

Fall 2022

ENGAGE

A Journal for Church of God Ministries

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Diverse Council Elected at General Assembly
- Items Adopted at the 78th International General Assembly
- There's a Right Way and a Wrong Way to Leave Your Church
- Finding God-Given Purpose in Retirement
- Pentecostal vs. Charismatic





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

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From the Editor | Cameron Fisher

Evangel and Engage

I just received my latest edition of *Evangel*. If you are part of the Church of God, you know about the *Evangel*. It's been around for more than a century and it has told the story of the Church since it was first released in 1910. Like all printed publications, the dynamic has changed. It now has an online presence, but still counts on subscriptions to help with its printing and delivery. It is respected as the primary publication of the denomination and is intended to reach beyond Church of God audiences.

Engage was established in the late 1980s in the days before the Internet. It was called *Profiles*, with an exclusively Church of God audience. Ministry and department leaders were invited to submit printed ads that would be included in a packet mailed to pastors. A newsletter of the same name was part of the packet and addressed topics pertinent to the Church of God. The price of designing and printing the thousands of flyers was the only expense for the ministries. Staff at Pathway Press hand-stuffed the packets in an assembly line fashion and delivered them to the local post office. In the early 2000s, *Profiles* morphed from that packet of loose ads to a small magazine called *Covenant Resources*. In 2009, it was renamed *Engage* and increased in size and quality. Four years later it went all-digital



into what it is today. Like *Profiles*, departments and ministries associated with the Church of God can submit ads to be included in *Engage* at no cost.

These two publications may reach a lot of the same audiences, but they offer different information for the benefit of the pastor, church leader, or layperson.

One of the rare instances where *Engage* and *Evangel* overlap is coverage of the General Assembly. If you have read the September/October issue, you will find a similar article about the historically-diverse election of the International Executive Council. *Evangel* includes a summary of the agenda items that were passed, while this issue of *Engage* will present the Agenda as it was read at the July 29, 2022 session. Earlier this year both included the identical three pages of registration and hotel information pertaining to the Assembly.

Evangel and *Engage*. Two publications with different histories and messages to the Church of God. May their audiences continue to enjoy the benefits they both offer. ■



Diverse Council of Eighteen Elected at General Assembly

By Cameron Fisher



Seated, L-R: Gary Lewis, Tony Stewart, Tim Hill, Raymond Culpepper, David Ramirez. **First Row**, l-r: William Lee, Scott Sheppard, Angel Marcial E., Anthony Pelt, Kip Box, Ken Hill. **Middle Row**, l-r: Joe Dobbins, David Smith, Nick Park, Kelvin Page, Lennox Walker, Rick Whitter. **Back Row**, l-r: R.C. Hugh Nelson, David Cooper, Julio C. Melendez Olgvin, Kenneth Anderson, Mark Leonhardt, Timothy Brown.

For the first time since the Church of God Council of Eighteen was increased from 12 to 18 in 1986, there will be eighteen new faces when the body of leaders convenes for their first meeting later this month. Among those elected, five are of African descent, including incoming chairman William Lee, and two are Hispanic. Fifteen of the eighteen have never previously served on the Council of Eighteen.

Timothy M. Hill was reelected to the position of General Overseer. He will be

joined back on the five-man Executive Committee by Raymond F. Culpepper, first assistant general overseer, and David E. Ramirez, third assistant. Both were also reelected to their same posts and the three will complete their tenures in 2024. Two new members were elected to the Executive Committee and include Tony Stewart, second assistant general overseer, and Gary J. Lewis, secretary general. They were both elected to four-year terms. The 23-member *International Executive Council*, the name of the governing body that includes both the Executive



Committee and Council of Eighteen, will meet at the International Offices on September 27-29, 2022.

Due to a decision on Tuesday, July 26 by the General Council, all former members of the Council of Eighteen were deemed to have completed full four-year terms due to the postponement of the Assembly from 2020 to 2022. Voting for the Council members began on Wednesday, July 27. The process was expedited through the implementation of an adequate number of voting devices, allowing each member to possess a device.

According to the *Minutes* of the Church of God, the General Council must include specified representation by groups of ministers, specifically at least twelve pastors, three living outside the United States, and three “at-large.”

