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ANNOUNCEMENTS

We will have our next **VBS planning meeting** on May 6 at 6:30pm in the FCML. Anyone who would like to help out in the planning process with the Community VBS this summer at SFCC is welcome to attend.

On Sat., June 1 at 4:00-9:00pm, we will be having our annual **Summer Cookout** at Jeff & Karen Heuby's house (4750W 200S, Lyons). Everyone is invited! Please be advised if you bring your little ones that the shooting range will be open. So, close parental supervision is imperative. Bring your friends, lawn chairs, guns and ammo, ear protection, and a \$5/ adult donation for food. Please RSVP to Jeff or Karen for a headcount if you plan to attend.

If you or a relative who regularly attends SFCC is **graduating from high school or college**, we wish to recognize you/them on June 2. Please sign up in the WCML foyer so that no one is overlooked. We ask that you/they be present during the morning worship service that Sunday to be recognized.

Free Breakfast

Sun. mornings at 8:15am, FCML

Worship & Sunday School

Sun. mornings at 9:15am, WCML

Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group

Sundays at 5:00pm, FCML

Kidz Klub

Wednesdays at 6:30pm, WCLL

Faithful Fitness

Wednesdays at 6:30pm, FCML

Elders Meeting

Sun. 5th at 4:00pm, Heubys

VBS Planning Meeting

Mon. 6th at 6:30pm, FCML

Seniors Fellowship

Tues. 7th & 21st at 10:00am, Library

Board Meeting

Thurs. 9th at 7:00pm, FCML

Mission Lunch

Wed. 15th at 11:30am, Comm. Bldg.

Connection

Sun. 26th at 6:30pm, FCML



The attacks on Easter that specifically targeted Christians and tourists in Sri Lanka should give us pause. They confirm what we already know to be true—that the church still faces and will continue to face increased persecution in the coming days.

Jesus warned that the world will hate us because of our allegiance to Him (see John 15:18-25). As Americans, we've been fairly insulated from such persecution, but we are seeing the precursors for it more and more everyday—stereotyping, vilifying, and marginalizing. Next will come criminalizing and then persecution. While we have it pretty easy here, our brothers and sisters in countries like India or Sri Lanka have been enduring persecution for centuries.

But with every attack on Christianity, whether it happens by means of a church bomb or shooting here or abroad, or by way of the courts, the government, or the press, it becomes clearer that the line in the sand is being drawn. Are you, who call yourself a Christian, willing to live for Jesus, even if it might mean dying for Him?

Twenty years ago, we never dreamed that just going to a church gathering might mean losing our lives, but that has changed. And now, the words of Jesus mean more to us than ever before when we read things like, "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matt. 10:22, NIV) Or, "Stand firm, and you will win life." (Luke 21:19, NIV) And from the Apostle Paul: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love." (1 Cor. 16:13-14, NIV) As Jesus followers, we must not waver.

Jesus and His apostles were repetitive in their encouragement to stand firm. They knew it would weed out the men from the boys, so to speak. Those who aren't very committed to Christ will walk away and join a worldly point of view, while the true followers of Jesus will remain to the end.

Ed Stetzer pointed out a few years ago that 75% of Americans checked the "Christian" box on a survey that was conducted. This is how they self-identified. Yet, we know better than to believe that three-fourths of the country is following the Bible, right?

Stetzer goes on to discuss three categories of the American population that identify as Christian. You have the Cultural Christians—those who believe they are Christians simply because their culture tells them they are. They are Christians by heritage and likely have religious roots in their family. They wouldn't call themselves atheists and will show up at a church once or twice a year, but they really don't revolve any of their decisions or lifestyle



Glen Apple, Max Apple, Shirley Baumert, Morgan Cazel, David Clark, Jeanette Goodman, Jonathan Kirkwood, Sandra Kuehn, Karl Newell, Avery Pond, Shirley Potter, Scott Rasico, John Rawles, Bryce Waggoner, Theresa Williamson, Taylor Zaharako

**Names above will be left on for 4 weeks and then removed unless otherwise requested.*

Nursing Home: Doris Bledsoe, Jack & Sylvia Heuby

Our Military, SFCC Youth

Our Missions/Ministries:

Camp Illiana, Ivory Coast Christian Mission, Helping His Hands, Matthew 25 Ministries, Delhi Outreach, Open Arms Christian Ministries, V.U. Christian Campus Fellowship, Pregnancy Choices

"Stand Firm" continued...

around their faith. But they *do* believe in God. Stetzer estimates that these make up a third of that 75%.

