

DO YOU BELIEVE OR WHAT? by Carl McMurray

I just received an email report from Daniel DeGarmo. He and Mark Hatfield (and their families) began a church planting in Chillicothe, OH, last year. There was no sound congregation in this town and Dan & Serena had been wanting to move to this area, so he and Mark prayed about it and then committed to planting a church there. Last month he reported that they were up to about 32 regularly meeting together. He also wrote that they had purchased 1,000 flyers, door-hangers, and postcards to mail out for a special Sunday service. They were going to invite 1,000 people and aim for their attendance to reach 100. Last Lord's Day they had 102 present.

A very well known preacher recently gave his studied opinion on this subject in conversation when he said, "The church is not growing!" I suspect that among the churches where he travels that statement is true, but I absolutely deny that it is true of the Lord's church everywhere. He travels in discouraging circles.

Where I've been in contact, I'm hearing of building programs and expansions. I've seen funds going overseas for preaching. I spoke to several in Florida last month about exciting works that are taking place in their locations in different parts of the country. I keep hearing about brothers in the institutional churches that are getting tired of holding the line against watered down Bible teaching and liberal innovations to the mission and organization of the Lord's church. They are looking for the old paths.

There are several outreach ideas on our own horizon that are being studied and considered here as we prepare to start construction on a new meeting place. Things like two separate mailing programs, special studies, special event Sundays, and more that different ones here are thinking about that haven't been discussed yet. 1 Peter 3:12 says, "*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayers.*" Although numerical growth is not one of the Lord's promises, answered prayer certainly is. Are you praying for souls to be reached? Another of the Lord's promises is that His Word WILL be successful and accomplish what HE wants, when it goes out, Isaiah 55:11. Our job is to get it out! It is our job to give the Word a chance to work on people's hearts. It is up to us to give honest and good hearts a chance to choose.

Men and women are in spiritual need, and the Word is powerful. May I suggest that we commit our plans, prayers, and practice to obedience and trust and then stand fast and watch while God glorifies Himself among men. In the coming year, let the rejoicing begin.