



engage

A Journal for Church of God Ministries

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- "WE ARE" Is Rallying Cry of Lewis' First Year
- Prayer Center Dedication: Special Highlight of 2025
- When Theology Isn't Enough: Why Emotional Intelligence Strengthens the Call
- IRS: Churches Can Now Endorse Political Candidates



Engage Journal is published in the interest of providing contemporary aids and resources to pastors and pastoral staffs.

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On the Cover:

Newly dedicated Global Prayer Center located on the campus of the Church of God International Offices, Cleveland, Tennessee.

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From the Editor | Cameron Fisher

The Power of ‘We’



For the last year the Church of God has embraced the theme “We Are Church of God” which was informally launched at the General Assembly last year. The phrase has caught hold as local churches are adopting it as well. It is catchy, fun, and truly captures the spirit of our movement.

We Are is a simple message of inclusivity that has seemingly touched every aspect of ministry within our church. In this issue is an article that defines the progress that has taken place since the Assembly in the areas of discipleship, care, preaching (outreach), evangelism, and prayer. We Are demonstrates what we have

known all along in the Church of God: We are a family that sticks together, ministers together, and we look out for one another, whether it is a church member facing a challenge, a fellow pastor who needs advice, or perhaps between state overseers feeling the stress of leadership.

The Executive Committee has embraced the theme as well, taking their portfolios of ministry and applying the “We” factor through slogans that highlight the unique bond that is the Church of God. Long after the theme fades into the next slogan, the power of “We” will live on. ■

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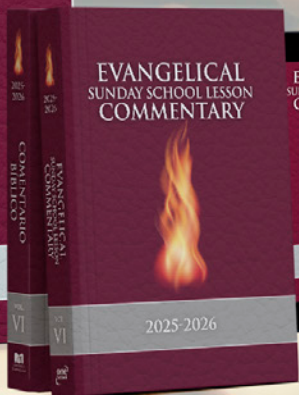


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"WE ARE" Is Rallying Cry of Lewis' First Year

By Cameron Fisher



Gary Lewis announces the "We Are the Church of God" theme at the 2024 General Assembly

Dr. Gary Lewis' year as general overseer was a year filled with progress and relationship-building as the Church of God rallied behind the theme, "We Are the Church of God!"

Launching on Friday night of the 79th International General Assembly in Indianapolis (July 12, 2024), the theme, often characterized as #WeAreTheChurchOfGod, has seen progress in five areas that evolved from the theme.

"I'm grateful to see how God's hand has been upon our church," Lewis stated. "In July 2024, we left the like a mighty army moving to fulfill the great commission. Together, we have accomplished

much under our adopted declaration of "We Are the Church of God."

In a recent issue of the Church of God *Evangel*, the areas of emphasis were expounded on the tenets of WE ARE. Since publication, even more exciting progress has been made in all five areas, and a report on God's goodness was a milestone not to be passed up in this issue of *Engage*.

The following are brief summaries of how God has blessed the Church of God since the General Assembly. In each instance, "We Are" is the Church of God as a movement:



WE GO!



- We have planted over 8,500 churches around the world.
- We have seen over 1.2 million souls saved.
- We have trained hundreds of coaches to facilitate church revitalization.
- We have equipped thousands of our laity to become soul winners.
- Church of God chaplains have taken the gospel to hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, military bases and schools.
- Thousands were evangelized in person and online during a powerful service in Times Square, NYC, on July 20, 2025.

WE DISCIPLE! *(Tom Madden, Liaison)*



- Tens of thousands are engaging scripture through the “We Grow” bible reading plan on the You Version app.
- Over 100,000 students attended Winterfests, Kidfests, and youth camps around the world.
- Adult Discipleship continues to develop resources for our local churches.

WE PREACH! *(Mark Williams, Liaison)*



- The “Between Sundays” podcast has been viewed or downloaded by millions of people.
- C2 engaged young men and women in their calling to preach.
- In the Division of Education, CAMS for Students had 388 young men and women pursue their calling. CAMS had 980 students and MIP graduated 580 ministers.
- The Paul L. Walker School of Pentecostal Preaching at Lee University is raising up the next generation of Pentecostal preachers.



- Over 500 Church of God female ministers attended a credentialed women's conference this past summer.

WE CARE! (*T. Wayne Dority, Liaison*)



- We have given millions of dollars to help those impacted by hurricanes, fires and floods, including Hurricane Helene which impacted many of our churches and members.
- Through the vision of 365, Church of God World Missions has provided wells and sustainable clean water for millions of people.
- We have ministered to thousands of orphans and widows around the world.
- Men and Women of Action worked on thousands of projects saving our churches millions of dollars.
- Operation Compassion has sent out hundreds of trucks to disaster sites, showing the love of Jesus to those who are hurting.

WE PRAY! (*Tony Stewart, Liaison*)



- Over 400,000 have engaged in our Global Prayer Meetings.
- The International Executive Council voted to turn the council meeting chambers at the International Offices into a Global Prayer Center. God has moved as we have made prayer a priority.
- Every state and region in the U.S. and Canada selected a week for 24/7 prayer and intercession.
- Joining with others around the world, the Church of God has been praying 24/7/365 since the General Assembly.

General Overseer Lewis acknowledged the Church of God around the globe stating, "Thank you for your continued faithfulness to the Kingdom and embrace of the burden God has placed upon my heart and the hearts of the Executive Committee and Council. Let's continue to move forward in the power of Pentecost!" ■



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Prayer Center Dedication: Special Highlight of 2025

In a September 23, 2025 ceremony, which concluded in a powerful time of corporate prayer, the ribbon was cut on the Church of God International Offices (COGIO) Prayer Center.

A dedicated prayer center located on the campus of the COGIO originated in the heart of Church of God General Overseer Gary Lewis a year ago when he shared with the International Executive Council (IEC) his desire to establish a space. Meeting during their September 2024 session, the Council voted unanimously to vacate a room built in 2004 especially for the Council. The action was followed by an anointing of the walls by Council members for the room's future purpose.

In the preceding session of the September 2025 gathering of the IEC, General Overseer Lewis welcomed the body of leaders, describing the year-long journey and the prayer encounters that have already taken place in the prayer center.