By the second round of voting, members of the General Council had chosen the first seven members: William Lee, pastor of Victorious Life Church in Conyers, Ga.; Scott Sheppard, senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in Athens, Ga.; Ángel Marcial, Latin American field representative for Church of God World Missions; Anthony Pelt, overseer for the Florida-Cocoa region and pastor of Radiant Living Worship Center; *Kip Box, state overseer of Michigan; Kenneth Hill, regional overseer of Southern New England; and Joe Dobbins, pastor of Twin Rivers Worship Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

In the next round of voting, three more members were elected, which included David Smith, pastor of Oak Park Church of God in Mobile, Ala.; Nick Park, overseer

of Ireland; and Kelvin Page, senior pastor of Westmore Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.

The General Council voted a fourth time and chose Lennox Walker, pastor/overseer in Ontario, Canada; *Rick Whitter, state overseer of Illinois; R.C. Hugh Nelson, pastor of the Church of God of East Flatbush in Brooklyn, New York; and David Cooper, senior pastor of the Mount Paran Church of God in Atlanta.

Two more rounds of voting completed the election process as the General Council satisfied the requirements outlined in the *Minutes*. Julio Olguin Meléndez, pastor of Iglesia De Dios Central in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, fulfilled the international requirements. His election was followed by Ken Anderson, pastor in Minnesota and regional superintendent of South Asia for World Missions. Rounding out the final two positions were *Mark Leonhardt, senior pastor in Fort Mill, South Carolina; and Timothy Brown, state overseer of Florida-Tampa.

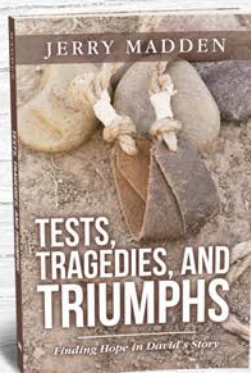
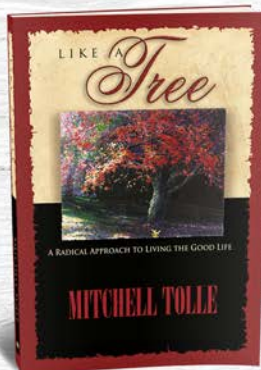
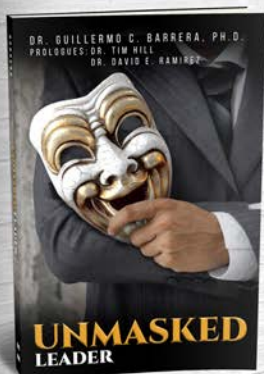
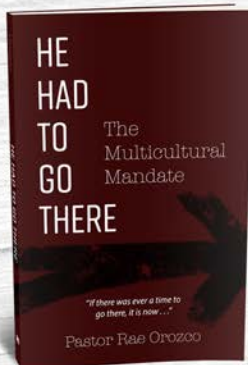
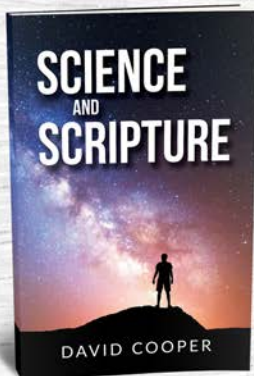
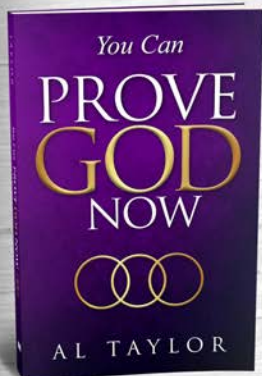
“I so appreciate the diversity I see in this body,” General Overseer Tim Hill said after introducing the group to the Council. This is a wonderful day in the Church of God!” ■

**Following their election to the Council of Eighteen, three members accepted new posts of leadership. They included Kip Box, moving from Michigan to Western North Carolina as administrative bishop; Rick Whitter, accepting the administrative bishop role in Pennsylvania from Illinois; and Mark Leonhardt who is now the administrative bishop in Louisiana.*



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Items Adopted by the International General Assembly 2022

The following is the official list of items adopted at the 78th International General Assembly, held July 26-29, 2022, in San Antonio, Texas. The General Assembly session where these items were officially ratified took place on Friday, July 29, 2022 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center:

INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. That Timothy M. Hill serve as General Overseer for the ensuing two years.
2. That Raymond F. Culpepper serve as First Assistant General Overseer for the ensuing two years.
3. That Tony D. Stewart serve as Second Assistant General Overseer for the ensuing four years.
4. That David E. Ramirez serve as Third Assistant General Overseer for the ensuing two years.
5. That Gary Joseph Lewis serve as Secretary General for the ensuing four years.

