

# **EXTRA! from the Creek**

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## **the Church at Dyers Creek**

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**This week we're passing along to you  
a page from the**

## ***CountyCulture Columns***

### **Increases in Core Religious Behaviors**

August 27, 2008

Continuing data from the annual tracking survey of religious behavior and beliefs conducted by the Barna Group reveals that there has been a significant increase in religious activity related to five of the seven core religious behaviors studied. The most prolific jump in activity relates to Bible reading. Bible readership had plummeted to a twenty-year low of just thirty-one percent in 1995, and began to slowly climb back to higher levels, finally returning to the forty percent mark in 2000. After several years of stalled growth, increases began again in 2004, continuing through the past three years, as Bible readership has again hit forty-seven percent of adults reading it during a typical week other than when they are at church. That is the highest readership level achieved since the 1980s.

Church attendance has also increased slowly in recent years. While we haven't returned to the forty-nine percent of adults who attended in a typical week as recorded in 1991, there has been a significant rebound from the thirty-seven percent recorded in 1996, climbing as high as forty-seven percent in 2006.

Involvement in small groups that meet for Bible study, prayer, or personal relationships (other than Sunday school or Christian education classes) has also reached a new high. Currently, nearly one out of every four adults is engaged in such a gathering during a typical week. A decade ago, one out of every six adults did so.

Church volunteerism, after experiencing the same mid-nineties doldrums as most other religious behaviors, has returned to its 1991 level of twenty-seven percent. Volunteering at a church has been one of the more stable measures during the past 15 years, ranging from a low of twenty percent to the current high. Even adult Sunday school attendance has risen in recent years. Once a mainstay of Protestant churches, Sunday school lost its cache in the nineties, but seems to be on the rebound as evidenced by attendance numbers that reached twenty-four percent in recent tracking surveys. That is up considerably from the seventeen percent mark recorded in 1995 and in 1996.

The only two religious behaviors that did not reflect significant change were prayer and evangelism. Slightly more than four out of five adults claimed they had prayed in the past week. That has been the case since the Barna Group began tracking the frequency of prayer in 1993. Survey respondents who were born again Christians – meaning they had made a commitment to Christ that was important in their life and believed they would go to heaven after they died solely because they had confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their Savior – were asked if they had shared their faith in Christ with non-believers during the past twelve months. The research showed that there has been no significant change in this behavior during the past decade, with six out of ten Christians claiming to have shared their beliefs about Jesus with someone whom they knew believed differently.

#### **Sources**

Barna Group. "Five Out of Seven Core Religious Behaviors Have Increased in the Past Decade" (April 3, 2006)

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