Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing where you attend church services and whether you are actually a member?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
===== ===			
Number	3,288	2,578	710
A. "My home congregation is close enough to this school so that I am still a member and continue to attend services at my home congregation—or—after I enrolled in this school I placed membership at a local congregation where I now regularly attend services."	854 26.0%	650 25.2%	204 28.7%
B. "Although I have never actually placed membership, there is a local congregation where I attend services most of the time."	1,619 49.2%	1,353 52.5%	266 37.5%
C. "Although I attend church services regularly, I visit several different congregations depending on where my friends are going and what special classes or speakers are scheduled."	452 13.7%	387 15.0%	65 9.2%
D. "I occasionally visit various congregations, but do not attend church services regularly."	276 8.4%	168 6.5%	108 15.2%
E. "I do not attend services at any congregation."	103 3.1%	33 1.3%	70 9.9%

Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	75.2%	77.7%	66.2%
Total "Negative" (D+E)	11.5%	7.8%	25.1%
Net (A&B-D&E)	63.7%	69.9%	41.1%
"Mean"	3.88*	3.97*	3.71*

*All of these "means" are in the range of response B indicating a member or at least someone who attends one local congregation regularly.

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STUDENT SURVEY
Table 2

Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing how often you attend church services?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
Number	3,283	2,574	709
A. Two or three times a week.	1,669 50.8%	1,483 57.6%	186 26.2%
261	1,034		773
B. At least once a week.	31.5%	30.0%	36.8%
C. Two or three times a month	269 8.2%	176 6.8%	93 13.1%
D. At least once a month.	123 3.7%	70 2.7%	53 7.5%
E. Less than once a month—or—never.	197 6.0%	76 3.0%	121 17.1%
Summary Statistics			
Median	At least once a week.	Two or three times a week	At least once a week
Mean	6.3 times a month	7.2 times per month	4.5 times per month

The figures on frequency of church attendance are interval level so these are true means. At the participating Christian colleges and universities, students who are members of the Churches of Christ attend church services significantly more often than students who are not members of the Churches of Christ. But 41.5 percent attend church services no more than once a week and 12.5 percent attend church services less than once a week—or never.

When controlled for the previous question, those who attend the most are those who are actually members of a congregation—followed by those who at least have one congregation that they attend regularly. Those who visit various congregations attend much less often.

Other parts of this research clearly indicate that those who connect with a local congregation while they are attending a college or university are most likely to continue as members of the Churches of Christ after they graduate. Those who just visit various congregations while in school are much more likely to drop out of the Churches of Christ after they graduate. Those who do not attend while in school have already dropped out and are not likely to return. These other parts of this research include a survey of alumni at the participating Christian colleges and universities and a study of church members throughout the nation who have graduated from high school in the past ten years,

STUDENT SURVEY
Table 3

Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing why you do or do not attend church services?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the</i>	<i>Not Members of the</i>
=====	=====	=====	=====
=	=	=	=
Number	3,232	2,548	2,548
684			
A. "I am a member of a congregation and attend church services regularly because of my love for Christ and my need for association with other Christians."	1,400 43.3%	1,140 44.7%	260 38.0%
B. "Although I am not a member of a local congregation, I attend church services regularly because of what 246 church services do to help me spiritually."	1,353 41.9%	1,107 43.4%	1,107 36.0%
C. "I attend church services when and where my friends go because I want to be with my friends."	164 5.1%	127 5.0%	37 5.4%
D. "Chapel, Bible classes, and small group devotionals on campus meet my spiritual needs and I do not see why it would be necessary for me to attend church services."	169 5.2%	103 4.0%	66 9.6%
E. "Religion is emphasized so much on campus that I do not want any more."	176 5.4%	88 3.5%	88 12.9%

Summary Statistics

Total Positive (A+B)	85.2%	88.1%	74.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	10.6%	7.5%	22.5%
Net (A&B-D&E)	74.6%	80.6%	51.5%
"Mean"	4.15*	4.20*	3.82*

*The "means" for all students and for members of the Churches of Christ are in the range of response B, indicating that most of these either are members of a local congregation or at least have one local congregation that they attend regularly. The "mean" for those who are not members of the Churches of Christ is also in the range of that same response, but the indication is at a "lower" level.

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Note: This item combined two questions to save space. Students may have been responding to the "member/regular visitor" difference between the first two responses rather than to the differences in motivation. Actually, the first response is the only one with the correct motivation: to worship God and not just to get something out of the service. A follow-up study could clarify this matter if it is important.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 4

I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God's kingdom.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
	3,280	2,572	708
A. The one most important reason	945 28.8%	817 31.8%	128 18.1%
B. A very important reason	1,386 42.3%	1,141 44.4%	245 34.6%
C. A relatively important reason	575 17.5%	417 16.2%	158 22.3%
D. A minor consideration	207 6.3%	119 4.8%	88 12.4%

E. Not a factor in my decision	187	92	95
	5.7%	3.6%	13.4%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	71.1%	76.2%	52.7%
Total Negative (D+E)	12.0%	8.2%	25.8%
Net (A&B-D&E)	59.1%	68.0%	26.9%
"Mean"	3.84*	3.98*	3.09**

*"Very Important. **Relatively Important.

This is the most important reason for attending a Christian college or university given by students who are members of the Churches of Christ, but the third-highest priority for those who are not members. However, this emphasis on biblical instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere is not something viewed negatively by students who are not members of the Churches of Christ. This is the most important factor in recruiting students who are members of the Churches of Christ and it does not hurt—it even helps a little—with those who are not members of the Churches of Christ.

SUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 5

**I believed that the education I would receive here would
prepare me for a career with a good income.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	3,279	2,570	709
A. The one most important reason	283 8.6%	196 7.8%	87 12.3%
B. A very important reason	1,465 44.7%	1,184 45.3%	301 42.6%
C. A relatively important reason	902 27.5%	724 28.2%	178 25.1%
D. A minor consideration	346	277	69

	10.6%	10.8%	9.7%
E. Not a factor in my decision	297 9.1%	219 8.5%	78 11.0%

Summary Statistics

Total Positive (A+B)	53.3%	52.9%	54.8%
Total Negative (D+E)	19.7%	19.3%	20.7%
Net (A&B-D&E)	33.6%	33.6%	34.1%
"Mean"	3.35*	3.34*	3.37*

*"Relatively Important"

Note: There is no significant difference between students who are members of the Churches of Christ and those who are not on this matter. This is the second-highest "mean" for students who are not members of the Churches of Christ and the third-highest for students who are members of the Churches of Christ.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 6

**The cost of attending this school is less than the cost
at other schools that I considered.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
Number	3,269	2,563	706
A. The one most important reason	107 3.3%	73 2.8%	34 4.8%
B. A very important reason	337 10.3%	235 9.2%	102 14.4%
C. A relatively important reason	454 13.9%	351 13.7%	103 14.6%

D. A minor consideration	554 16.9%	442 17.2%	112 15.9%
E. Not a factor on my decision	1,818 55.6%	1,469 57.1%	355 50.3%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	13.6%	12.0%	19.2%
Total Negative (D+E)	73.0%	74.6%	67.2%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-59.4%	-62.6%	-48.0%
"Mean"	1.89*	1.84*	2.06*

*"A Minor Consideration"

Note: Cost does not seem to be a very good selling point for these Christian colleges and universities—whether with students who are members of the Churches of Christ or those who are not. There is a possible explanation of why those who are not members of the Churches of Christ may be slightly less negative in their evaluations on this matter. A significant number of these may still be living at home and thus reducing the total cost of attending school when compared with the total cost for the resident students living in the dorms.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 7

This school offers the kind of degree program that I wanted.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
Numbers	3,267	2,561	706
A. The one most important reason	526 16.1%	349 13.6%	177 25.1%
B. A very important reason	1,371 42.0%	1,101 43.0%	270 38.2%