OTHER NOMINATIONS

6. That Rob Bailey serve as Director of Youth and Discipleship for the ensuing two years.
7. That Brian K. Yaun serve as Assistant Director of Youth and Discipleship for the ensuing two years.
8. That M. Thomas Propes serve as Director of World Missions for the ensuing four years.
9. That John D. Childers serve as Assistant Director of World Missions for the ensuing four years.

INTRODUCTION OF THE COUNCIL OF EIGHTEEN

1. William A. Lee, Jr.
2. Robert Scott Sheppard
3. Angel Marcial E.
4. Anthony T. Pelt
5. Kip Anthony Box
6. Kenneth Lamar Hill
7. Joe Dobbins
8. David Smith
9. Nick Park
10. Kelvin Earl Page
11. Lennox Dacosta Walker
12. Rick Whitter
13. R.C. Hugh Nelson
14. David Charles Cooper
15. Julio C. Melendez Olgin
16. Kenneth Ray Anderson
17. Mark C. Leonhardt
18. Timothy Edwin Brown

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Tenure of Elected Officials

Tenure of the Newly Elected Members (2016) of the International Executive Committee.

That the newly elected members (2016) should have only two more years of tenure eligibility.

Tenure of the Newly Elected Members (2018) of the International Executive Council

That the newly elected members (2018) should not have any tenure eligibility remaining.



Tenure of the International Director and Assistant Director of Youth and Discipleship

That the Director and Assistant Director should have only two more years of tenure eligibility.

2. Meaning and Usage of the Title Ordained “Bishop”

That the title Ordained “Bishop” as a third tier of licensure be retained.

3. Resolution Concerning Human Identity and Sexuality

WHEREAS, we are faced with societal, cultural, and sociopolitical theories that view “gender identity” as a social construct that proposes there is no Biblical truth to gender, and that gender is contextualized as a matter of choice; and

WHEREAS, the Church of God recognizes that today’s culture is increasingly embracing a non-biblical view of human sexuality and gender identity by normalizing the LGBTQ+ agenda, including sexuality, and that biblical sexual norms are being replaced with a postmodern non-biblical view of sexual orientation, gender fluidity, and self-gendering; and

WHEREAS, being created in God’s image gives personal identity, dignity and equality to male and female; and

WHEREAS, self-identifying with any sexual orientation or gender identity contrary to the biblical view of gender and sexuality, including such terms as “gay Christian,” “homosexual Christian,” or any other non-biblical sexual orientation or gender identity is an affront to the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, nowhere in Scripture is it suggested that individuals may self-identify as the gender they wish to be rather than the biological or “natural considerations,”

and that the Church believes that Scripture is God’s final, authoritative, and Spirit-inspired Word to the Church, and that the Bible explains God’s design of creation and what constitutes human sexuality, as well as the purpose, order, wholesomeness, and beauty of human sexuality (e.g., Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2:18-24; Matt. 19:4-5);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we the people of the Church of God affirm our belief in God’s perfect design for human sexuality (Genesis 1:27); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that because God offers restoration and redemption through Jesus Christ to all who confess and forsake their sin, we believe that all people should be treated compassionately, and that care should be taken to offer prayer and competent counsel for those who face sexual confusion; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that in order to preserve the doctrinal integrity of the Church of God as part of the Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to our movement, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as ministerial volunteers, agree to and abide by the Declaration of Faith and doctrinal statements of the church. (Genesis 1:27, 2:20-24, 3:17; Proverbs 18:22; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 11; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Peter 3:7)

4. Biblical Fidelity in Gender Identity Affirmation

That page 111, S29. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINISTERS, II. MARRIAGE AND SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS be amended by inserting:

7. No Church of God minister shall permit any employee of any church or institution of the



church, under their direct authority, to knowingly participate in using or verbally affirming the use of a self-selected gender identity that is incongruent with the individual's biological sex. Ministers are prohibited and must prohibit their employees from encouraging or affirming people and especially people within their care to identify with their sexual temptation, their unbiblical sexual attraction, or a self-selected gender or gender pronoun, which is incongruent with their biological sex.

