

Students going back to church

Spiritual attitudes are changing, religious leaders say

By Janis Lovitt
Staff Reporter

A need for security, the Reagan administration and a desire to share has brought students back to church, UNL church officials say.

In the last year, several campus churches and religious groups have experienced an increase in church participation, say UNL's religious leaders. This, they say, may suggest changing attitudes among students.

For example, Mark Schubert, a youth pastor for the Baptist Student Union, whose group doubled in size last semester, said he thinks students are returning to religion to find "a sense of security."

Schubert said he expects his group to continue growing this semester.

James Bauer, campus pastor for the UNL Lutheran Center, said he thinks students' renewed spiritualism is a societal movement. Returning to church is part of the conservative attitude President Reagan encourages, he said.

Although attendance at the UNL Lutheran Center plateaued last semester, Bauer said, church attendance has increased 85 percent in the past three years.

Tim Walton, campus director for the Campus Crusade, said the swing toward conservatism is the alternative approach for students.

"People are realizing that the avenues pursued in the 60s and 70s aren't working," Walton said.

Young people realize that spiritual strength is needed to withstand the pressures of the world, said Richard Coolidge, representative for the Christian Science Organization.

Coolidge said he thinks students are turning to religion to regain traditional values.

Because of this, CSO has grown significantly in the last year, Coolidge said.

Unlike many churches, attendance at the Berean Fundamental Church has not increased, said Dan Lehman, the

church's college pastor. Instead, students already attending the group have been more active, he said.

Lehman said students are looking for something absolute, and religion seems to be the answer for many.

Among the students who have returned to religion, junior and senior college students show more interest in religion than other students, said Father Don Hanway, chaplain for St. Mark's on campus. The older students feel the need to make a choice so they begin to

ask themselves where faith will fit into their lives, he said.

Students at UNL are traditional in comparison to other universities, Hanway said. Because of this, the trend toward spiritualism may be less obvious here than it will be on other campuses, he said.

Even "scientists are becoming more religious," Hanway said. "About everything is pointing back to God."

Church is not the only place students turn for traditional values. Many

are volunteering for social programs.

For example, Jan Walters, a member of the Servant House staff, said most of its volunteers are students working on class assignments.

This has created an increase in Servant House volunteers in the last year, she said. Walters attributed the increase to students' new awareness of what they have and their need to share.

The number of volunteers at the People's City Mission also has increased, said Gerry Ann Ortega, community

relations assistant. In 1984, the mission had 200 volunteers. In 1985, 521 people volunteered.

Ortega said she had not noticed any significant increase in student volunteers. However, more students have been using the People's City Mission in their class assignments, she said.

"I don't think there is a need for students to share," Lehman said. "We're all selfish by nature. If we do something it is because it is going to help us in some way."



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