C. A relatively important reason	721 22.1%	602 23.5%	119 16.9%
D. A minor consideration	297 9.1%	242 9.4%	55 7.8%
E. Not a factor in my decision	364 11.1%	277 10.8%	87 12.3%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	58.1%	56.6%	63.3%
Total Negative (D+E)	20.2%	20.2%	20.1%
Net (A&B-D&E)	37.9%	36.4%	43.2%
"Mean"	3.44*	3.40*	3.57**
*“Relatively Important” **“Very Important”			

Note: This was the highest “mean” and thus the most important reason given by students who are not members of the Churches of Christ, but it was the second-highest “mean” among students who are members of the Churches of Christ. Availability of desired degree programs seems to be a very strong selling point, but the lack of many desired degree programs could be a problem for smaller schools with limited offerings.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 8

One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
=			

Numbers	3,271	2,565	706
A. The one most important reason	95 2.9%	79 3.1%	16 2.3%
B. A very important reason	332 10.1%	287 11.2%	45 6.4%
C. A relatively important reason	381 11.6%	350 13.6%	31 4.4%
D. A minor consideration	352 10.8%	323 12.6%	29 4.1%
E. Not a factor in my decision	2,115 64.7%	1,530 59.6%	585 82.9%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	13.0%	14.3%	8.7%
Total Negative (A&B-D&E)	75.5%	72.2%	87.0%
Net	-62.5%	-57.9%	-78.3%
"Mean"	1.76*	1.86*	1.41**
*"A Minor Consideration"	**"Not a Factor"		

Note: This seems not to be very important for either group, but far less for non-members than for members of the Churches of Christ.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 9

I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
=			

Numbers	3,275	2,566	709
A. The one most important reason	99 3.0%	71 2.8%	28 3.9%
B. A very important reason	298 9.1%	254 9.9%	44 6.2%
C. A relatively important reason	409 12.5%	337 13.1%	72 10.2%
D. A minor consideration	546 16.7%	454 17.7%	92 13.0%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,931 59.0%	1,457 56.8%	474 66.9%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	12.1%	12.7%	10.1%
Total Negative (D+E)	75.7%	74.5%	79.9%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-63.6%	-61.8%	-69.8%
"Mean"	1.81*	1.85*	1.68*
*"A Minor Consideration"			

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 10

My parents encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i><u>Not</u> Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
------------------	-------------------------	--	---

	3,267	2,561	706
Number			
A. The one most important reason	191 5.8%	159 6.2%	32 4.5%
B. A very important reason	522 16.0%	469 18.3%	53 7.5%
C. A relatively important reason	695 21.3%	598 23.4%	97 13.7%
D. A minor consideration	647 19.8%	519 20.3%	128 18.1%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,224 37.5%	825 32.2%	399 56.5%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	21.8%	24.5%	12.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	57.3%	52.5%	74.6%
Net	-35.5%	-28.0%	-62.6%
"Mean"	2.34*	2.47*	1.86*

*"A Minor Consideration"

Note: The encouragement of parents was less a factor with students who are not members of the Churches of Christ, but it was at least a consideration for both groups. Among the eleven items included in this questionnaire, encouragement by parents had the sixth-highest ranking by those students who are members of the Churches of Christ and the seventh-highest ranking by those who are not members.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 11

The preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Numbers	3,266	2,557	709
A. The one most important reason	40 1.2%	33 1.3%	7 1.0%
B. A very important reason	149 4.6%	135 5.3%	14 2.0%
C. A relatively important reason	247 7.6%	217 8.5%	30 4.2%
D. A minor consideration	393 12.0%	352 13.8%	41 5.8%
E. Not a factor in my decision	2,451 75.0%	1,833 71.7%	618 87.2%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	5.8%	6.6%	3.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	87.0%	85.5%	93.0%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-81.2	-78.9	-90.0
"Mean"	1.46*	1.53**	1.24*

*"Not a Factor" **"A Minor Consideration"

Note: Preachers in Churches of Christ would seem from these results to have much less influence than preachers did a few years ago. An alternative explanation is that preachers may not be encouraging Christian young people to attend a Christian college or university as much as preachers did in the past.

It would take a follow-up study to find out if this is true and, if so, why preachers are not encouraging the young people in their congregations to attend a Christian college or university.

Something unusual in these results is that 92 of the students who are not members of the Churches of Christ (13.0%) said that the preacher in their home congregation encouraged them to attend this school—although it was not a major factor in most of their decisions. It would take some follow-up studies to explain this.

Table 12

The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
=			
Numbers	3,270	2,563	707
A. The one most important reason	51 1.6%	45 1.8%	6 0.8%
B. A very important reason	164 5.0%	151 5.9%	13 1.8%
C. A relatively important reason	288 8.8%	259 10.1%	29 4.1%
D. A minor consideration	418 12.8%	375 14.6%	43 6.1%
E. Not a factor in my decision	2,357 72.1%	1,741 67.9%	616 87.1%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	6.6%	7.7%	2.6%
Total Negative (D+E)	84.9%	82.5%	93.2%
Net	-78.3%	-74.8%	-90.6%
"Mean"	1.52*	1.60*	1.23**
*"A Minor Consideration"	**"Not a Factor"		

Note: This table shows the same problem regarding Youth Ministers that the previous table showed with preachers. Either they have less influence than previously assumed or else they just are not encouraging the young members to attend a Christian college or university. This table has the same unusual pattern with 91 students (12.9%) who are not members of the Churches of Christ reporting that their Youth Minister encouraged them to attend a Christian college or university. Both of these things might need to be investigated in a follow-up study.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 13

**I was attracted to this school because of
the small size of the classes.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	3,269	2,561	706
A. The one most important reason	114 3.5%	75 2.9%	39 5.5%
B. A very important reason	682 20.9%	511 20.0%	171 24.2%
C. A relatively important reason	916 28.0%	734 28.7%	182 25.7%
D. A minor consideration	667 20.4%	554 21.6%	113 16.0%
E. Not a factor in my decision	903 27.6%	699 27.3%	204 28.8%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	24.4%	22.9%	29.7%
Total Negative (D+E)	48.0%	48.9%	44.8%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-23.6%	-26.0%	-15.1%
"Mean"	2.54*	2.51*	2.62*

*"Relatively Important"

Note: Small class size is a little more important to students who are not members of the Churches of Christ, but this does not appear to be a major decision factor with either group of students.

STUDENT SURVEY
Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 14

**When I visited, I was impressed by the
friendly atmosphere on the campus.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Students</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	3,267	2,559	708
A. The one most important reason	406 12.4%	315 12.3%	91 12.9%
B. A very important reason	1,281 39.2%	1,059 41.4%	222 31.4%
C. A relatively important reason	721 22.1%	583 22.8%	138 19.5%
D. A minor consideration	338 10.3%	255 10.0%	83 11.7%
E. Not a factor in my decision	535 16.4%	359 14.0%	176 24.9%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	51.6%	53.7%	44.3%
Total Negative (D+E)	26.7%	24.0%	36.6%
Net (A&B-D&E)	24.9%	29.7%	7.7%
"Mean"	3.22*	3.30*	2.97*

*"Relatively Important"

Note: The wording of this item assumes a campus visit prior to enrollment and that, of course, is not always the case. Most students, however, probably visit campus prior to enrollment and that appears to be an important factor in their decision. Students who are not members of the Churches of Christ seem to be a little less impressed with the friendly atmosphere on campus. This may simply reflect the probability that members of the Churches of Christ are more likely to see people they already know.