Engagement in this behavior is grounds for disciplinary action. Failure of credentialed ministers to prohibit their employees of denominationally affiliated institutions or churches, under their authority, from engaging in this behavior is grounds for disciplinary action. "Employees" shall be defined as credentialed employees, or any employees connected with conveying the message of the church and carrying out its mission.

5. Usage of the Titles of God

That pages 109-110, S29. INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINISTERS, I. General Instructions for Ministers be amended by inserting the following:

12. No Church of God minister or employee of any church or institution associated with the Church of God shall violate Articles 1 & 2 of the Declaration of Faith by the feminization of God, naming God using feminine pronouns or feminine titles. The usage of feminine titles or feminine pronouns for God in reference to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit is a violation of the Declaration of Faith and shall result in ministerial disciplinary action.

6. Motions Committee - Form of Submission

That we amend page 62, S2. BYLAWS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 2.

INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL, Agenda, paragraph 4, by striking "~~typewritten form~~" and inserting "a legible format (print or digital)."

So as to read:

4. Any new business shall be presented to the chairman of the motions committee, which committee shall receive, classify, clarify, eliminate duplication, and dispatch for placement on the agenda following the completion of the printed agenda. Any new business presented to the motions committee shall be presented in a legible format (print or digital) not later than 2 p.m. of the third day of the International General Council.

7. Motions Committee – Date of Submission

That we amend page 62, S2. BYLAWS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 2. INTERNATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL, Agenda, paragraph 4, by striking the word ~~third~~ and inserting the word *second*.

So as to read:

4. Any new business shall be presented to the chairman of the motions committee, which committee shall receive, classify, clarify, eliminate duplication, and dispatch for placement on the agenda following the completion of the printed agenda. Any new business presented to the motions committee shall be presented in typewritten form not later than 2:00 p.m. of the *second* day of the International General Council.

8. International General Council - Meeting

That we amend page 61, S2. BYLAWS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 2. INTERNATIONAL



GENERAL COUNCIL by inserting a paragraph regarding “Meeting” following the Members paragraph:

So as to read:

Meeting

The International General Council shall meet biennially, convening in conjunction with the International General Assembly.

9. International Executive Council – Indonesia (Participation)

A. That we amend pages 68-69, S5. INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, I. Selection, 3., by inserting “and the general overseer of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia Church of God”

So as to read:

3. In accordance with the memorandum of agreement, the moderator of the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa *and the general overseer of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia Church of God* shall be members of the International Executive Council of the Church of God in America, and the general overseer of the Church of God shall be a member of the Executive Council of the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa.

B. That we amend pages 68-69, S5. INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, I. Selection, 3., by inserting “and the Executive Council of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia Church of God.”

So as to read:

3. In accordance with the memorandum of agreement, the moderator of the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa shall be a member of the International Executive Council of the Church of God in America, and the general overseer of the Church of God shall be a member of the Executive Council of the Full Gospel Church of God

in South Africa and the Executive Council of the Gereja Bethel Indonesia Church of God.

10. International Executive Council Expansion

A special commission will be appointed by the General Overseer to study the feasibility and operational challenges/opportunities of expanding the International Executive Council, as well as the designation of certain groups to be represented, with special emphasis on the following areas that have already been addressed by the International Executive Council but need further study:

- Ratio of church membership to councilors
- Assurance that the five core ministry gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors), and teachers—are represented
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- Clear definition of “foreign national”
- Feasibility of virtual, as well as in-person, meetings
- Potential for cost-sharing of councilors’ expenses, and that a report on such be brought back and presented, with appropriate motion(s), if necessary, to the 2024 International General Council.

11. General Assembly Procedures and Extenuating Unusual Circumstances

That we amend page 65, S3. INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, II. Procedures, 2., by substituting the following for Item 2.

So as to read:

2. Arrangements for the time and location of the International General Assembly shall be entrusted to the International Executive Council. Should there be extenuating unusual circumstances including but not limited to the following: a global



pandemic or regional or national epidemic; regional, national, or global war; natural disaster; or any other event that would demonstrate compelling impact upon the convening of the biennial General Assembly, the International Executive Council shall be empowered to postpone or reschedule the regularly scheduled General Assembly to an appropriate time and place.

