

# Church of Christ congregation OKs musical instruments: Want to "reach more people who need Christ"

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The nation's largest a cappella congregation within the Churches of Christ has decided to add a worship assembly on Saturday evenings that will make use of musical instruments. Statements on the Web site of Richland Hills Church of Christ in the Fort Worth, Texas, area said the decision came after a lengthy period of fasting and prayer.

"After a three-year period of much study, prayer and fasting, the leadership of the Richland Hills Church of Christ has decided to add a third weekend assembly that will include instrumental praise," reads a statement on a Web page titled "The Both/And Church." An additional statement from elders of the church said the period of reflection inspired them to "become a more externally focused church."

The congregation, located in North Richland Hills, Texas, is the largest of the 13,000 a cappella churches in the Churches of Christ, reported the *Christian Chronicle*, a denominational newspaper.

For more than 100 years, instrumental churches and a cappella, or noninstrumental, churches have remained separate while sharing roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement of the 1830s. Some oppose instrumental music because instruments are not mentioned in the New Testament.

The newspaper said that Rick Atchley, senior minister of the church, has been a national leader in recent efforts to improve relations with churches that use musical instruments. He told a December 3 Bible study at his church that the decision will permit the congregation "to reach more people who need Christ" and also will ease crowding at the church's two Sunday morning services.

The new service is scheduled to be launched on the second weekend of February, the newspaper reported. -*Religion News Service*