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Ranked by “means” in responses of students who are members of the Churches of Christ

- 3.98 I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in the kingdom of God.
- 3.40 This school offers the kind of degree program that I wanted.
- 3.34 I believed that the education I would receive here would prepare me for a kingdom of God.
- 3.30 When I visited, I was impressed by the friendly atmosphere on the campus.
- 2.51 I was attracted to this school because of the small size of the classes.
- 2.47 My parents encouraged me to attend than this school.
- 1.86 One or both parents and/or older siblings attended this school.
- 1.85 I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.
- 1.84 The cost of attending this school is less than the cost at other schools that I considered.
- 1.60 The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.53 The preacher in my home congregation congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

Ranked by “means” in responses of students who are not members of the Churches of Christ

- 3.57 This school offers the kind of degree program that I wanted.
- 3.37 I believed that the education I would receive here would prepare me for a career with a good income.
- 3.09 I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful career with a good income. service in the
- 2.97 When I visited I was impressed by the friendly atmosphere on the campus.
- 2.62 I was attracted to this school because of the small size of the classes.
- 2.06 The cost of attending this school is less than the cost at other schools that I considered.
- 1.86 My parents encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.68 I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.
- 1.41 One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.
- 1.24 The preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.23 The youth minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

Note: Most students recognize a school's religious heritage before they enroll. The factors that influence the enrollment decisions of students who are not members of the Churches of Christ are actually very similar to those of students who are members of the Churches of Christ. Reducing the emphasis on a school's religious heritage is not likely to increase enrollment among those who are

not members of the Churches of Christ, but it could decrease enrollment among those who are members of the Churches of Christ.

**RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Part Two
A Survey of Alumni**

Alumni of participating Christian colleges and universities were asked to respond to an anonymous online survey. The introduction explained that “The Christian Higher Education Foundation represents colleges and universities serving the same constituency among Churches of Christ in the United States. The schools listed below are asking their alumni to take this online survey.”

The first two questions were included to facilitate cross-tabulation studies.

1. Please indicate the Christian college or university that you attended—and—if you attended more than one of these schools, just check the one where you graduated with a baccalaureate degree.

This was followed by a listing of the schools.

2. Most of the alumni of the schools that are participating in this study indicated “Churches of Christ” as their religious affiliation when they enrolled. Was that your religious affiliation when you enrolled at this school?

- A. Yes
- B. No

3. Which one of the following statements comes the closest to describing your level of church involvement when you were attending this school?

- A. My home congregation was close enough so that I was still a member and continued to attend services at my home congregation, or after I enrolled at this school I placed membership with a local congregation where I attended services most of the time.
- B. Although I never actually placed membership, there was a local congregation where I attended services most of the time.
- C. Although I attended church services regularly, I visited several different congregations depending on where my friends were going and what special classes or speakers were scheduled.
- D. I occasionally visited various congregations, but did not attend church services regularly.
- E. I did not attend church services at any congregation.

4. Which one of the following statements comes the closest to describing how often you attended church services when you were attending this school?

- A. Two or three times a week
- B. At least once a week
- C. Two or three times a month
- D. At least once a month
- E. Less than once a month, or not at all

5. Which one of the following statements best describes your present religious affiliation?

- A. I am a member of a local congregation of the Churches of Christ.
- B. Although I am not presently a member of a local congregation, I would still indicate “Churches of Christ” as my religious preference.
- C. I am a member of a different religious group.
- D. I have no present religious affiliation

6. Are you presently involved in any kind of leadership/service roles in your local congregation—such things as Bible class teacher, committee member, ministry leader, song leader, minister, deacon, or elder?

- A. Yes B. No

7. Gender

- A. Male B. Female

8. Marital status

- A. Single, never married
B. Married to my first spouse
C. Divorced and now single again, or remarried following a divorce
D. Single again or remarried following death of spouse

The remaining items on this questionnaire deal with the reasons various students and alumni have given for selecting the Christian college or university that they decided to attend. Please select the response option that best indicates how important each reason was in your decision to attend this school.

- A. The most important reason
B. A very important reason
C. A relatively important reason
D. A minor consideration
E. Not a factor in my decision

9. I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God's kingdom.

10. I believed that the education I would receive at this school would prepare me for a career with a good income.

11. The cost of attending this school was less than the total cost at other schools that I considered.

12. I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.

13. One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.

14. My parents encouraged me to attend this school.

15. The Preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

16. The Youth Minister at my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

Report of Results

1. What school did you attend?

*This item was included primarily for cross-tabulation studies. Results from individual schools will be reported to that school if there were enough of their alumni participating to provide significant results. There were only 2,065 alumni who completed this survey. Some of the participating schools got a very good response rate in their alumni surveys, but the numbers were quite low in other schools. **This may be an area where some follow-up studies would be indicated.***

2. What was your religious affiliation when you enrolled?

Among the 2,065 alumni who completed this survey, 1,872 (91%) were members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled. *The following reports will be presented in columns for: 1) All alumni; 2) Alumni who were members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled; and, 3) Alumni who were not members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled.*

ALUMNI SURVEY

Table 3

Which one of the following statements comes closest to describing your level of church involvement when you were attending this school?

<i>Responses</i>	ALUMNI SURVEY		
	<i>All Alumni</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
Number	1,950	1,795	155
A. My home was close enough so that I was still a member and continued to attend services at my home congregation, or after I enrolled at this school, I placed membership with a local congregation where I attended services most of the time.	620 31.8%	560 31.2%	60 38.7%
B. Although I never actually placed membership, there was a local congregation where I attended services most of the time.	760 39.0%	714 39.8%	46 29.7%
C. Although I attended church services regularly, I visited several different congregations depending on where my friends were going and what special classes or speakers were scheduled.	516 26.5%	491 27.4%	24 16.1%
D. I occasionally visited various congregations, but did not attend church services regularly.	65 3.3%	47 2.6%	18 11.6%
E. I did not attend church services at any congregation.	12 0.6%	6 0.3%	6 3.9%
Statistical Summary—Assuming an implied order in the responses			
The two most positive responses (A+B)	70.8%	71.0%	68.4%
The two most negative responses (D+E)	3.9%	2.9%	15.5%
Net (A&B-D&E)	68.9%	68.1%	52.9%
“Mean”	4.02*	4.03*	3.88*

Interpretation of the “Means”

- 4.50 to 5.00 **Attended as a member**
- 3.50 to 4.49 **Attended one congregation, but never placed membership**
- 2.50 to 3.49 **Visited various congregations**
- 1.50 to 2.49 **Occasionally visited but did not attend regularly**
- 1.00 to 1.49 **Did not attend church services**

ALUMNI SURVEY

Table 4

Which one of the following statements comes the closest to describing how often you attended church services when you were attending this school?

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	1,955	1,801	154
A. Two or three times a week	1,496 76.5%	1,440 80.0%	56 36.4%
B. At least once a week	312 16.0%	254 14.1%	58 37.7%
C. Two or three times a month	85 4.3%	68 3.8%	17 11.0%
D. At least once a month	34 1.7%	23 1.3%	11 7.1%
E. Less than once a month, or not at all	28 1.4%	16 0.9%	12 7.8%
Statistical Summary			
Most Positive (A+B, once a week or more)	92.5%	94.1%	74.1%
Most Negative (D+E, once a month or less)	3.1%	2.2%	14.9%
Net (A&B-D&E)	89.4%	91.9%	59.2%
Mean	8.4 times a month	8.9 times a month	5.5 times a month

ALUMNI SURVEY
Table 5

**Which one of the following statements best describes
your present religious affiliation?**

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,057	1,873	184
A. I am a member of a local congregation of the Churches of Christ	1,595 77.5%	1,564 83.5%	32 16.8%
B. Although I am not presently a member of a local congregation, I would still indicate "Churches of Christ" as my religious preference.	154 7.5%	146 7.8%	8 4.3%
C. I am a member of a different religious group. 72.8%	255	121 12.4%	134 6.5%
D. I have no present religious affiliation.	56 2.7%	45 2.4%	11 6.0%

Summary of Four Categories

The "Still Faithful" Group

**Those who were members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled
and are still members—or at least have that religious preference** **1,710**
83.1%

The "Converts"

**Those who were not members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled
39
but are now members—or at least have that religious preference** **2.0%**

The "Drop-Outs"

Those who were members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled but now are members of a different religious group—or have no religious affiliation 166
8.1%

The “Non-Converts”

Those who were not members of the Churches of Christ when they enrolled and who still are not—but who are members of a different religious group 145
or have no present religious affiliation 7.0%

ALUMNI SURVEY
Table 6

Are you presently involved in any kind of leadership/service roles in your local congregation—such things as Bible class teacher, committee member, ministry leader, song leader, minister, deacon, or elder?