“We are believing that this is going to be a place where God’s presence is felt,” Lewis said. “This dedication is about our church’s [prayer] position with Him and the presence of God in all we do. Business without His presence means nothing; but the presence of God changes everything.”

The dedication ceremony included readings of six scripture passages on prayer and a dedicatory prayer by Ishmael Charles, field director of the Caribbean and a member of the IEC. Members of the Executive Committee described the significance of the features of the room and Lewis thanked the many people who worked to make the center a reality. The conclusion of the event was a ceremonial snipping of the ribbon, followed by a time of spontaneous prayer by the participants. Joining the concluding prayer experience were more than 100 from around the globe via Zoom, portrayed on the large LED screen that dominates the room.



Gary and Lori Lewis are joined Executive Committee members Mark Williams, Tony Stewart, and Tom Madden at the Prayer Center ribbon-cutting

To the left of the prayer center entrance are six panels designed to inform



visitors of the global presence of the Church of God and call to prayer for the six primary regions where the Church of God has a presence. To the right of the entrance are two panels that remind visitors of the importance prayer has played in the Church of God since its founding, in the present day, and into the future.

Features of the room include a large panel that replicates a section of the Jerusalem Wailing Wall, also known as the Western Wall. Visitors are invited to leave a prayer request in the slot of a podium, or in the crevices as is done at the wall in Jerusalem. Prayer requests will be removed periodically and passed to the PrayerBorne ministry and eventually to the Wall in Jerusalem.



Other highlights include a large display of stained glass, commissioned and built earlier this year specifically for the prayer center. On the opposite corner is a free-standing globe, a gift from the Church of God Publishing House and a familiar sight on numerous livestream events.

Should they be moved to do so, visitors to the prayer center can participate in Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper through use of provided portable elements and scriptural prompts at a station in the room.



Finally, in the center of the prayer center is an electronic touch-screen information table that was specially built for the prayer center and programmed with exclusive content about Church of God colleges, seminaries, and country statistics providing prayer points for visitors. The table ties in with the exclusively designed carpeting throughout the prayer center.

The Church of God International Offices Prayer Center will be open for visitors anytime during regular business hours, with special event gatherings available through prior arrangements. While most of the renovations required to equip the room have been funded, donations are still being accepted to complete the campaign to establish the prayer center. Please click [here](http://www.coggive.com) to partner. (www.coggive.com) ■

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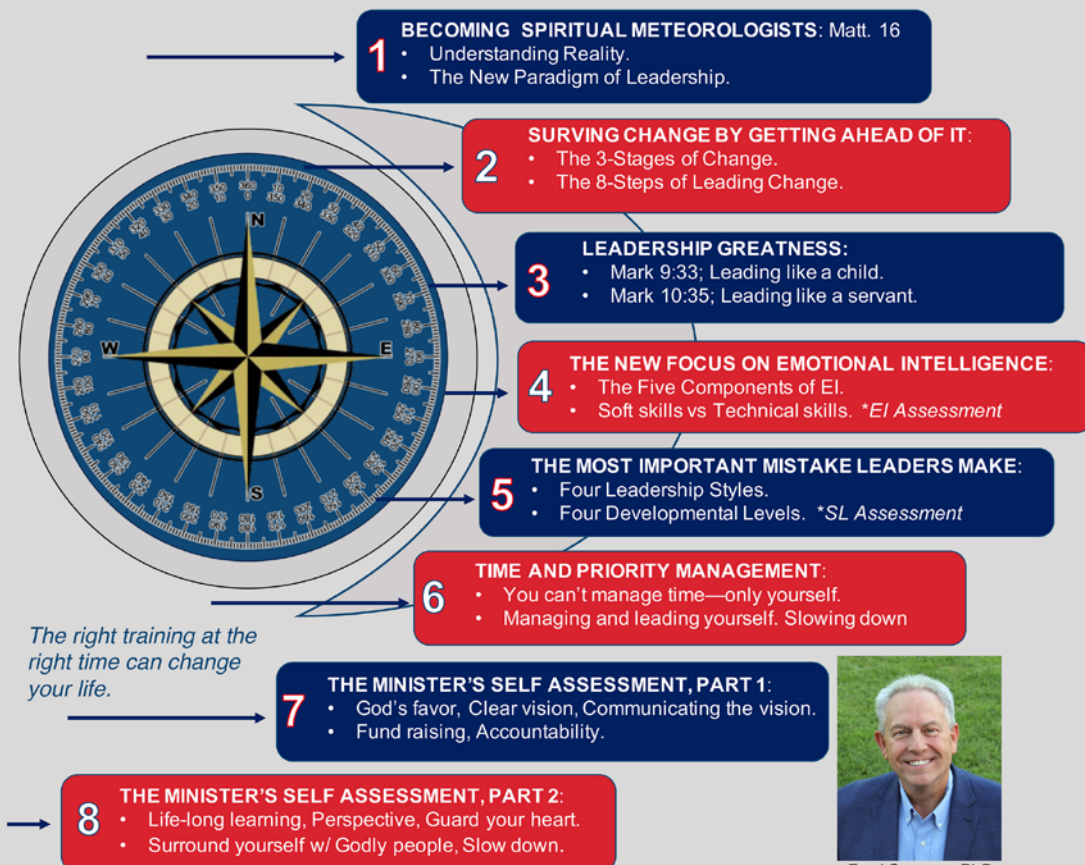
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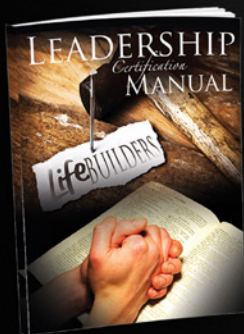
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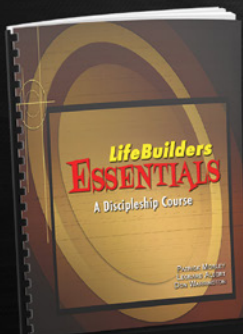
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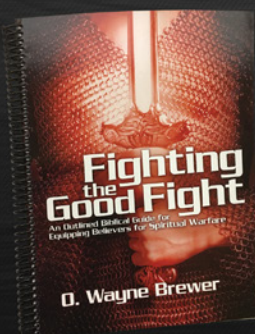
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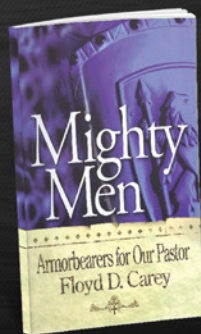
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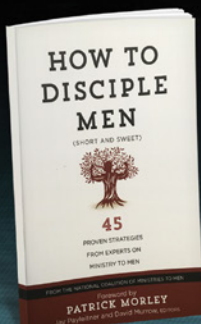


