

# Back to the Bible Campaign Successful Across Lawton

**K**nocking doors and asking strangers to study the Bible. This may seem like an out-of-date method of saving the lost – but not for the Northwest Church of Christ in Lawton, Okla. They know it still works, it's effective, it's gratifying - and most importantly it follows the Great Commission.

It's a chance to take people "Back to the Bible" for a basic study of the Scriptures, through a tried and proven method known as the "Safety Chain." This logical method of Scripture study was developed years ago by the Northwest Church of Christ and has been used to convert thousands of people throughout the years.

Each year, in early June, members of the Northwest Church of Christ typically travel to another community to knock doors for a congregation that has invited them to conduct a Back to the Bible Campaign. But, this year was different. The Northwest congregation took on the task of knocking doors in their own community.

But, they didn't do it alone.

Joining them were four other local congregations, Eighth & Lee Church of Christ, Rose Hill Church of Christ, Sullivan Village Church of Christ, and University Church of Christ. They accomplished their goal – to knock the doors of all 36,000 homes in Lawton over a seven-day period. Knocking these doors would reach out to the 91,000 residents of this southwest Oklahoma community. The town was geographically divided according to the location of each church, as well as the size of the congregation and how many participants each had for the week.

The purpose of the campaign was to invite residents to study the Bible and attend a gospel meeting that was hosted on the evenings of the same week at each participating Lawton

congregation's respective church building. Each congregation taught the same set of topics.

In addition to pre-campaign classes that were hosted at each participating congregation,



*Two campaign workers representing Northwest Church of Christ knock a door in a Lawton, Okla. neighborhood to invite residents to a gospel meeting as a part of a Back to the Bible Campaign. Door knockers also offered free Bible studies during this time. Lawton was geographically divided according to the location of each of the participating local Churches of Christ, as well as the size of the congregation and how many participants each had for the week.*

Northwest also hosted an evangelism workshop on the day prior to beginning the Back to the Bible Campaign on June 6. Most of those participants, who represented 11 states, stayed several days to assist with the door knocking and to learn more about campaigning so they could take more information back to their home congregations.

Also taking part in this year's campaign are former members, who return each year for this event. And, as an added bonus, teams are also made up of individuals from congregations from which Northwest has conducted past Back to the Bible Campaigns.

### **Campaign Success**

So, how did all of the work turn out? As of Sunday, June 14, there have been 51 baptisms and one restoration. Fifty-one new Christians as a result of church members giving their

time to go out with the goal of seeking and saving the lost over a seven-day period. And, there are still many studies to go that were set up during this time. Positive results are likely to continue rolling in for weeks to come.

### **2009 Campaign**

"This year's campaign was definitely different from past years," Bob Dismuke, campaign coordinator, pointed out. Since the campaign was local, many more Northwest members were able to be involved in one way or another. "We had members who joined together to do every task necessary to accomplish the goals of this campaign. It's both positive and gratifying," he commented.

Dismuke explained that the campaign is one of the most exciting evangelistic efforts to be involved with throughout the year. "We looked forward to this week all year long. Even though



*One of the Northwest Church of Christ teams returns to the van after knocking doors in one Lawton, Okla. neighborhood. Door knockers representing five local Churches of Christ in Lawton, knocked doors for seven days as a part of the Back to the Bible Campaign. Some 36,000 doors were knocked during this time, reaching out to the 91,000 residents of this southwest Oklahoma community.*



we do a lot of evangelistic work throughout the year - the Back to Bible Campaign is the most enjoyable," Dismuke commented.

"It's a little piece of heaven," he added. "It is so exciting to be around all of the door knockers and hear the stories about people who want to study the Bible," he pointed out.

### **Views from Church Leaders**

A benefit of every campaign is that members are "reaching out instead of in," explained David Sexton, campaign director, and an elder for the Northwest congregation. "In doing this, you not only grow individually – but it also helps the congregation to stay united towards the common goal of evangelizing and staying focused on the same purpose," Sexton commented.

"Door knocking still works. The Back to the Bible Campaign works. Setting up Bible studies is not dead," Sexton remarked.