<i>Responses Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,058	1,873	185
A. Yes	1,331 64.7%	1,261 67.3%	70 37.8%
B. No	612 29.7%	518 27.7%	94 50.8%
C. Not applicable since I am not a member of any local congregation	123 6.0%	101 5.4%	22 11.9%

Cross-Tabulation by Gender (Table 7)

Number	<i>All Alumni</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	2,060	863	1,197
A. Yes	1,335 64.8%	614 71.1%	721 60.2%

B. No	611 29.7%	199 23.1%	412 34.4%
C. Not applicable since I am not a member of any local congregation	122 5.9%	52 6.0%	70 5.8%

There are several other cross-tabulation studies with various filters that could be used for a more detailed analysis as needed. This should be enough, however, to show a gender difference—but probably far less than many observers would have predicted. But it should be noted that in this study many different roles were combined in one question. A more detailed nation-wide survey among Churches of Christ probably would not find many female elders, pulpit ministers, song leaders, etc., but would find more women in full-time church-supported ministry positions in such areas as counseling, education, children’s ministry, etc. This might be an area where additional study would be justified.

ALUMNI SURVEY
Table 8

Marital Status

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
=			
Number	2,054	1,869	185
A. Single, never married	479 23.3%	413 22.1%	66 35.7%
B. Still married to my first spouse	1,436 69.9%	1,340 71.7%	96 51.9%
C. Divorced and now single again, or remarried following a divorce	122 5.9%	101 5.4%	21 11.4%
D. Single again or remarried following the death of a spouse	17 0.8%	15 0.8%	2 1.1%

-			

It could be argued that alumni of Christian colleges and universities who have divorced would be less likely to respond to this survey or to omit this particular item. On the campuses of several Christian colleges and universities, there has been a popular belief that “The divorce rate among graduates of Christian colleges and universities is higher than the national average of 50 percent.” There is a

natural human tendency to notice a few dramatic cases and project those on the whole group. People cannot divorce unless first they have married. Note the numbers in this study.

<i>Categories</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
Total number who have ever married	1,575	1,458	119
Total number who have divorced	122	101	21
Divorce rate (percentage)	7.7%	6.9%	17.6%

If this alumni study were expanded to include a larger sample, it is likely that the divorce percentages would be higher—but not much higher.

In a later section of this report there are divorce rate figures from a nation-wide sample of churches. In this study, church leaders reported on young people in their congregations who had graduated from high school in the past ten years. As one would expect, many of these have never married and most of those who have married are still married to their first spouse. But the frequency of divorce among these young people from Churches of Christ is one-third lower than the national average for people who graduated from high school in the past ten years.

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

The remaining items on this alumni survey listed reasons various students and alumni have given for deciding to attend a Christian college or university. Alumni were asked to indicate the relative importance of these reasons in their own personal decision.

Table 9

I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God’s kingdom.

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2.053	1,870	183
A. The most important reason	612	598	14

	29.8%	32.0%	7.7%
B. A very important reason	805 39.2%	755 40.4%	50 27.3%
C. A relatively important reason	369 18.0%	327 17.5%	42 23.0%
D. A minor consideration	138 6.7%	108 5.8%	30 16.4%
E. Not a factor in my decision	138 6.7%	90 4.8%	48 26.2%

Summary Statistics

Total Positive (A+B)	69.0%	72.4%	35.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	13.4%	10.6%	42.6%
Net (A&B-D&E)	55.6%	61.8%	-7.6%
"Mean"	3.80*	3.91*	2.76**

**The "means" for All Alumni and members of the Churches of Christ were in the "Very Important" range.*

***The "mean" for alumni not members of the Churches of Christ was in the "Relatively Important" range.*

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 10

I believed that the education I would receive at this school would prepare me for a career with a good income.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All Alumni</i>	<i>Members of the Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
===== ===			
Number	2,005	1,870	185
A. The most important reason	116 5.6%	95 5.1%	21 11.4%
B. A very important reason	816	753	63

	39.7%	40.3%	34.1%
C. A relatively important reason	671 32.7%	614 32.8%	57 30.8%
D. A minor consideration	272 13.2%	250 13.4%	22 11.9%
E. Not a factor in my decision	187 9.1%	164 8.8%	23 12.4%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	45.3%	45.4%	45.5%
Total Negative (D+E)	22.3%	22.2%	24.3%
Net (A&B-D&E)	23.0%	23.2%	21.2%
"Mean"	3.20	3.21	3.22

Note: No significant difference between members of the Churches of Christ and alumni who are not members of the Churches of Christ.

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 11

The cost of attending this school was less than the total cost at other schools that I considered.

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the</i> <i>Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,048	1,863	185
A. The most important reason	76 3.7%	63 3.4%	13 7.0%

B. A very important reason	223 10.9%	194 10.4%	29 15.7%
C. A relatively important reason	266 13.0%	239 12.8%	27 14.6%
D. A minor consideration	325 15.9%	302 16.2%	23 12.4%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,166 56.9%	1,073 57.6%	93 50.3%

Summary Statistics

Total Positive (A+B)	14.6%	13.8%	22.7%
Total Negative (D+E)	72.8%	73.8%	62.7%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-58.2%	-60.0%	-40.0%
"Mean"	1.90	1.87	2.17

Note: A possible reason for alumni who are not members of the Churches of Christ being slightly less negative on this item could be that these individuals may have lived at home while attending one of these schools and that would be less expensive than attending other schools where they would have been living on campus.

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 12

I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the</i> <i>Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,052	1,868	184
A. The most important reason	82	71	11

	4.0%	3.8%	6.0%
B. A very important reason	270 13.2%	258 13.8%	12 6.5%
C. A relatively important reason	241 11.7%	231 12.4%	10 5.4%
D. A minor consideration	339 16.5%	326 17.5%	13 7.1%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,131 55.1%	992 53.1%	139 75.5%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	17.2%	17.6%	12.5%
Total Negative (D+E)	71.6%	70.6%	82.6%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-54.4%	-53.0%	-70.1%
"Mean"	1.96*	2.00*	1.62*

*A minor consideration

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 13

One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.

<i>Responses</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
<i>Churches of Christ</i>			

=====			
Number	2,053	1,868	185
A. The most important reason	54 2.6%	49 2.6%	5 2.7%
B. A very important reason	192 9.4%	186 10.0%	6 3.2%
C. A relatively important reason	175 8.5%	174 9.3%	1 0.5%
D. A minor consideration	180 8.8%	177 9.5%	3 1.6%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,454 70.8%	1,284 68.7%	170 91.9%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	12.0%	12.5%	5.9%
Total Negative (D+E)	79.6%	78.2%	93.5%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-67.6%	-65.7%	-87.6%
"Mean"	1.65*	1.50*	1.05**
*A minor consideration **Not a factor in my decision			

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 14

My parents encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,054	1,869	185
A. The most important reason	132 6.4%	129 6.9%	3 1.6%
B. A very important reason	361 17.6%	349 18.7%	12 6.5%
C. A relatively important reason	424 20.6%	409 21.9%	15 8.1%
D. A minor consideration	363 17.7%	336 18.0%	27 14.6%
E. Not a factor in my decision	779 37.9%	650 34.8%	129 69.7%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	24.0%	25.6%	8.1%
Total Negative (D+E)	55.6%	52.8%	84.3%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-31.6%	-27.2%	-76.2%
"Mean"	1.43*	1.44*	1.57**

