

Solid Rock Community Church Is Still Very Solid

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A few weeks ago, I preached at both the Sunday School and the Sunday worship service at Solid Rock Community Church in West Unity, Ohio. I was at the church about three years ago and noted one striking change: The attendance doubled from about 150 to 320. As I am very interested in church growth, I asked several people "What was your secret?" The answer they gave was the lead pastor, Robert Rodríguez, who I was told, goes well beyond the call of duty in his community outreach activities, working with local schools and other churches. He is, my informant explained, very personable, effectively showing a sincere interest in those people he comes in contact with, both church members and outsiders.

Another reason for their growth was the pastor, when preaching the gospel, backs it up with apologetics, the defense of Christianity. As 1 Peter 3:15 states, "In your heart honor Christ as the Lord, but always being prepared to, with gentleness and respect, give a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you." In contrast to most ministers, Pastor Rodríguez has a good background in apologetics, and recognizes that, as the leading atheist of the last century, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, explained, evolution is the doorway to atheism. It is this door that thousands of people are going through each year in America. In Montpelier alone, I am aware of three churches that have recently closed their doors.

Nationally, 50 years ago, close to 80 percent of Americans rejected atheism and evolutionism, and accepted the Biblical explanation for the origin of humans. The latest data finds under 50 percent accept the creationist position, and the fastest growing faction is the "None's," meaning those not professing any religion (which is

essentially atheism). Religiously, the 'Nones' are now the largest single religious group in America. Pew Research Center puts the number at 28 percent. Acceptance of evolution correlates directly with the growth of the 'Nones.'

As I was shown around the church, other reasons were pointed out for the church's growth. One was the large youth group that attracts many kids to partake in a large variety of activities. The church was often busy with sports, Kids' Sunday School, X-Change Youth, and Adult Bible Fellowships. The Bible teaches in 1 Timothy 4:8, "Training your body helps you in some important ways, but devotion to God helps you in every way. It brings you blessings both in this life and in the future life as well." Numerous social events are also included in Solid Rock's calendar, including those designed for men, women, children, and married couples which allows the needs of specific groups to be met.

While there, I mentioned to the Sunday School class that I had presented in over 400 churches during the last 40 years in Europe, Asia, and Africa. I then asked, "How many churches do you think that I have been invited to present my apologetics program in Northwest Ohio?" Several people correctly mentioned only one, Solid Rock. They recognized that Solid Rock is unusual in this way because most churches totally ignore the important apologetics area. Actually, I have presented at Solid Rock at least six times and I am aware of and at least three other creation ministries that were invited to Solid Rock. Several persons also noted they faithfully read my weekly column in the *Village Reporter*, which is always good to hear.

I was especially heartened by the large number of young people there in contrast to the usual sea of gray (and more and more the sea of white) I encounter when visiting churches today. This was partly because Solid Rock has focused on the youth ministry directed by a full-time youth pastor. Another group is Awana, an organization that helps parents train their children to make life choices consistent with Christ's teachings. It also provides opportunities for earning awards, both individually and as part of a team. Kids work in the Awana handbook throughout the year, earning awards as they complete sections and memorize scripture.

I also ran out of three book titles at my literature table. One popular book was the one on Nazism because, several people recognized, as noted by the senior editor of ABC News for 35 years, Peter Jennings, that "The Nazi bible was *Mein Kampf*," Hitler's book in which "he expanded upon his racist views, stressing the social Darwinist notion that man must fight or be doomed to extinction. Since the aggressive capacity of any race... was directly proportional to the purity of that race,

its very existence was threatened by its tolerance of 'foreign defilements.'" By 'inferior races' he meant Jews. World War II was the deadliest and most destructive war in history; 28 times greater than all 601 historical wars put together. WWII caused 85 million fatalities, mostly civilians, thanks to social Darwinism.

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