12. Procedure for Filling Vacancy of an Elected Ministry Leader Under Extenuating Unusual Circumstances

That we amend page 85, S13. PROCEDURE FOR FILLING VACANCY OF AN ELECTED MINISTRY LEADER, by inserting:

C. Policy Regarding Succession in Office of Elected Persons

Persons elected to an international, state/regional, or local position serve in their respective elective office until their successor is named, unless there has been a death or a person has been involuntarily removed, or voluntarily resigned. In extenuating unusual circumstances, including but not limited to the following: a global pandemic or regional or national epidemic; regional, national, or global war; natural disaster; or any other event that would demonstrate compelling impact upon the governance of the Church of God, an individual's tenure in office might exceed the tenure limits set by the International General Assembly.

In the case of a vacancy in an elected office with a two-year term, if more than half of the term remains to be filled, the time served shall count as a full two-year term for the individual filling the vacancy. In the case of a vacancy in an elected office with a four-year term, if

more than half of the term remains to be filled, the time served shall count as a full four-year term for the individual filling the vacancy.

13. Procedure for Filling Vacancy – Secretary General

A. That we amend page 77, S9. SECRETARY GENERAL, III. Procedure for Filling Vacancy, by striking “mail” and inserting “the most efficient and effective methods.”

So as to read:

In the event the office of the secretary general be vacated because of death, disability, advancement, or the incumbent in any wise being disqualified, the general overseer shall submit by *the most efficient and effective methods* the names of the next two men receiving the highest vote, who were not elected to any general office, to the ordained bishops. The ordained bishops shall select the one who will fill the vacancy in the secretary general's office. Ballots must be returned to the general overseer within twenty (20) days to be valid votes. The one receiving the majority vote shall be declared elected to fill the unexpired term of the secretary general.

B. That we amend page 77, S9. SECRETARY GENERAL, III. Procedure for Filling Vacancy, by striking “twenty (20)” and substituting “forty-five (45).”

So as to read:

In the event the office of the secretary general be vacated because of death, disability, advancement, or the incumbent in any wise being disqualified, the general overseer shall submit by mail the names of the next two men receiving the highest vote, who were not elected to any general office, to



the ordained bishops. The ordained bishops shall select the one who will fill the vacancy in the secretary general's office. Ballots must be returned to the general overseer within *forty-five (45) days* to be valid votes. The one receiving the majority vote shall be declared elected to fill the unexpired term of the secretary general.

14. Procedure for Filling Vacancy – Assistant Ministry Leader

That we amend page 85, S13.

PROCEDURE FOR FILLING VACANCY OF AN ELECTED MINISTRY LEADER, B. Filling Vacancy of Assistant Ministry Leader, by striking “mail” and inserting “the most efficient and effective methods.”

So as to read:

In the event the office of an elected assistant ministry head be vacated because of death, disability, advancement, or the incumbent in any wise being disqualified, the general overseer will submit by *the most efficient and effective methods* the names of the next two persons receiving the highest vote for that position, who were not elected to any general office, to the ordained bishops, to select the one who shall fill the vacancy in the ministry.

Ballots must be returned to the general overseer within 45 days to be valid votes. The one receiving the majority vote shall be declared to fill the unexpired term of the assistant to the ministry in question.

15. Report/Announcement – Virtual Church

During a pandemic where health concerns forced “virtual” church services to become an option to regular in-person worship, many churches experienced great results and furthered their evangelistic outreach through

different methods of virtually reaching their church members and other interested persons. Because of such great success with further opening the church house doors through electronic mediums, it is important that we continue to pursue every option to reach a global harvest as we seek to fulfill and FINISH the Great Commission.

With ever-increasing technology expanding social and public mediums of communications, a task force will be appointed to review the possibilities and challenges in potentially organizing and establishing virtual churches. Structural and organizational challenges will be identified and reviewed, with recommendations concerning governance and operations submitted to the International Executive Committee and International Executive Council for consideration. If necessary, appropriate motion(s) will be made available to the 2024 International General Assembly.

16. State Board of Trustees – Real Estate Amounts

That we amend page 132, S34. STATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, item 5 by striking:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount</i>
5-star	\$750,000
4-star	\$500,000
AAA	\$350,000
AA	\$250,000
A	\$200,000
Others	as approved by the International Executive Committee

And inserting:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount</i>
6-star	\$1,750,000
5-star	\$1,500,000
4-star	\$1,250,000



AAA	\$1,000,000
AA	\$750,000
A	\$500,000
Others	as approved by the International Executive Committee

22. State Board of Trustees – Editorial Change

That we amend page 133, S34. STATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 7., by striking “his office, his place” and inserting “his/her office, his/her place.”