*Not a factor in my decision **A minor consideration

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 15

The Preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,054	1,869	185
A. The most important reason	23 1.1%	22 1.2%	1 0.5%
B. A very important reason	123 6.0%	122 6.5%	1 0.5%
C. A relatively important reason	137 6.7%	136 7.3%	1 0.5%
D. A minor consideration	209 10.2%	208 11.1%	1 0.5%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,567 76.3%	1,386 74.2%	181 97.8%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	7.1%	7.7%	1.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	86.5%	85.3%	98.3%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-79.4%	-77.6%	-97.3%
"Mean"	1.46*	1.51**	1.04*

*Not a factor in my decision **A minor consideration

ALUMNI SURVEY

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Table 16

The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

<i>Responses</i> <i>Churches of Christ</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Members of the Alumni</i>	<i>Not Members of the Churches of Christ</i>
=====			
Number	2,054	1,869	185
A. The most important reason	12 0.6%	12 0.6%	0 0.0%
B. A very important reason	81 3.9%	81 4.3%	0 0.0%
C. A relatively important reason	126 6.1%	124 6.6%	2 0.5%
D. A minor consideration	165 8.0%	164 8.8%	1 0.5%
E. Not a factor in my decision	1,672 81.4%	1,490 79.7%	182 98.4%
Summary Statistics			
Total Positive (A+B)	4.5%	4.9%	0.0%
Total Negative (D+E)	89.4%	88.5%	98.9%
Net (A&B-D&E)	-84.9%	-83.6%	98.9%
"Mean"	1.19*	1.20*	1.03*

*Not a factor in my decision

Reasons for Selecting a Christian College or University

Ranked by “means” in responses of alumni who are members of the Churches of Christ

- 3.91 I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God’s kingdom.
- 3.21 I believed that the education I would receive at this school would prepare me for a career with a good income.
- 2.00 I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.
- 1.87 The cost of attending this school was less than the total cost at other schools that I was considering.
- 1.51 The Preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.50 One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.
- 1.44 My parents encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.20 The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

Ranked by “means” in responses of alumni are not members of the Churches of Christ

- 3.22 I believed that the education I would receive at this school would prepare me for a career with a good income.
- 2.76 I believed that the Bible instruction and the moral/spiritual atmosphere at this school would help equip me for useful service in God’s kingdom.
- 2.17 The cost of attending this school was less than the total cost at other schools that I was considering.
- 1.62 I had friends who selected this school and I wanted to be with them.
- 1.57 My parents encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.05 One or both of my parents and/or older siblings attended this school.
- 1.04 The Preacher in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.
- 1.03 The Youth Minister in my home congregation encouraged me to attend this school.

The most significant thing about these survey results is the similarity in the motivations of those who are members of the Churches of Christ and those who are not. As was the case with the Student Survey, these results strongly suggest that playing down a schools religious heritage would not attract more students who are not members of the Churches of Christ—although it might reduce the number of students coming from Churches of Christ.

A comparison of the rankings in the Student Survey (page 18) might suggest that the influence of preachers now is less than it was when these alumni attended school. That could be because of preachers having less influence now than in the past, but it could also be because preachers today do not encourage young people in their congregations to attend a Christian college or university.

**RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Part Three**

Estimating Some Numbers

One of the first things that the presidents of Christian colleges and universities represented in the Christian Higher Education Foundation asked me to do was to answer some questions about numbers.

How many young people in Churches of Christ graduate from high school each year?

How many of these Christian young people go on to college?

How many of the college-bound Christian young people attend a Christian college or university?

There are some rather good data on the entire population of the United States, 1990 through 2004. These figures provide some background for studying young people in Churches of Christ. This shows the size of the total college-bound population.

College Enrollment of Recent High School Graduates in the United States

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number who graduate from high school</i>	<i>Percent who attend college</i>	<i>Number who attend college</i>
=====			
=			
1990	2,363,000	60.1	1,419,562
1991	2,276,000	62.5	1,422,500
1992	2,397,000	61.9	1,483,743
1993	2,342,000	62.6	1,466,092
1994	2,517,000	61.9	1,558,023
1995	2,599,000	61.9	1,608,781
1996	2,660,000	65.0	1,729,000
1997	2,796,000	67.0	1,855,230
1998	2,819,000	65.6	1,849,264
1999	2,897,000	62.9	1,822,213
2000	2,756,000	63.3	1,744,548
2001	2,549,000	61.8	1,575,282
2002	2,796,000	65.2	1,822,992
2003	2,677,000	63.9	1,710,603
2004	2,752,000	66.7	1,835,584

Source: Adapted from U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics
Digest of Educational Statistics, annual, Table 265

Throughout this period, the number graduating from high school each year as a percentage of the nation's total population has been between 0.9 and 1.0 percent. The percentage of these high school graduates who attended college has averaged 63.5 percent with some upward trend.

The projection at the top of the next page starts with the Census Bureau’s estimates of population trends and assumes that the number graduating from high school will continue to be about the same percentage of the nation’s population with some upward trend.

Projected College Enrollment of High School Graduates in the United States

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number who graduate from high school</i>	<i>Percent who attend college</i>	<i>Number who attend college</i>
=2005	3,176,000	65.0	2,064,400
2006	3,232,000	65.1	2,104,032
2007	3,326,000	65.2	2,168,552
2008	3,339,000	65.3	2,180,367
2009	3,326,000	65.4	2,175,204
2010	3,301,000	65.5	2,162,155
2011	3,256,000	65.6	2,135,936
2012	3,255,000	65.7	2,138,535
2013	3,224,000	65.8	2,121,392
2014	3,241,000	65.9	2,135,819
2015	3,187,000	66.0	2,103,420

Source: Adapted from U.S. Center for Educational Statistics, *Projections of Educational Statistics, 2005-2015*, Table 206

If the demographics for Churches of Christ in the United States match these population norms, we would expect around 1.0 percent of the total adherents in Churches of Christ to be graduating from high school each year (“Adherents” include the members plus all children who attend but who are not yet old enough to be baptized and thus counted as members). We would also expect around two-thirds of these Christian young people who graduate from high school each year to attend college.

There are some interesting demographic data on Churches of Christ in the results received thus far from the Survey of Congregations. Over 3,000 congregations were contacted by regular mail or by email. Church leaders were asked to identify (for their own purposes) all of the members of their congregation who graduated from high school in the years 1997 through 2006. They were not asked to reveal the names of these individuals. They were simply asked to answer a few questions about each one. Those questions included:

- Did this individual go to college?**
- If so, did this individual attend a Christian college?**

This Survey of Congregations is not yet complete. We still need to fill a few more slots for a valid cluster sample. As of this date, we are probably about 80 percent of the way toward such a sample. Results received thus far, however, are not likely to change drastically when the cluster sampling is complete.

Some people would have predicted that the number of young people in Churches of Christ who graduate from high school each year would probably be far less than the national average of one percent. They base this on the congregations they have seen where the average age is far older than the average age in the general population. They believe that there has been some kind of mass exodus of young people from Churches of Christ. However, in the data received thus far in the Survey of Congregations, the number of members who graduate from high school each year is very close to one percent of the total adherents.

Some people would have predicted that the number of young people in Churches of Christ who go on to college after graduating from high school would be far lower than the national norm of around two-thirds. Actually, what we have found thus far in the Survey of Congregations is:

- Twenty percent do not go to college;**
- Thirty percent attend a Christian college or university; and,**
- Fifty percent attend a public institution, private secular school, etc.**

These figures may change slightly as the cluster sampling is completed, but the results thus far should be encouraging to those who believe in Christian education.

The question about how many young people in Churches of Christ graduate from high school each year requires estimates concerning the total number of adherents in the congregations of the Churches of Christ. The best source for these estimates is *Churches of Christ in the United States*, compiled by Carl H. Royster, published in Nashville by 21st Century Christian—with consultation services provided by Mac Lynn, who began this work more than three decades ago. Page 15 of this directory lists the number of congregations, members, and adherents for several years from 1980 to 2006. Estimates can be projected for the intervening years.