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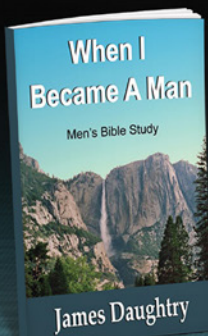
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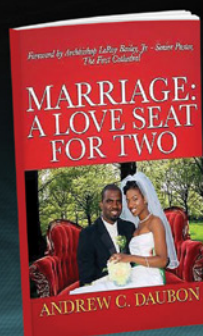
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When Theology Isn't Enough: Why Emotional Intelligence Strengthens the Call

By Giovy Sanders

Introduction

We thought we were stepping into our fairy tale ending—two people in our mid-40s, seasoned by life, finding love again. With over two decades in the ministry, my husband had faithfully pastored the same church for over ten years and was navigating the aftermath of personal heartbreak. I relocated from another state to begin our new life together, hopeful for redemption and fresh beginnings.

However, almost immediately, we were met with a cascade of challenges—family transitions, unexpected personal crises, and the complex dynamics that come with merging lives, households, and callings. While my husband was familiar with the rhythms of the church, I was new to the role of pastor's wife and the expectations that came with it. I quickly realized that stepping into ministry leadership also meant stepping into the emotional aftermath left by previous chapters—ones I hadn't written but now had to help carry.

Within months, our new marriage was under pressure. Change, grief, and emotional fatigue began taking their toll. As someone who had previously benefited from counseling, I knew the value of mental health support and believed this was the moment to seek it out.

But the conversation wasn't easy.

There was tension—not because of a lack of love, but because of the weight ministry sometimes places on the idea of *who pastors are supposed to be*. The narrative that “pastors are the ones who help others, not the ones who ask for help,” is more common than we like to admit.

Eventually, by God's grace, we went. We did the hard work and had the uncomfortable conversations. Counseling didn't just help us—it transformed our marriage and reshaped our ministry. Today, our church has a Mental Health Support Fund for those in crisis, and we advocate for professional counseling whenever possible.



This experience opened my eyes to a truth many of us know but rarely say out loud: theology alone isn't always enough. Ministry is beautiful and sacred, but it's also heavy. And sometimes, even the strongest leaders need a space to lay their burdens down too.

The Emotional Gap in Ministry

Through research, I explored how clergy respond to mental health needs within their congregations. What I found was both affirming and eye-opening: across denominations, clergy often receive minimal mental health training. Seminaries give us depth in Scripture and doctrine—but many of us step into the field unprepared for the emotional weight we'll carry. This isn't an issue limited to one denomination—it's a widespread challenge across clergy preparation as a whole.

Most pastors care deeply. We show up in hospital rooms, stand by gravesides, and answer late-night phone calls. But without tools to process what we absorb, that emotional weight begins to settle in. Feeling it doesn't make us weak—it makes us human. And that's just the burden we carry for others. What about the weight of our own lives—the grief, the transitions, the silent battles we don't always have time to name?

Maybe you've developed a strong personal rhythm—one that keeps you emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually grounded. If so, that's a gift. But according to current research, you're in the minority. In the absence of formal protocols, pastors often create their own informal systems—doing their best to support congregants while simultaneously managing their own emotional strain.

That gap in preparation is exactly what led me to explore how clergy make decisions when faced with mental health concerns in ministry. From that research, I developed what I now call the **Clergy Mental Health Referral Process™**—a 7-phase path that many clergy instinctively follow when determining how to support someone in emotional or mental distress. It's not a clinical checklist—it's a guide to help you stay grounded in care and clarity.

The seven phases are:

1. *The Pastoral Role in Congregant's Mental Health Care*—The roles a pastor plays often influence whether they offer direct support or refer to mental health professionals.
2. *Pastors and the Mental Health Support Team*—The involvement of others (spouses, staff, other



clergy) can shape the decision to refer or continue care within the church.

3. *Identifying the Mental Health Support Request*—How a concern is presented often determines whether it is recognized as needing professional intervention.
4. *The Role of Clergy in Facilitating Mental Health Referrals*—Pastors may choose to refer when the need exceeds their scope of training or pastoral responsibility.
5. *The Impact of Pastoral Mental Health Literacy on Mental Health Referrals*—A pastor's level of mental health education directly influences mental health referrals.
6. *The Impact of Pastoral Perceived Origins of Mental Health Issues on Mental Health Referrals*—Pastors' beliefs about whether a problem is spiritual, emotional, or psychological affects referral choices.
7. *The Impact of Pastoral Wellbeing on the Mental Health Referral Process* — A pastor's own mental health can shape their capacity to recognize, respond to, and refer congregants appropriately.

This process isn't about reacting in crisis—it's about preparing in peace. It's a proactive way to think about care, not just for our people, but for ourselves.

A Gentle Challenge to Fellow Pastors

Ministry is sacred—but it's also relentless. And if we don't take care of our own emotional and mental well-being, we can unintentionally serve from a place of depletion.

This isn't about being weak or incapable. It's about being wise.

I want to gently challenge you: what would it look like to put mental health on your radar before the breakdown? What if counseling, rest, or self-awareness wasn't a last resort—but a part of your rhythm?

Ask yourself:

- Do I have someone I can talk to about the weight I carry?
- Have I identified professionals I can refer congregants to if needed?
- What boundaries help protect my own emotional health?

Caring for your mind is not a sign of weakness—it's a reflection of stewardship. You matter. Your family



matters. Your calling matters. And staying well is not only for your benefit—it strengthens the very people you serve.

Let's Normalize This

It's time to normalize conversations about mental and emotional well-being in the lives of clergy. We cannot afford to wait until the crisis hits to pay attention. Let's talk about it in staff meetings and teach it in ministry prep. Let's live it in front of our congregations.

