

The Southern Shift in World Christianity: A *Kairos* Episode for Brethren

George F. Pickens

1. George Pickens shows that the church in the northern hemisphere is now smaller than the church in the southern hemisphere. What are the growth trends in your congregation over the last 50 years? To what do you attribute the changes?
2. Pickens says, “Even though statistics on church attendance don’t reveal a marked decline in Christianity in the United States similar to the experience of Europe, it can be argued that a decline has occurred nonetheless, demonstrated in a growing shift away from historic Christianity and towards an emergent form of deism.” Look up “deism” in a dictionary. What is deism? What evidence of deism do you see among Christians in the United States? Do you agree with Pickens? Why or why not?
3. While the Brethren have not considered the church and the government to be partners necessarily, many other Christian groups accept this relationship. In what ways do most Christians support the role of government in religion? In what ways does the government support the church in the United States? What evidence do you see that this mutual support is weakening or growing?
4. What do you think the Brethren believe about government? Is government ordained by God? Do God and country rate equally in the hearts and minds of Christians? What evidence do you see of this? What evidence do you see to the contrary?
5. What would you say are core Brethren values? In what ways do you share these values with Christians in the Southern Hemisphere?