One of the problems for administrators of Christian colleges and universities who want to know how many young people from these congregations are graduating from high school each year is that some of the congregations have doctrines or practices that set them apart from the majority of Churches of Christ. Page 19 of *Churches of Christ in the United States, 2006*, lists various “fellowship groups.” The young people in Churches of Christ who are most likely to attend a Christian college or university are those in what this directory calls the “Mainstream” congregations. These “Mainstream” congregations account for 75.6 percent of the churches and they have 87.3 percent of the members. In the following table, the number of high school graduates in each of these years is figured at one percent of the total adherents. The number of college-bound high school graduates is figured at eighty percent.

Notice, however, that these estimates are based on results received thus far in the Survey of Congregations and that survey was limited to “Mainstream” congregations. I have conducted a lot of surveys of Churches of Christ starting in the late 1960s and I have never had much cooperation from the congregations that are not “Mainstream.” They just do not respond. So these figures should be understood as being valid for “Mainstream” congregations but perhaps not valid for the others.

Year	<u>All Churches of Christ</u>		<u>“Mainstream” Churches of Christ</u>	
	<u>High School Graduates</u>	<u>College-Bound</u>	<u>High School Graduates</u>	<u>College-Bound</u>
1997	16,471	13,177	14,363	11,490
1998	16,466	13,173	14,358	11,486
1999	16,461	13,169	14,354	11,483
2000	16,456	13,165	14,350	11,480
2001	16,493	13,194	14,384	11,507
2002	16,530	13,224	14,418	11,534
2003	16,567	13,254	14,451	11,561
2004	16,510	13,208	14,404	11,523
2005	16,542	13,234	14,357	11,486
2006	16,395	13,116	14,309	11,447

An Assessment

Christian colleges and universities were asked to provide a report on the number of entering freshmen each year, 1997 through 2006, with the number and/or percentage in each year who indicated “Churches of Christ” as their religious affiliation. It is likely that a large majority of these students come from the “Mainstream” Churches of Christ. In the period from 1997 through 2006, the available pool of college-bound high school graduates from these congregations has averaged around 11,500 per year. The Survey of Congregations provides data on how many high school graduates from these congregations church leaders say attend a Christian college or university. This study of the schools shows how many actually enrolled.

The Size of the Entering Freshman Class at Christian Colleges and Universities with the Number of These Who Identify “Churches of Christ” as Their Religious Affiliation

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Entering Freshmen</i>	<i>Number Who Come From Churches of Christ</i>	<i>Percent Who Come From Churches of Christ</i>
1997	5,820	3,664	63.0
1998	5,882	3,757	63.9
1999	6,219	4,351	70.0
2000	6,643	4,411	66.4
2001	6,636	4,461	67.2
2002	6,351	4,060	63.9
2003	6,164	4,034	65.4
2004	6,299	4,209	66.8
2005	6,553	4,175	63.7
2006	6,331	4,029	63.6

Source: Figures were provided by: Abilene Christian University; Cascade College; Crowley’s Ridge College; Faulkner University; Freed-Hardeman University; Great Lakes Christian College; Harding University; Heritage Christian University; Lipscomb University; Lubbock Christian University; Magnolia Bible College; Oklahoma Christian University; Ohio Valley University, Pepperdine University; Rochester College; Southwestern Christian College; Western Christian College, York College.

Churches of Christ have not grown or declined significantly since 1980. “Plateaued” is a term that church statisticians use to describe this condition. The population of the nation has grown by more than 25 percent since 1980, but the small amount of growth among Churches of Christ has not been enough to keep pace with the population growth. Unless there is a major revival soon, what is most likely to happen is that the number of congregations, members, and adherents is likely to remain about the same. **The most likely projection for the next ten years regarding the number of high school graduates coming from Churches of Christ is that there will be around 11,400 from “Mainstream” Churches of Christ as the best recruiting prospects and 13,120 from all Churches of Christ. These numbers are not likely to increase—unless there is a major revival in Churches of Christ.**

In the period between 1980 and 2006, Churches of Christ in the United States increased:

In the number of congregations by	244	1.9%
In the number of members by	26,232	2.1%
In the number of adherents by	39,318	2.5%

These figures, however, are totals for the entire nation. There were fifteen states where the number of congregations declined and seventeen states where the number of members and adherents declined.

See at the end of this report:

“Growth and Decline Among Churches of Christ in the United States, 1980-2006”

(a three-page alphabetical listing by states)

“States Ranked by Growth or Decline in the Number of Congregations” and

“States Ranked by Growth or Decline in the Number of Members”

(a one-page summary)

Schools that recruit most of their students from these states where the number of congregations, members, and/or adherents has declined would have a smaller pool of students to draw from.

Information is available by state and even by county on the number of congregations, members, and adherents—1980 to 2006. These figures can be used by administrators at Christian colleges and universities to make more exact projections for the areas where they draw most of their students.

If the numbers projected here sound far too small, consider the following perspective.

A Church Statisticians Perspective on ACT and SAT Lists

Most Christian colleges and universities purchase lists of students about to graduate from high school who have taken the ACT or the SAT and have indicated “Churches of Christ” as their religious affiliation. Administrators at Christian colleges and universities have noticed a recent decline in the number of these students. The figures that I have heard are from well over 23,000 down to just a little more than 18,000.

The first thing that most members of the Churches of Christ notice when they hear these reports is the **size of this decline** in these ACT and SAT numbers for Churches of Christ. The first thing that I noticed as a church statistician is **how large these numbers are**. I am a member of the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, a former president of the American Society for Church Growth, and the Director of the Harding Center for Church Growth Studies. For almost four decades, I have been studying patterns of growth and decline among Churches of Christ in the United States. This experience has caused me to reach the following conclusions.

Why the ACT and SAT Numbers Are So Large

Both the ACT and the SAT have a limited number of religious groups that students can check as their religious affiliation. Both of these include only two heirs of what some historians have called the “Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.”

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*	Churches of Christ*
Congregations 3,339	Congregations 13,027
Members 817,902	Members 1,264,808
Adherents 1,017,784	Adherents 1,645,584

But there is a third heir of this movement that neither the ACT nor the SAT include in their list of options. In the almanacs and yearbooks this fellowship is identified as “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.” Standard Publishing Company and College Press both have directories of this fellowship and both use this double designation since about half of these congregations call themselves “Christian Churches” while the other half call themselves “Churches of Christ.” These congregations use instrumental music in their worship assemblies and historically that has set them apart from Churches of Christ that do not use instrumental music. In the 1906 edition of *Religious Bodies*, compiled by the United States Census Bureau, the congregations that used instrumental music were identified as “Christian Churches” while the non-instrumental congregations were identified as “Churches of Christ.” But for the next fifty years, the more conservative congregations of the Christian Churches strongly opposed a more liberal element. The main issues were Open Membership, Church Federation, the Ecumenical Movement, Liberal Theology, and finally “Restructure.” Those who are now known as the “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” said that they could not fully participate in the Ecumenical Movement’s effort to merge denominational

organizations unless they had a central denominational headquarters that could speak for all of their congregations. The more conservative congregations refused to go along with the “Restructure” plan. They continued to exist and function as an informal fellowship of independent congregations.

Christian Churches and Churches of Christ*	
Congregations	5,471
Members	1,156,699
Adherents	1,439,253

*Source: Dale E. Jones and others, *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000*, (Nashville: Glenmary Research Center, 2002).

It seems likely that students who are members of “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ,” when they took the ACT or the SAT, probably checked the “Church of Christ” box or the “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” box. If half of these students checked one and the other half checked the other, that would be enough to bring the “Church of Christ” numbers on the ACT and the SAT to around 18,000.

According to the ACT “Church of Christ” list, Ohio is the state with the largest concentration of students from Churches of Christ. That clearly is not the case with the non-instrumental kind of Churches of Christ. But in Ohio, almost all of the congregations counted with “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ” use the “Church of Christ” designation. This supports the conclusion that students from the instrumental fellowship are checking the “Church of Christ” box and that is why those numbers are so high.