The goal is not perfection—it's health. The goal is not to never struggle, it's to not struggle alone. The goal is not to stop pastoring—it's to keep pastoring with strength, grace, and longevity.

If you are a Church of God credentialed minister, it's important to know you're not alone. The Center for Ministerial Care in Cleveland, Tennessee exists to serve you. Their mission is clear: "To serve our credentialed ministers and their families through support, encouragement, resources, and pastoral counseling." They recognize the demands and stressors placed on ministers and offer a safe place to receive care.

For my husband and me, it took walking through a personal crisis to fully realize that mental health

professionals can be some of our greatest allies in ministry. Mental health is not associated with shame in our leadership—it's embraced as part of holistic care. In fact, we openly invite those who are willing to have the hard conversations into a safe space, one that removes stigma and replaces it with prayer, support, and hope.

Ministry was never meant to be carried alone. "*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2). We've learned that inviting others into the process doesn't weaken the mission, it strengthens the team. Therefore, let's stand together, not just in preaching and service, but in healing, support, and wholeness. Together, we will do our due diligence in preparing the Bride for her groom.

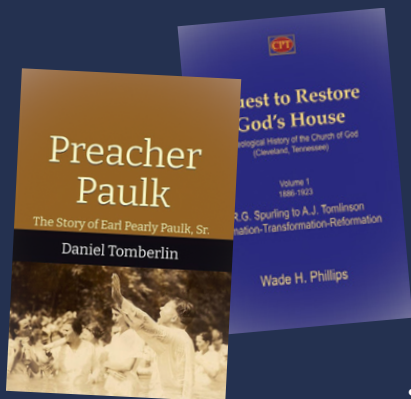
Clergy Mental Health Referral Process™ is a proprietary framework developed by Dr. Giovanna L. Sanders.

About the Author

Dr. Giovvy Sanders is a 20-year USAF/IANG veteran and currently serves alongside her husband, Bishop Dennis Sanders, as they lead the Terre Haute Church of God. She is passionate about equipping clergy with mental health awareness, emotional intelligence, and tools for long-term ministry sustainability. ■

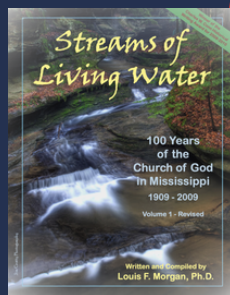
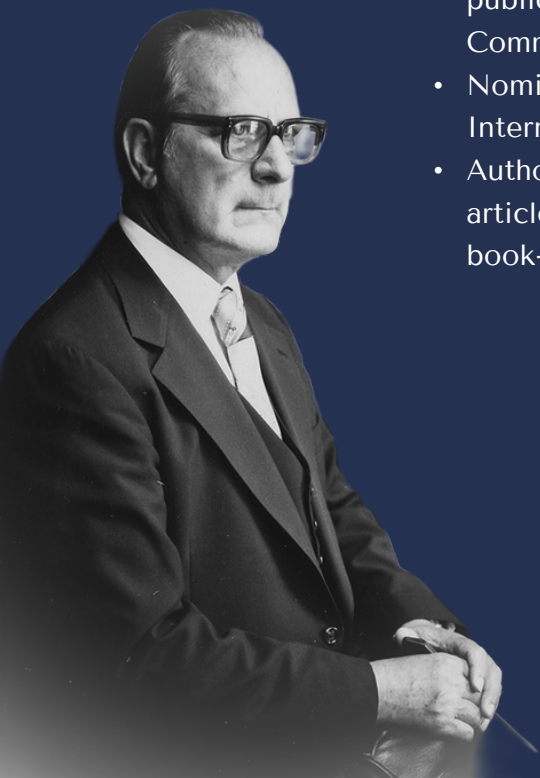
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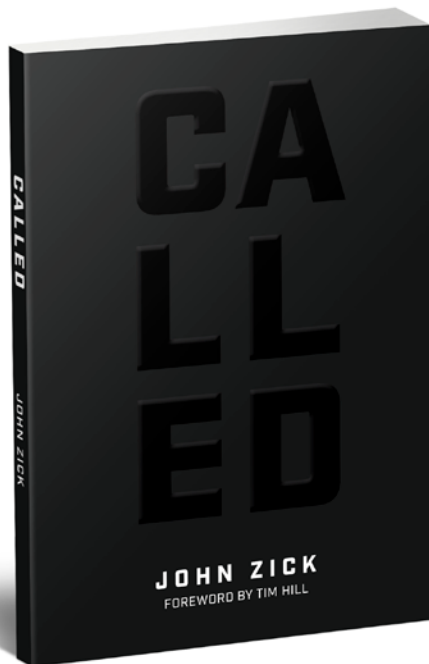
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IRS: Churches Can Now Endorse Political Candidates

NASHVILLE—In a reversal of decades of legal precedent, the Internal Revenue Service [said in court filings on July 7 that churches and other religious 501 c\(3\) organizations](#) can endorse political candidates in certain circumstances.

By Angele Latham, USA Today Network

The new position, made in a joint filing intended to end a lawsuit brought by a group of high-profile Christian organizations last year, carves out a narrow exception to the Johnson Amendment, which has banned political activity by churches since 1954.

The rule was introduced by former President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1954, when he was serving as the U.S. Senate majority leader. It banned all tax-exempt organizations like churches and charities from “directly or indirectly” participating in politics, specifically in endorsement or opposition of candidates.

In the filing, the agency stated that political endorsements made by a church would not be seen as “participating” or “intervening” in political campaigns, but instead as a “family discussion concerning politics.”

“When a house of worship in good faith speaks to its congregation, through its customary channels of communication on matters of faith in connection with religious services, concerning electoral politics viewed through the lens of religious

faith, it neither ‘participate(s)’ nor “intervene(s)’ in a ‘political campaign,’ within the ordinary meaning of those words,” the IRS stated in the filing.

The agency went on to explain that the new position was in keeping with the IRS’s usual enforcement of the Johnson Amendment—which the agency admits it “generally has not enforced”—citing a 2017 executive order signed by President Donald Trump that limited the Department of Treasury’s actions against houses of worship for political activity.