He added that more than half of the Northwest congregation is qualified to sit down and teach a Bible study. Not very many congregations have

this confidence or this ability to do studies that can have such results.

"Conducting a campaign in our own town allowed us to utilize our membership for knocking doors, cooking, driving, babysitting and many other duties. Almost 100 percent of our congregation participated in one aspect or another of the campaign," Sexton noted.

Among the visitors to this year's campaign was a group from a church in Alabama. "They had knocked thousands of doors and not set up one study, so they wanted to see what we were doing," Sexton said.

Charlie Dillahunty, an elder with the Northwest congregation, noted that the campaign helps Northwest members to fulfill the Great Commission. Dillahunty, who has been involved with all of the campaigns, admits that it took several years to build the event into the success it is now.

Dillahunty noted that every elder from the Northwest congregation is involved in either door

knocking, teaching or with the administrative portion of the campaign. He feels that involvement of the leadership has been a key factor in keeping the Back to the Bible campaign going strong for 34 years.

"Christ didn't set up the church to become a housekeeping organization," Dillahunty commented.

While many campaign results are immediate, with baptisms resulting from Bible studies set during the week, some results may not be evident for several years to come. For example, Dillahunty noted, many years may go by and then someone remembers something that was said during a past campaign, and



*Captains look over contact cards gathered from team members. Team captains are responsible for dropping off and picking up their team members when knocking doors, as well as knowing where they are at all times.*

is baptized as a result. Northwest members have accumulated many stories like this over the campaign's long history.

"Door knocking is contagious," commented David Faram, another of Northwest's elders taking part in the campaign. "They see others out knocking doors and they want to join in. It has been really good for this congregation," Faram noted.

### ***Campaign Participants***

Kaye Moore, who has been on all 34 of Northwest's Back to the Bible Campaigns, feels that it is a unique event in several ways. "(Those taking part in the campaign) are ordinary – everyday – working people, who take a week off of work to knock doors. It's not a group of preachers or church staff who are reaching out – it's just ordinary Christians," Moore commented.

Another unique aspect she appreciates is the pairing of study partners. "When Bible studies are set up, campaigners (who go out in twos) are carefully paired to the person(s) being studied with, whether by occupation, interest, age or other factor," she explained. This often helps put the person being studied with more at ease.

A highlight of the campaign for Moore is the chance to grow closer spiritually with the others who are taking part in the campaign. "You spend a lot of time with them all week – working closely together during a very concentrated effort," she explained.

Moore said that she has also enjoyed being an encourager to her husband, Roy Moore, who was among the original leaders of the Back to the Bible Campaign for Northwest. Together, the pair has been very involved in the campaign for over three decades for the Northwest congregation.

Dorothy Glass, a member of the Northwest church, has been on almost every campaign. "The first Bible study I taught – my knees were knocking," she quipped.

However, she pointed out, after doing a Bible study once, it became a lot easier. "We go by the Scriptures and use only the Bible. We don't take anyone else's word for it – we don't add or take away from it - and no one can change that," Glass commented.

"It is truly a blessing to be with other Christians and enjoy the fellowship together," Glass said.

As for Kristi Brown, who has been on seven campaigns, the one week of knocking doors with fellow Christians is a "re-fuel to get through the year" until the next campaign. "It's like being at

an adult church camp – we are saving lost souls together," Brown commented.

As for door knocking, Brown noted that people seem to have a better response when you meet them at the door – "it shows them you care."

Brown, who is a member of the Northwest

congregation, spends the week with her husband, Mike, who serves as a team captain. In his role, he keeps up with all team members and their locations at all times, constantly driving around the neighborhood checking on their status.

"It is the best tired you will ever feel," commented Mike Brown.

Keith Catron, also a captain for one of the five teams involved in this year's campaign, noted that he is always surprised at how well door knocking works and how other people agree to having a Bible study. "It certainly discounts the idea that door knocking doesn't work – because it does," he commented.

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-- Charlie Dillahunty**



Catron noted that the Safety Chain is among the most logical methods of study and progression of Scriptures. "It is easily taught and easily understood," he added.

