

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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OAK HILLS DROPS “CHURCH OF CHRIST”

By: Jerry Fite

The San Antonio Express-News ran an article Saturday, September 6, 2003 with the above title. Lisa Harrison Rivas, the paper's staff writer, reported Max Lucado's remarks in a recent sermon: *“Lucado, who has been the pulpit minister for 15 years, said during his Sunday sermon that some find the Church of Christ name to be an insurmountable barrier”*. He further said, *“A common comment from new members is this: ‘We would have come sooner, but we had to get over the name of the church.’”*

In hopes of bringing more people to Christ, Max Lucado and the elders of the Oak Hills Church of Christ have decided that in the future they will simply be called the Oak Hills Church. This will go along with their plans of “opening new campuses” in the city.

Lucado looks upon these changes, including the name change, as a change in “strategy”, not in the church's “core values.” He said, *“we want to do whatever seems most effective at the time... That's what these initiatives are: change of strategy, not changes of doctrine or core values.”*

Two changes at Oak Hills Church will distinguish it from what people usually associate with the beliefs and practices of those who comprise the church of Christ. They are the belief that baptism is essential in order to be saved, and the practice of singing in worship unto God without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music. These changes are evident for Lisa Harrison Rivas writes, *“Oak Hills also believes salvation doesn't come through baptism, but that baptism is the initial step of obedience after salvation.”* She also reports, *“But for the first time Oak Hills will add instruments to a new Sunday evening service, which will be geared toward young adults and will begin early next year.”*

Lucado assures all that *“the name change doesn't mean core values will.”* Apparently “How” God wants us to worship Him (John 4:24, Eph. 5:19) is not a core value to Lucado, but merely an area of “strategy” open to “what seems most effective at the time.” Baptism unto the remission of sins and salvation (Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16) must not be a “doctrine” that is to be retained for it is being sacrificed on the altar of “what seems most effective at the time.”

Vic King, minister of missions and outreach says, *“it's the sign that we are changing... We are changing to a sign that more accurately reflects who we are.”* With King I agree, Oak Hills is changing. It no longer reflects a church patterned after the New Testament, but just another interdenominational evangelical community church.

We hear from some of our brethren that we should not tell prospective Bible students that we are with the “CHURCH OF CHRIST” because this is an “institutional way of speaking” and they will “pigeon hole” us in a negative way (associate us with a group that thinks that if you are not with the church of Christ, you will go to Hell.). So, all teaching material sent to the Bible student is void of the name church of Christ. They like, Lucado, see this as merely a strategy. Today they drop the name from their literature, but how long will it be before these brethren drop the name from the sign to reflect, like Oak Hills, their turn from some distinctive truth of the Gospel? Teaching overcomes barriers, not hiding.