It’s common for religious figures and groups, including denominations, to publicly align with or even support candidates on both sides of the political spectrum. Political candidates regularly visit houses of worship to engage potential voters. But often, churches and pastors have been careful about how they show that support or the formats in which they show it, such as during sermons in weekly worship services.

The July 7 filing was the product of a lawsuit filed in Texas in September 2024 on behalf of the National Religious



Broadcasters, an international association of evangelical Christian communicators, as well as Intercessors for America, a conservative Christian prayer advocacy group. Two Texas churches also joined as plaintiffs: First Baptist Church Waskom in Waskom, Texas, and Sand Springs Church in Athens, Texas.

In a statement made when the lawsuit was filed, the NRB stated the groups felt that their speech has been “wrongfully silenced” under the Johnson Amendment.

“We believe that all nonprofits should have the constitutional right to freely express their point of view on candidates, elections, and issues on the ballot,” NRB President and CEO Troy Miller said. “Our challenge to the Johnson Amendment is about securing the future of free expression for all Americans, particularly those standing in the pulpit.”

In the IRS’s filing, the agency seems to agree with Miller regarding the First Amendment implications of the Johnson Amendment.

“Interpreting the Johnson Amendment to reach (political communications made within a house of worship) would create serious tension with the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause: That broad interpretation would treat religions that do not speak directly to matters of electoral politics more favorably than religions that do so—favoring some

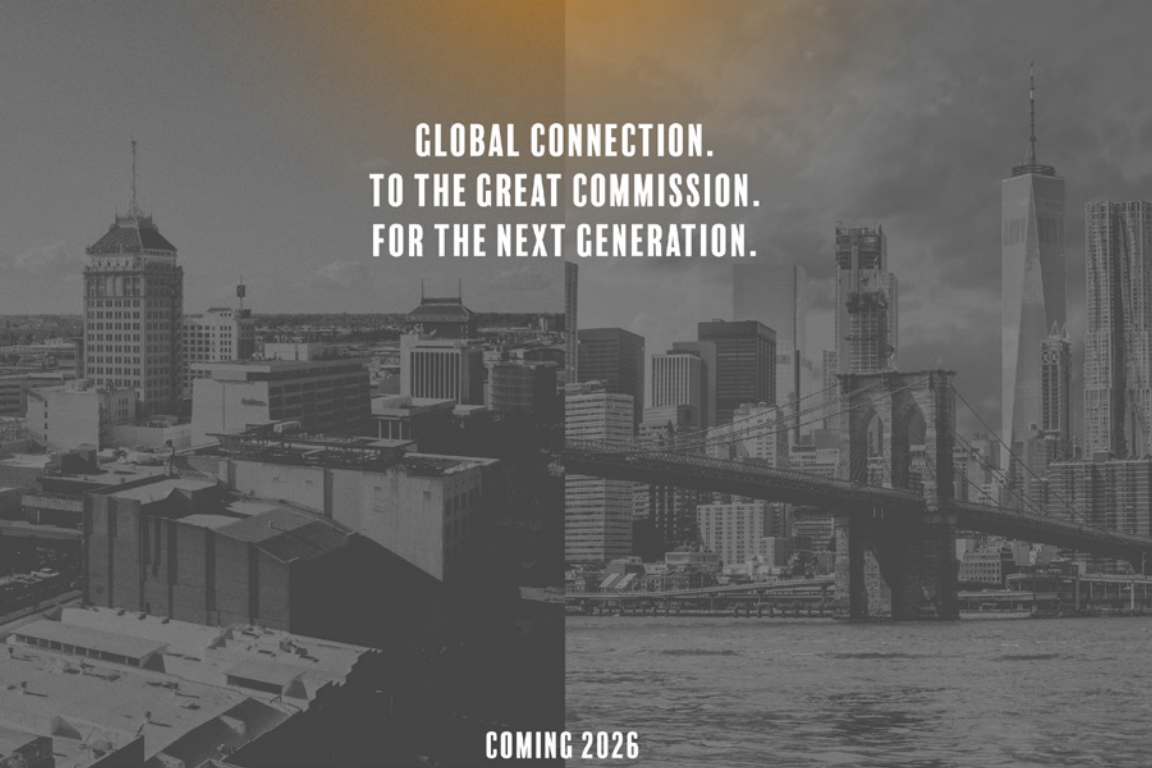
religions over others based on their speech to their own congregations in connection with religious services through customary channels of worship and religious communication,” the filing states.

According to a 2024 survey conducted by Lifeway research, a Southern Baptist Convention research organization, only three in 10 U.S. adults (29%) believe pastors publicly endorsing candidates for public office during a church service is appropriate. Three in five (60%) disagree, including 42% who strongly disagree and 11% aren’t sure.

When asked directly in the survey if churches that endorse political candidates should lose their tax-exempt status, around 48% of respondents agreed, 31% disagreed and 21% weren’t sure.

But the percentage of Americans who see pastors endorsing a candidate in church as appropriate has risen steadily over the past 16 years, according to the organization. In the first survey of the topic in 2008, only 13% saw political endorsements during a church service as acceptable. The number rose steadily in the second survey conducted in 2015, before rising to its current 29% in 2024. ■

(SOURCE: This article originally appeared in July 2025 in The USA TODAY Network via Faith On View Daily)



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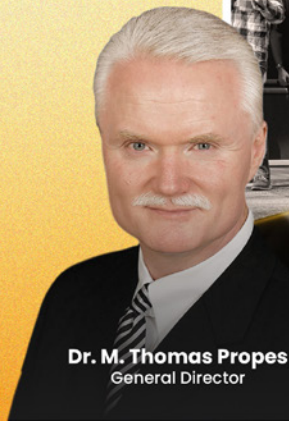
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MONEY MATTERS

ART RHODES

Tax Laws Are Changing

Not since December 2017 have tax laws changed so dramatically in this country. With the passage of the “One Big Beautiful Bill” Act, signed into law on July 4, 2025, multiple provisions in the tax code have been changed, some immediately and others over the next couple of years. As with all tax legislation, the 870 pages of the “One Big Beautiful Bill,” often call “OBBBA,” or formally H.R. 1, made some changes permanent, while other provisions were only changed temporarily.