Catron has been taking part in the Back to the Bible campaigns for about 16 years, pointing out that while each one is unique, each offers the same elements. "It's like a summer camp for adults – you create a lot of good friendships," Catron commented.

### **Ministers' Comments**

Monte Ginnings, minister of the Northwest Church of Christ, noted that during this year's campaign, the local congregation was actually doing the work of two churches. Typically, when a campaign is conducted at another congregation, they provide some of the services that we were providing, such as babysitters, drivers and cooks, while we assist with the door knocking and administrative duties," he explained. "This year, we are doing all of this and working twice as hard," he commented.

"It was a joy to see such a high percentage of our members being involved in this campaign. It was a phenomenal cooperative effort among everyone who pulled together to make it a successful event," Ginnings remarked.

"In this campaign, we are doing things for others, not for ourselves," commented Barry Haynes, associate minister at the

Northwest Church of Christ. "We may never know this side of heaven what affect we are having. Years from now, that person may remember something that was said and decide to act upon it," he added.

Dave Dugan, minister of the Eighth and Lee Church of Christ, summarized the overall campaign as great and wonderful, with at least 50 people showing up to go out and knock doors every day. He noted there was a high participation level from among the local congregation, but they also had some out-of-town help as well.

Dugan explained that the cooperation among the participating congregations was unique in that they were able to cover the entire city of 91,000 with their door-knocking efforts. He also noted that people had remembered seeing the advertising that was published prior to the campaign, with some saying that they had been expecting them to come by. This offered us "a vehicle into their homes."



*Campaign directors show visitors the basics of how the Northwest Church of Christ's Back to the Bible Campaign operates from the administrative side. This was the 34th year for the campaign, but the first time for a full-week campaign in Lawton.*

“Overall, the Churches of Christ have certainly made ourselves better known throughout this community,” Dugan pointed out.

Rodger Schwenn, minister of the Sullivan Village Church of Christ, explained that their participation in this year’s Back to the Bible Campaign was very effective and inspiring for many. “For one, it inspired those who were already involved in work. Then, it also inspired those who saw what others were doing with the campaign whether or not they were involved with the congregation.”

Schwenn noted that their elders were behind this campaign and were excited that so many were involved. “Who is growing in this case – we are,” he added.

In one door-knocking instance, Schwenn pointed out that a lady from Indiana was visiting her mother. “She asked for two brochures - one to give to her mother and one to take back to her home congregation (also a Church of Christ) to show them what their fellow brethren were doing in Oklahoma.” She commented that she wished they would do something like this.

According to Randy Mathis, who recently began duties as minister at the University Church of Christ, their church members have been pushing forward with this campaign.

“For people to take time out of their day to personally knock doors means something more than just putting up a sign in your yard,” he noted.

#### ***Out-of-Town Participants***

Ron Boatwright, an elder in Conway, Ark. participated in both the pre-campaign workshop and the door knocking. Boatwright has been on

over 20 other campaigns in various locations, but this is his first with Northwest. He pointed out that this is one of the best organized, most effective and largest campaigns that he has been involved with. “Northwest is very dedicated to campaign work,” he commented.

He also noted that he was very impressed with Northwest’s commitment to the truth, which is very important in today’s society. “Northwest

is holding on to that truth,” he remarked.

Gene Gochenour of Sugar Creek, Mo., attended this year’s campaign workshop with hopes of gaining useful evangelistic information to take back to his home congregation.

And, he and another church member, Charles Price, stayed and knocked doors for three days as well. “We wanted to attend because we feel that we need something to be more evangelistic in Sugar Creek,” Gochenour commented. Both Gochenour and Price are elders at the Sugar Creek congregation.

“It was a lot of work, but it was also a lot of fun,” Gochenour said, adding that the campaign was both very informational and very positive. “If your church does not have a good evangelistic approach, check into the Back to the Bible Campaign at Northwest. It has over three decades of experience,” Gochenour recommended.

He also noted that he enjoyed the camaraderie among the congregations in Lawton that worked together in this Back to the Bible Campaign.

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**--David Sexton**