So as to read:

7. Any person appointed to the State Board of Trustees shall be a member in good standing of the Church of God. If at any time, any member of any Board of Trustees shall cease to be a member in good standing, or if by reason of death, removal, incapacity, or unwillingness to perform all duties of *his/her office, his/her place* on the Board of Trustees may be declared vacant: on the General Board by the general overseer; on a State Board by the state overseer; on a Local Board by a local church conference; and the same authority that declares said office vacant shall appoint a person to serve until the time for regular appointments, and the one so appointed shall have all authority held by the one removed.

23. State Overseer Duties

That we amend page 128, S32. STATE OVERSEERS, VII. Duties and Authorities by inserting the following as paragraphs 1 and 2:

1. Develop a culture of mission in the state/territory/region that will lead to increased church health, church planting and church multiplication.

2. Strive to cultivate the planting/revitalization of churches in the state/territory/region by developing a strategy with identifiable goals to plant, organize, and revitalize churches, to be reviewed by the International Executive Committee at the annual leadership conference.

REPORTS

The following reports called for at the 77th International General Assembly were printed and distributed in registration packets.

1. Global Ministry Forum Results
2. Spiritual Acceleration
3. Visional Actualization
4. Ministerial Activation
5. Generational Assimilation
6. Lee/PTS Scholarship

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions 1-6 were presented and adopted by General Council, and Resolution 7 was presented and adopted by General Assembly.

1. Appreciation to Timothy M. Hill
2. Appreciation to Church of God International Executive Council
3. Appreciation to J. David Stephens
4. Appreciation to John D. Childers
5. Appreciation to 78th International General Assembly Cabinet
6. Appreciation to City of San Antonio, Texas
7. Appreciation to David M. Griffis

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There's a Right Way and a Wrong Way to Leave a Church

By J. Lee Grady

This pandemic season hasn't been easy—but pastors have suffered in unique ways. Statistics show that between 20–30 percent of churchgoers stopped attending in 2020, and the bulk of those people have not returned. In many cases, they never said goodbye.

Many of my best friends are pastors, and they have told me many sad accounts of how their church members left—both before and during the pandemic. I took a random poll this week to hear how exiting members behaved when they went out the back door:

Pastor “Bob”: “One of my members left the church, and then he told me it was because the air conditioning in the church was too cold.”

Pastor “Rick”: “One family left my church, but before leaving they actually threatened to inflict bodily harm on me because I didn't do enough to help their son who was on drugs.”

Pastor “Stan”: “One of my members came to my house and told me I was leading the teens to hell because I allowed them to hear Christian rap music. Then she left the church.”

Pastor “Brenda”: “A disgruntled member who left the church still had a key. This person then let himself into the building and released a bunch of snakes. It took a week to get rid of them!”

Pastor “Doyle”: A man left our church right after we allowed a group of Hispanic believers to use our building. This man



said he was leaving because Hispanics were ‘taking over everything!’”

Pastor “Mike”: “Most of the time when someone leaves, they never say anything. I would rather they tell me directly what their issue is.”

People come and people go. Pastors know this, and they try to learn to cope with the pain. Pastors will certainly feel rejected when people leave, even when God is leading those people to make an exit. But if you sense the Holy Spirit is directing you to leave a church, please do it the right way. Here are a few guidelines:

1. Don't leave mad. If you are leaving because you are angry at a pastor or another member, you are proving your immaturity. Offense is never justifiable. Jesus told us to go to the person who offends us (Matt. 18:15). And Proverbs 19:11 says: “The discretion of a man



defers his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." If you break a relationship every time you are offended, you will never grow up. Even if you are called to leave a church, you should never hold a grudge. Have the courage to face your offense and disarm it.

2. Don't make threats. Some people get so angry they want to hurt the church when they leave. They want the pastor to suffer. One man told a friend of mine that he hoped the church would go bankrupt after he stopped tithing to it. (Instead, God sent other people whose donations more than covered the lost income.) Romans 12:19 says, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves." Even if a pastor or church members are doing inappropriate things, it's not your job to punish them.

3. Don't leave secretly. When I was a boy, my mother taught me to say: "I enjoyed my meal. May I be excused?" when I finished eating. I wasn't allowed to leave the table without this announcement. A similar rule applies to leaving a church. It's rude to walk out with no explanation. Your pastor deserves to know why. You can write a letter, but it's better to say it in person—and to include some words of thanks for the way the church has helped you in the past.