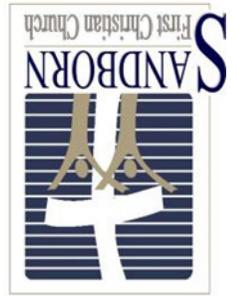
Another third he labels Congregational Christians. Similar to the first group, these individuals have at least some level of connection to congregational life. They likely would identify a "home church" they grew up in or perhaps were married in. They probably even visit occasionally, maybe even once every few months or so. They grew up in the church, they have their membership there, but church isn't really a regular part of their life now. They don't really have a Biblical worldview. Or, in some cases, in this category you might find people who are in church quite often, yet really don't let it shape much of their life when they leave. Like Cultural Christians, it's not a real vibrant faith, even though there's a little more church attendance than the first category.

The last third Stetzer labels Convictional Christians—those who are actually striving to live according to their faith. These are Christians who would say that Jesus has changed their lives. They don't live perfect lives, but their faith is the core of their identity.

As we see Christianity in decline, and as churches close their doors more and more each year, I believe what we are seeing is, not really a drop in the last category, but actually just more and more of the first two categories shifting over to the "no religion" category. It's no longer to their advantage to wear the name Christian, so they're subtly excusing themselves of a label that was never really true of them in the first place.

Persecution has a way of thinning out the Cultural and Congregational Christians, while strengthening the Convictional Christians. That's why I would agree with Stetzer that Christianity isn't technically in decline. It's just that more and more Christians are counting the costs, and some are jumping ship. The church isn't dying; it's just becoming more clearly defined. And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

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May Serving Schedule	5	12	19	26
Bus Drivers	David Myers	Julie Sanders	Randy Burress	Steve Anderson
Greeters & Communion Cleanup	Forrest & Sharon Lynch	Cook Family	Josh & Juli Adams	Rawles Family
Communion Meditation	Scott Williams	Richard Mortland	Forrest Lynch	E.B. Rawles
Offering Prayer	Steve Anderson	Paul Kaiser	Jeff Heuby	J.D. Lynch
Media Booth	Luke Powers	Madison Burress	Debbie Mason	Madison Burress
Worship Team	Amanda, Barb, Karen, Janelle, Jeff, Hunter	Janice, Troy, Janelle, Jeff, Hunter	Amanda, Barb, Troy, Alice, Jeff, Hunter	Janice, Karen, Janelle, Jeff, Hunter
Decision Guide	Troy Stoll	Karen Heuby	Paul Kaiser	Becky Williams
Nursery	Alisa Anderson & Regina Kaiser	Alexis Van Deventer	Becky Williams & Chad Russell	Jes Fry
Preschool Teachers	Erin Russell & Madison Burress	Jenny Anthis	Kelsey Schilt & Libby Lynch	Erin Russell
Elementary Teachers	Julie Sanders	Jes Fry	Julie Sanders	Troy Stoll
Communion Prep	Richard Mortland			



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|----|-----------------|----|----------------|
| 2 | Linda Roberts | 14 | Josh Anderson |
| 2 | Kendall Sanders | 19 | Ashley Cook |
| 3 | Cindy Malone | 22 | Debbie Mason |
| 3 | Scott Powers | 26 | Carter Roberts |
| 4 | Lexi Ferree | 27 | Aurora Rickli |
| 5 | Dalton Thompson | 28 | Derek Williams |
| 11 | Randy Burress | | |



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|----|---------------------------|
| 23 | Cody & Chelsea Polston |
| 30 | J.R. & Julie Padgett |
| 30 | Steven & Renee Schopmeyer |
- If your name was left off, please fill out an Anniversary/Birthday info sheet found on the table in the foyer and submit it to the minister.

"Stand Firm" continued...

But it's vitally important that *you* know where you stand. Are you a Christian by name only? Or, will you deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Him?

No matter what the future holds for us, stand firm, church. Our reward will be well worth it.