It is important to highlight a few of the major changes included in the “One Big Beautiful Bill:”

Employee Retention Credit Payment/Enforcement

The legislation limits the outstanding employee retention credit (ERC) claims that will be processed and potentially that will be paid by the Internal Revenue Service. In addition to limiting who can claim the ERC, funds were provided to investigate and assure that previously paid ERC claims were legitimate.

Charitable Deduction for Non-itemizers

For charitable contributions made in 2026 and afterwards, non-itemizers will

be able to claim a charitable deduction up to \$1,000 for individual filers and up to \$2,000 if you are married and filing jointly. Only cash donations made directly to a qualified charity or church are eligible. Gifts to donor-advised funds and private foundations do not qualify for this new deduction.

60% Cap on Itemized Cash Contributions Made Permanent

For charitable contributions made in 2026 and afterwards, non-itemizers will be able to claim a charitable deduction up to \$1,000 for individual filers and up to \$2,000 if you are married and filing jointly. Only cash donations made directly to a qualified charity or church are eligible. Gifts to donor-advised funds and private foundations do not qualify for this new deduction.

New Charitable Deduction Floor of 0.5% of Adjusted Gross Income

Beginning in 2026, itemizing taxpayers can only deduct charitable contributions that exceed 0.5% of their AGI. Any amounts below this new floor are not deductible. For example, if a person has \$100,000 of adjusted gross income, the

first \$500 of charitable donations will not be deductible. This new floor applies to both cash and non-cash charitable gifts.

Standard Deduction Increase

The 2025 standard deduction amounts, which you will use when filing your taxes in 2026, have been increased to \$15,750 for an individual filer and \$31,500 if you are married and filing jointly. The OBBBA makes the higher standard deduction amounts permanent and increases the amounts for inflation in future years.

Increase in Amount Required for Form 1099 Reporting

- **Form 1099-NEC (Nonemployee Compensation):** The reporting threshold for payments made to non-employees (like independent contractors, evangelists, and singing groups) increases from \$600 to \$2,000, effective for the 2026 tax year (forms issued in 2027). This threshold will also be adjusted for inflation annually starting in 2027.
- **Form 1099-MISC (Miscellaneous Information):** Similarly, the reporting threshold for certain miscellaneous income (like rents, prizes, and certain gifts) also increases from \$600 to \$2,000, effective for the 2026 tax year (forms issued in 2027), with inflation adjustments starting in 2027.

It is important to remember that even if you do not receive a Form 1099-NEC, you are still required to report **ALL** income (regardless of how small) to the IRS on your tax return. Therefore, while a church may not have to provide a minister with a 1099 for a gift of \$1,000 in 2026, the \$1,000 is still reportable income for the minister. This change in law only impacts when the church has to provide a 1099. The amount is, and has always been, reportable by the minister as taxable income, regardless of the amount.

Will Rogers supposedly once stated that "The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets." Hopefully these changes and a host of others that were included in OBBBA will help you rather than cause more pain. ■

Art Rhodes is President and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc.

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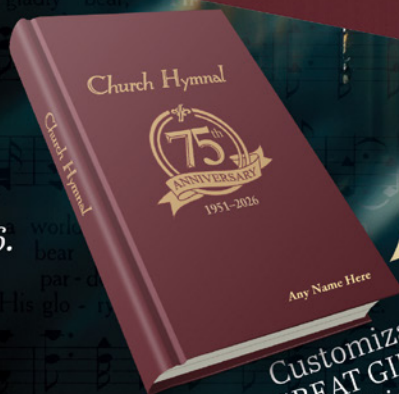
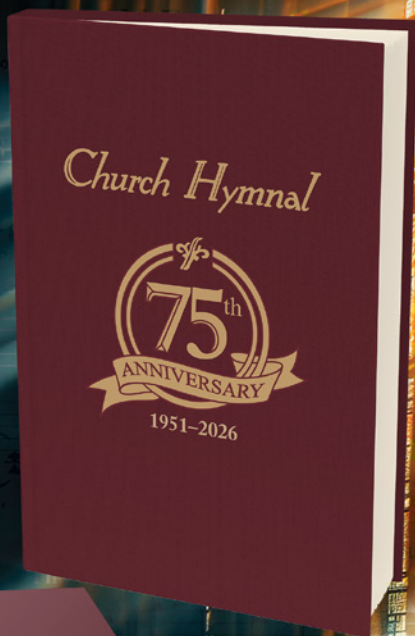
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LEGAL NOTES

DENNIS WATKINS

If Your “Check Is In The Mail,” BEWARE!



We often hear the phrase “the check is in the mail,” referring to the hope that we will be the recipient of a check. Yet today it is important to examine the scenario of *sending* a check. Recently, I was in a meeting with several bankers and one of the leaders of a bank made the statement: “I don’t think I will send any checks in the mail in the future. It’s just too dangerous.” That statement caught my attention. Within several days, I saw firsthand what this banker was referring to, and it’s a horrible scam.

The Scam

The scam works like this: Sophisticated and savvy criminals watch the mail for any envelope that seems to be containing a check. They intercept the envelope, get the check and produce an almost-perfect replica of the check, in blank, because they have all the pertinent information they need. They have the bank routing number, the account number, and everything else, along with the ability to produce a good fake check. It looks real!



These insidious criminals then create a check based on all the correct information and start writing checks to themselves, which they cash at the bank! They might not write themselves million-dollar checks or anything that would garner too much attention, but they write smaller, realistic-type checks and then start cashing them. These checks can add up in amount!

As I mentioned, within several days of my meeting, I was contacted by two churches which had fallen victim to this very scam. One church was scammed out of approximately \$24,000, and another out of approximately \$6,000. Obviously, this created great stress for these good church folks!

What can you do?

In my example of the two churches, there was a difference in how this crisis was handled. One church had elected to take out some form of fraud insurance and their loss was immediately replaced. The other church had decided not to take out that form of insurance and now it is haggling with the bank about replacement of funds. The first thing you should do is to discuss with your bank what types of fraud insurance protection you can obtain for these kinds of events, as this coverage might be worth it. I talked with my bank, and they also had some other ideas about detecting fraud like this.

Another approach might be to start paying your church expenses through checkless means like ACH, etc. In fact, some of the vendors that I deal with just recently advised me that they will not accept checks any longer and that they require checkless payment! I did not dream that I would ever see that day arrive, but that's where we are!