4. Don't talk about your exit on social media. Proverbs 6:19 says God hates the one who "sows discord among brethren." Those are strong words! Some people actually think they are doing God's work by badmouthing a pastor, but they are digging a ditch that they will soon fall into. Keep your judgments to yourself. Posting a rant on Instagram only shows how petty and self-centered you are.

5. Don't leave and try to take others with you. If God is calling you to switch churches, that's fine. God will bless your transition if you do it in a healthy way. But if you try to stage a massive walkout, you are undermining God's authority. Don't allow the Enemy to use you as an agent of division.

6. Don't leave and stay away from church altogether. I've often heard people say God led them to leave a church to go elsewhere. But then I find out after three years that "elsewhere" meant nowhere! This is usually a sign of either deep disappointment or an unresolved conflict. You should never, ever give up on church. It is God's family. No Christian should live in isolation.

Obviously, there are times when we must leave a church. It happens because of job transfers, family issues, ministry preferences, driving distance, and many other reasons. And some churches have unresolved problems that make them unhealthy—and God does not require us to stay there. The Holy Spirit is the one who directs us to the right congregation.

Good pastors know they can't hold onto people possessively. Healthy churches remind people that the exit door is unlocked, and that members are free to go as the Holy Spirit leads. Deuteronomy 28:6 says: "You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out."

Pastors should bless people who leave—but members should leave in a respectful way that invites that blessing.

J. Lee Grady is an author, award-winning journalist, and ordained minister. He served as a news writer and editor of *Charisma* for many years before launching into full-time ministry. ■

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Movement Calls Seniors to Find 'God-Given Purpose' in Retirement



More Americans over the age of 50 are facing loneliness and lack of purpose in their retirement years, according to a national faith-based movement that aims to turn things around.

During Older Americans Month in May, the Retirement Reformation movement (www.retirementreformation.org) says America's seniors have much to offer

their communities in their post-working years, but many need a nudge to pursue their "God-given purpose" and break out of their isolation bubble.

"Our culture says that retirement is a time of decline," said Retirement Reformation founder and 80-year-old mission architect Bruce Bruinsma. "But retirement can be the launch-pad to a purpose-filled



new journey. We're never too old to experience the joy of serving and encouraging others."

Bruinsma says his movement aims to inspire a legion of "mission-driven dynamos," helping others in their communities and mentoring younger generations. "*Retirement Reformation* is all about helping people hit «reset» and offering them resources and ideas to take their retirement in a meaningful new direction," he said.

Retirement Reformation's "Oxygen for Life" event May 20–21 at Cross Fellowship Church in Colorado Springs aims to help over-55s "overcome loneliness and find new meaning for your life." Other churches across the country are set to follow suit.

One in every three U.S. workers is 50 or older, according to AARP, and rapidly approaching retirement. A survey by Retirement Reformation revealed more than half of seniors—52%—said they had no specific plans for their retirement. And more than four out of ten listed "rest and relaxation" as a top priority for them when they quit the "9-to-5."

Overcoming Loneliness, Finding Purpose

Latest statistics show more than one in every four older Americans lives alone and that fuels social isolation, a big problem among seniors that was magnified by the pandemic. According to a study by the University of California, San Francisco, more than four in ten seniors regularly experience loneliness, which can lead to serious health issues.

The nation's 108 million over-50s—in particular those living alone—desperately need to find God-directed purpose in their lives, especially now when many of them face financial uncertainty and anxious times ahead, said Bruinsma.

Two out of every three seniors are worried about surging food, energy, and gas prices, according to a recent survey. Many of them fear they'll outlive their retirement savings, and nearly four out of ten say they need to increase their cash flow to stay afloat.

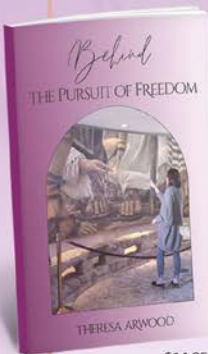
While many seniors are feeling the squeeze on their wallets, "God has a specific plan and purpose for every retired person," Bruinsma said, pointing out their retirement could last 30 years or more. "Retirement Reformation invites all seniors to find their God-given mission and experience a richer, fuller life of joy and contentment serving others."