Why the ACT and SAT Numbers Have Declined

Frankly, I am not sure why the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT lists have declined. I know that it is not because of a decline in the non-instrumental “Churches of Christ.” This fellowship has been “plateaued” with very little growth since 1980, but it has not declined. The decline in the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT lists certainly does not reflect a decline among the “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ.” They were the second-fastest major religious group in America in the 1990s. Only the Mormons grew faster.

I suspect that the reason for the decline in the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT lists is that a growing number of young people in one or both of these fellowships have started checking “Other” or “I prefer not to respond” on the ACT and “Other” or “No preference or affiliation” on the SAT. Denominational loyalty is not what it was in previous generations. That may even be the case among heirs of the Restoration Movement who are trying to be both non-denominational and non-sectarian.

I directed the Office of Outcomes Assessment at Harding University for about fifteen years and for almost forty years I have been doing survey research in churches. One thing that I have learned is that responses can differ based on the kind of response options listed. Responses are somewhat different when people have just a few response options to use as their answers instead of being asked more open-ended questions. In much of the research that I have done, one of the questions has been “What is your religious affiliation?” Most of the time they will write something like “Churches of Christ,” “Christian Churches,” “Disciples of Christ,” “Baptist,” “Methodist,” etc. But in recent years I have found more people writing something like “Non-Denominational,” “Christian,” or “My commitment is to Christ and not to any one denomination.”

I have interviewed some of these people who gave non-traditional responses to the question about religious affiliation. What I have found is that many are not sure that they will continue attending Churches of Christ after they graduate and are out on their own. Some students who are attending

congregations of the Churches of Christ while they are in school are not at all sure what they will do when they leave school.

This explanation of why the “Church of Christ” numbers in the ACT and SAT lists have declined is only a hypothesis. It needs to be tested by additional research. The decline, however, is real and it has some meaning. At this point, the most likely explanation would seem to be some kind of a shift in attitudes. Church leaders have reason to be concerned about this change in attitudes.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Part Five

Suggestions for Continuing the Research

There is still around \$4,000 left out of the \$11,000 research grant that the Christian Higher Education Foundation provided. That should be enough to cover expenses for the work that remains to be done and for follow-up studies.

Expand Student and Alumni Surveys.

Some of the CHEF schools did not administer the Student Survey or the Alumni Survey. These surveys, obviously, do not fit all of the schools. Focus groups or some other means of assessment may be more appropriate for some schools. A few of the CHEF schools administered the Student Survey and the Alumni Survey, but the samples at these schools were too small for any meaningful report to those schools regarding how their students and alumni answered the questions. These schools, of course, helped provide some data for the larger study. But before we could provide confidential reports that would have any meaning, those schools would need to contact students and alumni again with a request for them to respond to the surveys. Schools that decide to do this could administer both surveys in the Spring semester of 2008. Their data would then be added to the data provided by students and alumni at other schools. The expanded data base would then be used for the final report that should be available by the 2008 meeting of the Christian Higher Education Foundation. These schools would then have large enough samples for confidential reports to administrators at each school.

In the current data, schools that had the best response rate for the Student Survey used a two-stage approach. They printed copies of the Student Survey and administered these in Bible classes. Then they paid student workers to go online to enter the responses. Those that had the best response rate for the Alumni Survey used repeated messages by email encouraging their alumni to go online to answer the questions.

Complete the Cluster Sampling.

The important thing about cluster sampling is that all known relevant demographic characteristics concerning the larger population be represented in the sample. In this case, the larger population is all congregations of the Churches of Christ in the United States. But we do not need a random sample of churches. The focus of the research is on young people in these congregations who have graduated from high school in the past ten years (1997-2006). We need more data from large congregations because that is where the members are. This sampling is by church size, location, and racial/ethnic make-up.

We already have an adequate sample of congregations in the following size categories:

Churches with less than 50 members
44.9% of congregations but only 12.6% of members

Churches with 50-99 members
26.7% of congregations but only 18.8% of the members

Churches with 100-199 members
16.0% of congregations but only 22.2% of the members

We still need two congregations with 200-299 members.
5.4% of congregations with 13.0% of the members

We still need nine congregations with 300 or more members.
7.0% of the congregations with 33.4% of the members

We already have an adequate sample from most locations, but still have these remaining slots to fill:

Three congregations in Texas
16.5% of congregations with 22.5% of the members

Two congregations in Tennessee
11.2% of congregations with 13.3% of the members

Four congregations from the following states:

- Alabama**
6.9% of the congregations with 7.2% of the members
- Arkansas**
5.8% of the congregations with 6.9% of the members
- Oklahoma**
4.6% of the congregations with 4.9% of the members

In order to fill two other location slots, we need one congregation each from the following states:

- California**
5.3% of the congregations with 6.4% of the members
- Florida**
4.0% of the congregations with 4.5% of the members

In order to fill one remaining slot regarding racial/ethnic make-up, we need one Hispanic congregation.

We already have an adequate sample of White/Anglo and Black congregations. Hispanics make up less than one percent of the members in Churches of Christ. *We are not looking for a White/Anglo congregation that has a Spanish language service, but an independent Hispanic congregation. We know of only 25. We sent copies of the research packet for churches in English and in Spanish to each of these churches—but without a single response.*

This may be an area where I will need help from the presidents of Christian colleges and universities. Notice, however, that the congregations selected to complete the cluster sample should not be a congregation located close to a Christian college or university. Their members would include too many students who could have already completed a Student Survey. To avoid double-sampling, we need to select churches that are located far enough away from a Christian college or university so that they do not have members living at home and commuting to a Christian college or university. At their November 2007 meeting, the presidents approved doing the things needed to complete a valid cluster sampling.

Try Again on the Campus Ministry Survey.

We contacted every campus ministry operated by Churches of Christ at state-supported colleges and universities in the United States. Their research packet included a one-page questionnaire for the leaders of the campus ministry and a brief questionnaire for students involved in campus ministry activities. That questionnaire included reasons for their decision not to attend a Christian college or university.

I made a presentation explaining this research at a meeting of campus ministry leaders this past summer. We did not get enough of a response in the campus ministry study to include it in the *Preliminary Report* given to the presidents at their November 2007 meeting. Since then, however, we have started getting responses from campus ministry leaders and from students involved in campus ministry activities at state-supported schools. Those results will be included in the final report to be given to the presidents at their November 2008 meeting.

Follow-Up Studies

There are two follow-up studies that I would like to suggest. Both of these studies have the potential of providing a better understanding of the drop-out problem.

Differences in the Kind of People Who Are Leaving Churches of Christ

Some anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a difference between the kind of people who are leaving Churches of Christ today and those who were leaving this fellowship back in the early 1970s when I first started studying this subject.¹ In the 1970s and early 1980s, most of the people who were dropping out of Churches of Christ were the young people who had never really been very active in the church. They were not the most spiritually-minded. At best, they could be described as “marginal” members. Very few of these drop-outs joined other religious groups. After they left Churches of Christ, most had no religious affiliation.

This changed, however, when the Boston-Crossroads Discipling Movement (later known as the “International Churches of Christ”) was at its peak.² Some of the brightest and most evangelistic young people left the “Mainstream” Churches of Christ and joined this movement.

Today it seems that the “marginal” members who drop out now have no religious affiliation and that is about 20% of the young people growing up in Churches of Christ. But the 20% who leave Churches of Christ and join some other religious group seem to be quite different from those “marginal” members. The anecdotal evidence suggests that these are some of the most talented, evangelistic, and spiritually-minded young Christians.

In order to study this matter in greater depth, I would suggest going back to some of those church leaders who provided the data on young people in their congregations who graduated from high school in the past ten years (1997-2006). We need to ask them to tell us more about these young people who dropped out. In some cases, we might be able to contact a few of these individuals and ask them to tell us why they left.

¹ Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., *Persuasion in Religious Conversion* (University of Illinois, Doctoral Dissertation, 1975).
_____. *Why Churches Grow, Third Edition* (Nashville: Christian Communications, Inc, a division of the Gospel Advocate Company, 1986).

² Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., ed., with Howard Norton, Don Vinzant, and Gene Vinzant, *The Discipling Dilemma* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1988).

The presidents approved this follow-up study and suggested that we get more data on the alumni—specifically how many years they attended a Christian college or university.

Differences in the Kind of Congregations They Are Leaving

When I first started studying the drop-out problem, my focus was on characteristics of those who left Churches of Christ. In this I followed the approaches used by John Savage, generally regarded as the leading authority on the subject.³ He took a psychoanalytic approach. Later, however, when I was working at Abilene Christian University, I served on a D. Min. Thesis Project Committee for David Malone. He had been trained by Savage in the “Calling and Caring” program for reaching and restoring drop-outs. Malone was studying the exit path in Churches of Christ. He applied a systems theory approach that he had learned in his Marriage and Family Therapy classes at ACU. He focused on characteristics of the congregation that church members were leaving.

In his research, Malone used items from a subscale of the *Prepare/Enrich Relationship Inventories*.⁴ This subscale includes all of the items used to prepare the “Couple and Family Map.” This map has five levels of **Closeness**: Disconnected, Somewhat Connected, Connected, Very Connected, and Overly Connected. The map also has five levels of **Flexibility**: Overly Flexible, Very Flexible, Flexible, Somewhat Flexible, and Overly Flexible. Four different kinds of dysfunctional relationships are identified.

- Overly Flexible and Disconnected
- Inflexible and Disconnected
- Overly Flexible and Overly Connected
- Inflexible and Overly Connected

The subscale of items used to prepare this map were tested for reliability and validity under the name “FACES III.” Malone obtained Olson’s permission to change the wording of those items so that instead of saying “My family is like __,” they said “My church family is like __.”

When Malone gave the FACES III items in questionnaires for members of several congregations, he found that many of these congregations were like dysfunctional families. Church leaders could restore drop-outs, but unless they addressed the issues of a dysfunctional congregation, those restored drop-outs soon dropped out again. Many of these “Mainstream” congregations were Inflexible and Disconnected. I am reasonably sure that if I had given FACES III in my study of the Boston Church of Christ or other congregations of the Discipling Movement, they would have scored as Inflexible and Overly Connected.

I have used the FACES III items in questionnaires for church members when I was conducting congregational assessments. One of the things that I have observed about Inflexible congregations is that they have very little tolerance for diversity. They attract and keep only those individuals who are like the present members. That is probably true in things like socio-economic status and racial/ethnic identity. I have also found this to be true in regard to the personality characteristics identified by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.⁵

In “Mainstream” Churches of Christ that are Inflexible on the FACES III results, the pattern that I have observed is simply that they tend to attract and keep people whose MBTI results are similar to their own. They have a significant over-representation of just a few of the 16 MBTI types and a significant under-representation of all the rest. The pattern that I observed in the Boston Church of Christ was different. In

³ John S. Savage, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member: Psychological and Theological Implications* (Pittsford, New York: LEAD Consultants, Inc., 1976).

⁴ David H. Olson, (Minneapolis: Life Innovations, Inc., 1987).

⁵ “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and “MBTI” are registered trademarks of Consulting Psychologists Press.

the Spring of 1985, I administered the MBTI to over 900 of their members three times with different instructions.

1. *Answer the questions the way you would have before your conversion to this group—or five years ago if you have been a member that long.*
2. *Answer the questions the way you think, feel and act today.*
3. *Answer the questions the way you think you will after you have been disciplined for five more years.*

I had tested that methodology with “Mainstream” Churches of Christ and also with Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian congregations. In these groups, there were no statistically significant changes in the MBTI results. The “past,” “present,” and “future” perceptions of self remained unchanged. But I also tested that methodology in five groups that appear on almost all lists of cults: The Church of Scientology, The Unification Church (Moonies), Hari Krishna, The Way International, and The Family of God. In these cults, there were highly significant changes from “past” to “present” and on to “future” perceptions of self. Furthermore, there was a clear convergence in a single MBTI type. That is also what I found in the Boston Church of Christ.⁶

Later I served as an outside reader for a D. Min. Thesis Project for the pastor of a small Lutheran church. His Myers-Briggs Type was INFP. His church had attracted and kept a large over-representation of people who were similar to this pastor, especially those who preferred to introvert their Feeling communication style. A few miles away there was a very large ELCA congregation with an ESFJ pastor. People who visited this small Lutheran church and left tended to go to this large church with the ESFJ pastor. When given the MBTI, these people tended to be very similar to the ESFJ pastor. People tend to be uncomfortable with others who extravert a function that they prefer to introvert. People who left this small Lutheran church tended to be outwardly very expressive of their feelings. They held up their hands when they prayed. Some of them said “Amen,” or “Praise the Lord” out loud in front of God and everybody. That made those who preferred to introvert their Feeling function rather uncomfortable.

In the 100+ congregational assessments that I have conducted, I have almost always given the MBTI to all in the leadership group and to a representative sample of the rest of the church members. Congregations that score as Inflexible on the FACES III items also tend to have a significant over-representation of just a few MBTI types. Furthermore, these churches tend to have a low retention rate.

There is one city where I have conducted several congregational assessments. All of these assessments involved giving the MBTI. One congregation had a large over-representation of members with a preference for Thinking judgment. In another congregation not far away, there was a large over-representation of those who preferred Feeling judgment. The Thinker-type church did not like the Feeler-type church. The Thinkers thought that the Feelers were a bunch of liberals who would soon join the Pentecostals and start talking in tongues. Meanwhile, the Feelers felt that the Thinkers were a bunch of narrow-minded legalists. In an inner-city congregation, there was a slight over-representation of those who preferred Sensing as a communication style. They wanted the Thinkers and the Feelers to forget their differences and join them in an effort to feed the hungry and provide shelter for the homeless.

On several occasions, I have been asked to help congregations manage conflict. When I have given the MBTI to these congregations, it always became clear that their divisions were really over personality differences and not true doctrinal differences.

If there is enough money left when we finish the present study and the most obvious follow-up, I really would like to test a hypothesis that congregations with a low tolerance for diversity are those with the highest drop-out rate, especially among the 20% who are leaving Churches of Christ and going to other religious groups. Demographic data, of course, would show how much diversity a congregation has in

⁶ Yeakley, *The Discipling Dilemma*, pp. 23-38, with statistical tables on pages 198-205.

regard to racial/ethnic identification, socio-economic status, educational levels, age (generational cohorts), etc. A questionnaire with the FACES III items could determine whether the congregation scored as Inflexible. That same questionnaire could include items that would reveal the level of doctrinal differences among the members. I really believe that such a study would show that congregations with a low tolerance for diversity tend to have the highest drop-out rates.

A healthy congregation, as I understand it, is one where the members do not just tolerate diversity; they actually *celebrate* diversity. They have come to understand that their diversity is an opportunity for growth. In mature congregations, members do not seek to please themselves. Instead, they seek what is best for others and for the group as a whole. In these congregations, members engage in authentic dialogue so that they can understand one another better. They begin this dialogue with enough humility to admit that they do not know everything and that they might learn from viewing things from the perspective of others. Following the instructions in Romans 14:1—15:7, the more “conservative” members do not judge those whose conscience approves of things that their conscience forbids. At the same time, the more “liberal” members do not look down on those whose conscience forbids things that their conscience permits. In these healthy congregations, the members try to build consensus for some compromise position that all can accept. If they cannot achieve that goal, they at least try to find some way to avoid intruding the matter of differences into the shared experience of the congregation. If all efforts fail and they simply cannot stay together in the same congregation, they at least separate on the basis of conscience and not on the basis of judging one another or looking down on one another. At their November 2007 meeting, the presidents indicated that this kind of study concerning characteristics of the congregations members are leaving should be done. After the meeting, however, several of the presidents suggested that this be done as a separate study not funded by the research grant from the Christian Higher Education Foundation. That is the way I plan to do it.

In Conclusion

I would like to thank the Christian Higher Education Foundation for making this study possible. I hope and pray that it helps.