Of course, the business world currently is fraught with money scams, and the issue of wire transfers and money transfers carries its own degree of risk. It behooves anybody dealing with church money to sit down with a bank manager and discuss how to avoid something like this. We know that where there is money, enterprising criminals will be thinking up new methods to steal!

Conclusion

Thank you to all of you faithful and selfless church treasurers and administrators who assist the church in matters of money and business. May the Lord protect you from scams! ■

***Dennis Watkins** is the legal counsel for Church of God. The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.*

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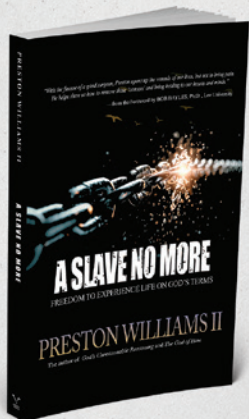
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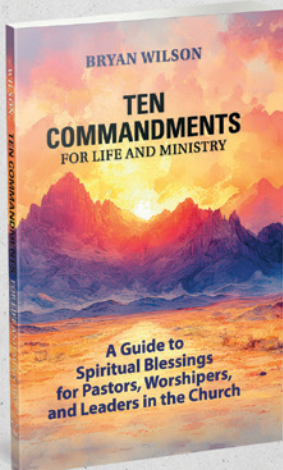
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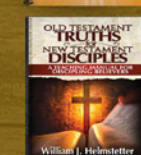
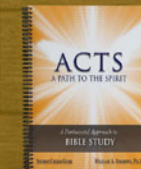
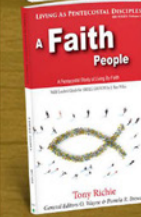
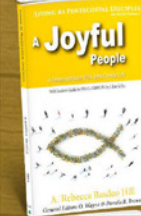
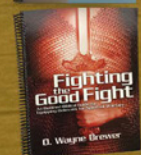
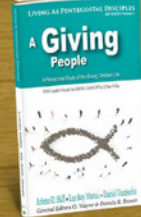
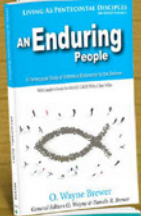
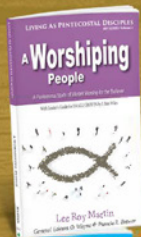
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<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
4 Weeks "Understanding and Breaking Strongholds" (Chapter 8 & 9 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	4 Weeks "A Spirit-Empowered People" (Living a Spirit-Empowered Life) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 4	4 Weeks "A Joyful People" (Living the Joyful Christian Life) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 5	4 Weeks "A Faith People" (A Study of Living by Faith) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 6
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Church of God HIGHLIGHTS

Abbreviated items of interest to the Church of God published on Faith News Network between June 1, 2025, and September 25, 2025. To read the articles in their entirety and others, please visit faithnews.cc.

Church of God Agencies Moving Into Texas

July 7, 2025 – Cleveland, TN— Church of God benevolent agencies Men and Women of Action and Operation Compassion are on their way to staging areas and relief locations in central Texas in response to the devastating floods that have claimed the lives of more than one hundred in and around Kerr County.

Search and rescue operations entered their fifth day on Tuesday after heavy rainfall caused the Guadalupe River to overflow to devastating levels in minutes. Bridges and roads leading into the primary disaster zones have been destroyed or heavily damaged hampering immediate relief efforts.

Church of God General Overseer Gary Lewis was joined by Assistant General Overseer and liaison to the Division of Care, Wayne Dority, to receive updates from Kelvin Page, executive director of OC and Phil Thompson who leads MWOA.

“As always, the Church of God is stepping up in this tragedy, and both MWOA and OC are mobilized, loaded and just waiting for the green light,”

Lewis stated. He asked Dority the best way for the Church of God family to assist and he explained the most effective method is through giving, funds of which will be funneled directly to OC and MWOA to increase relief efforts.

Thompson stated they have trailers that will provide showers, shelter, and sanitation, while Page said a stocked 53-foot trailer of supplies is on the way. Thompson also stated the availability of 1,000 cots needed for both victims and volunteers.

A staging area has been offered at the Leander Church of God in Texas, about 30 miles north of Austin, and one of the hardest-hit areas. The worst came early in the morning on July 4, between 3:30 and 4 a.m., when a flash flood emergency was declared as the Guadalupe River surged over 20 feet in less than two hours.

To give to Church of God relief efforts, please visit coggive.com and designate your gifts to Disaster Relief. One hundred percent of donations will be applied toward Texas flood relief. ■



Caribbean Assembly Convenes in Trinidad and Tobago

July 29, 2025—The New Testament Church of God in Trinidad and Tobago hosted the 6th Caribbean Assembly of the New Testament Churches of God, a significant gathering of believers from across the region.

Convening under the theme, “Champions for the Future: Your Steps Are Ordered,” the assembly commenced on Wednesday, July 23, and continued through Sunday, July 27, 2025.

The assembly opened with hundreds of youth dancing in a welcome ceremony which set the atmosphere for the convention. General Overseer Dr. Gary Lewis brought a powerful message which set the convention on fire. The day’s session with Dr. Michael Baker on the subject “We Believe” stirred the hearts of the attendees.

This year’s theme emphasized empowering the next generation, prophetically symbolized by the handing over of 300 batons to youth representatives from across the Caribbean during the closing service on Sunday, July 27. The act represented “a divine charge, a transfer of vision, responsibility, and purpose into the hands of tomorrow’s leaders.”

A particularly historic occasion was marked on Thursday, July 24, when the New Testament Church of God in

Trinidad and Tobago welcomed, for the first time in its history, a sitting Prime Minister to its convention. The Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC addressed the assembly and delivered words of encouragement. The pages of history will now reflect that after 69 years of the existence of the church in Trinidad and Tobago, the government and clergy connected.



Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC at the Caribbean Assembly.

Bishop Ishmael Charles stated, “The convention was a Holy Spirit-filled fusion of praise and worship to the true and living God with over 500 delegates.” Countries represented included Antigua, Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, the British Virgin Islands, Grenada, the US Virgin Islands, Barbados, Guyana, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, the Cayman Islands, and the United States of America.



