



FROM THE EDITOR



By Mark A. Taylor

Beyond Talk: Only the Beginning

What is the best way to reconcile with an estranged relative? Should you talk? Should you discuss your differences, admit where you've been wrong, and ask for forgiveness? The answer, of course, is yes. But after all the words, sometimes the best way to come together is to work toward a common goal.

For many years some members of the noninstrumental churches of Christ and the independent Christian churches and churches of Christ have been talking with each other. Remembering their identical roots in the Restoration Movement, they have bemoaned the division over instrumental worship music that has separated them for more than a century. The talk has been good. Members of each group have realized how much they have in common with each other. Now many are ready to move beyond the discussions to action.

This was the spirit evident at the Hope Reunion in San Antonio, Texas, February 5-8. Lynn Anderson, founder of Hope Network Ministries, hosted the event, attended by about 250, many of them leaders with congregations where Anderson has consulted. Speakers included noted preachers, teachers, and writers among the noninstrumental churches, in-

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cluding Anderson, Rick Atchley, Rubel Shelley, and Randy Harris. Bob Russell and Marcus Bigelow spoke too. They were two of about 25 leaders from Christian churches who attended the conference.

We came to enjoy fellowship. We came to express and experience reconciliation. We were welcomed with applause and warm handshakes and thoughtful conversations. But this was not a meeting for talk alone. This was a meeting for action.

The focus of the sessions was on how Christian leaders can yield to the lordship of Christ, how churches can grow, how ministers and elders can work more effectively together, and how they can plant more churches. Indeed, representatives from Stadia: New Church Strategies were kept busy throughout the weekend explaining how they could help noninstrumental churches of Christ start new congregations.

The experience confirmed that many leaders of noninstrumental churches of Christ and independent Christian churches are ready to join hands, working together to serve and proclaim Christ despite more than a century of separation. I believe what we experienced at the Hope Reunion is only the beginning.

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Cover photo: Members of Atlanta Christian College's 2003 graduating class gather to rehearse May 1. The 66 graduates comprised the second-largest graduating class ever at the institution. Class members included a great-grandparent. Photo ©Atlanta Christian College.

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Volume CXXXIX, Number 12, CHRISTIAN STANDARD (ISSN 0009-5656), published weekly at 8121 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45231. Periodicals postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio.

Printed in USA. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Standard Publishing, 8121 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45231. Phone: 1-800-543-1301 or 1-513-931-4050.

Subscription rates: \$24.99 per year plus \$5.00 postage/handling (plus sales tax in FL and WA); \$10.00 postage/handling per year for Canadian subscriptions; \$12.50 for Mexico and all other foreign subscriptions). Two to fourteen copies to one address, \$5.00 each per quarter. Fifteen to thirty-four copies to one address, \$4.75 each per quarter. Thirty-five or more copies to one address, \$4.50 each per quarter. Send address changes to CHRISTIAN STANDARD, 8121 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45231. Send old and new addresses, complete with zip numbers, at least six weeks before delivery date. Unsolicited manuscripts that are not accompanied by return postage will not be returned. This publication is available in microform from UMI. Phone: 800-521-0600 toll-free; 313-761-4700 collect from Alaska and Michigan; 800-343-5299 toll-free from Canada.

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