Delegates also gathered for a period of training, discipleship, and spiritual empowerment. The atmosphere was saturated with praise, unity, and purpose. A powerful word was delivered by Dr. Angel Marcial, who encouraged all present to “continue dreaming and to never stop!” ■

Marker Unveiled at Barney Creek Site

August 19, 2025—On the 139th birthday of the founding of the Church of God, General Overseer Gary Lewis, members of the Executive Committee, and representatives from the Church of God Historical Commission, dedicated a historic marker on the site of the location of the Barney Creek Meeting House, the place where in 1886 a small group of believers began what would become the Church of God.

Barney Creek is in the southeast corner of Tennessee and in the vicinity of small towns connected with the early history of the Church of God, such as Coker Creek and Camp Creek. It was on August 19, 1886, when a handful of people searching for a deeper relationship with Christ banded together in discussion and prayer for divine direction. Eight persons came forward to form the Christian Union and church historians point to the gathering at Barney Creek as the initial event that sparked what would develop into the establishment of the Church of God of today

The Tuesday dedication was symbolically chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the event, and on the property which is now owned by the Church of God. The field trip was part of the agenda of the monthly Executive Committee meeting and of the Church of God Historical Commission, who took the day prior to their annual meeting to join in the ceremony.



Caribbean Field Director Ishmael Charles greets Members of the Executive Committee and Historic Commission admire the newly-installed sign

The 45-minute celebration included a welcome and opening prayer by First Assistant General Overseer Tony Stewart, and comments and prayers by Third Assistant General Overseer Mark Williams, Secretary General Tom Madden, Youth and Discipleship Director Brian Yaun, Assistant Director of the Ministry of Evangelism Scott Shepard, and former Assistant Director of World Missions Victor Pagan. They were joined by Dr. David Roebuck, Church of God Historian who gave an



in-depth history of the Barney Creek site and the events of that day on August 19, 1886.

The climax of the morning ceremony was the unveiling of an historic marker that tells the story of Barney Creek for passersby along the remote road. The area remains largely unchanged from 139 years ago, except for the absence of a grist mill that also served as a meeting house.

A recap video of the ceremony is available on Facebook Live (@COGHQ) starting at 2:30 pm EST on Wednesday, August 20, 2025. ■

East Central Hispanic Region Dedicates New Offices

September 13, 2025 – Cleveland, TN—Pastors and leaders of the East Central Hispanic Region (ECHR) were joined by members of the Church of God Executive Committee to dedicate a new regional office facility.

Ministries of the ECHR encompass Hispanic churches with nearly 10,000 members who worship at 72 churches across 15 districts from the states of Alabama, North Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Leading the region as administrative bishop is Rev. Rigoberto Ramos.

“This new facility is for the pastors,” Ramos stated as he welcomed the guests gathered under a tent outside the building. “They have believed in this vision.” Ramos explained the building will house more than regional offices for the ECHR and will include space for educational and ministry training, meetings, and events. It replaces previous offices located in a former home across from the International Offices on 25th Street.



Dr. Mark Williams, left, snips a portion of the ribbon at the dedication of the ECHR offices. Looking on is Administrative Bishop Rigoberto Ramos and General Overseer Gary Lewis

General Overseer Gary Lewis greeted the crowd and explained the challenges of the relocation and navigating the journey with the Executive Committee. Third Assistant General Overseer Dr. Mark Williams serves as liaison to the ECHR and worked to help secure financing and other logistics of the relocation. He offered a closing prayer for the dedication.

The keynote address was offered by Dr. Carlos Moran, director of Hispanic Ministries for the Church of God. ■

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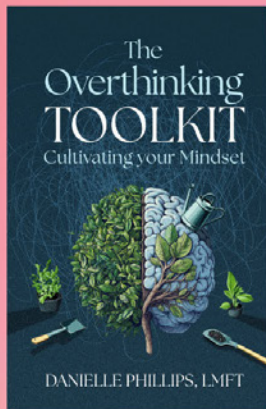
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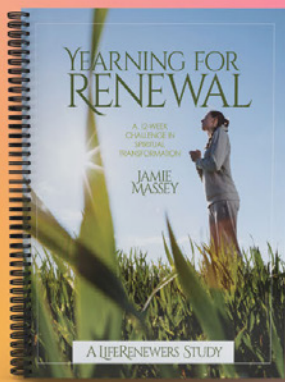
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DECLARATION OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE

1. In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
2. In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
3. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary; that Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead; that He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
4. That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
5. That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
6. In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
7. Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.
8. In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
9. In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost.
10. In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
11. Divine healing is provided for all in the Atonement.
12. In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.
13. In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
14. In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

SU IGLESIA IGLESIA DE DIOS

Declaración de Fe

CREEMOS:

1. En la inspiración verbal de la Biblia.
2. En un Dios que existe eternamente en tres personas, a saber: el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo.
3. Que Jesucristo es el unigénito del Padre; concebido del Espíritu Santo y nacido de la virgen María. Que fue crucificado, sepultado y resucitó de entre los muertos. Que ascendió al cielo y está hoy a la diestra del Padre como nuestro Intercesor.
4. Que todos han pecado y han sido destinados de la gloria de Dios, y que el arrepentimiento es ordenado por Dios para todos y necesario para el perdón de los pecados.
5. Que la justificación, la regeneración y el nuevo nacimiento se efectúan por fe en la sangre de Jesucristo.
6. En la santificación, siguiente al nuevo nacimiento, por fe en la sangre de Jesucristo, por medio de la Palabra y por el Espíritu Santo.
7. Que la santidad es la norma de vida.
8. Que el bautismo con el Espíritu Santo es la evidencia de la santidad del corazón.
9. Y hablar en otras lenguas, como evidencia de la santidad.
10. Que el bautismo en agua por inmersión es necesario para la salvación.
11. Que el bautismo en agua por inmersión debe ser bautismo en el nombre del Señor.
12. Que la santidad divina es el estándar de vida.
13. Que la cena del Señor es el memorial de la salvación.
14. Que la segunda venida de Jesús es para resucitar a los justos muertos y a El en el aire. Segundo, para resucitar a los justos muertos y a El en el aire. Segundo, para resucitar a los justos muertos y a El en el aire.
15. Que la resurrección corporal es eterna para los justos y eterna para los justos.

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