Retirement Reformation (www.retirementreformation.org) was founded to help Christians approach retirement as an opportunity to worship and serve God in new ways, sharing their wisdom, experience, and resources. It also assists churches and organizations in maximizing the gifts of a largely untapped constituency by equipping older members and supporters for active involvement in ministry. ■

(This article appeared in *ChristianNewswire.com* on May 17, 2022. Source: Retirement Reformation).

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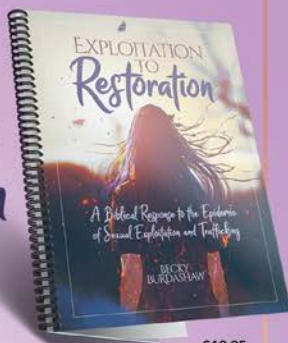
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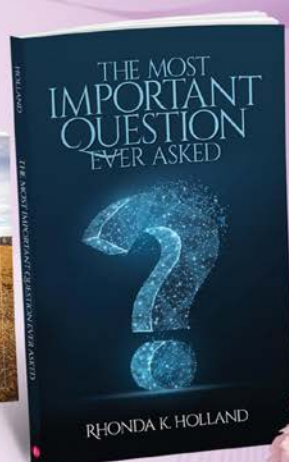
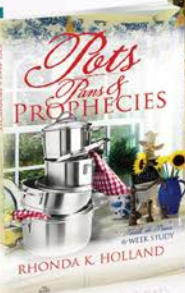
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New Study: Pentecostal vs. Charismatic Evangelicals



A new study from Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research explores the world of Pentecostal and Charismatic Evangelicals, and how they differ from other evangelical Christians.

The findings are detailed in *The Renewalists: Pentecostal and Charismatic Evangelicals*, a study of over 1,000 American evangelical Protestants released today.

According to the authors, one of the greatest challenges was simply defining what a Renewalist (Pentecostal or Charismatic) Evangelical even is.

“Three main ways of defining Renewalists traditionally have been people who consider themselves to be Pentecostal or Charismatic, attend a Pentecostal or Charismatic church, or speak in tongues,” says Mark Dreistadt, founder and president of Infinity Concepts. “The challenge is that there is relatively little overlap among these three definitions.”

The study found that while 36 percent of all American evangelical Protestants qualify as Renewalists, according to at least one of these definitions, only 6 percent qualify through all three.

“Six out of ten people who have spoken in tongues do not call themselves either Pentecostal or Charismatic,” explains Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research. “Among those who self-identify as Pentecostal or Charismatic, 53 percent do not attend a clearly Pentecostal church or denomination, such as the Assemblies of God or Foursquare.

“Among those attending a clearly Pentecostal church, 45 percent have never personally spoken in tongues,” Sellers adds. “Many Evangelicals are Renewalist through one definition, but not through others. That is why we chose in this study to qualify people as Renewalist through any one of those three definitions.”



The research defines a Renewalist Evangelical as anyone who self-identifies as Pentecostal or Charismatic or who attends a clearly Pentecostal/Charismatic church or who has personally spoken in tongues.

The study discovered that Renewalists tend to be somewhat younger than other Evangelicals, more likely to be raising children, more ethnically diverse, and more likely to live in less traditionally Christian parts of the country (Northeast and West).

Renewalists also tend to be more spiritually engaged in several ways:

- They are more likely than other Evangelicals to read the Bible daily (48% to 36%).
- They are more likely than others to attend church more than once a week (32% to 18%).
- They are more likely than others to participate in a small group for Bible study or prayer (47% to 32%).
- On average, they spend a higher proportion of their media use with specifically Christian media or content.

However, this greater level of spiritual engagement does not extend to generosity.

Renewalists are as likely as other Evangelicals to give to church and/or charity, but the proportion of their household income that is given away tends to be lower. The average proportion given to church is 20 percent lower for Renewalists compared to other Evangelicals, while for charities and ministries outside of church, it is 28 percent lower.

The study also points out that while Renewalists give a lower proportion of their

income to church, at the same time, they have higher expectations for their church to be active in the community—through more evangelism, more community outreach, and more focus on social issues.

Renewalists are also more likely than other Evangelicals to want their church to be different when it comes to political involvement, but the challenge is that they are about as likely to call for more political involvement (19%) as they are to want less of it (23%).

Finally, the majority of both Renewalist and non-Renewalist Evangelicals switched to online church during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Renewalists are 35 percent more likely than other Evangelicals to have “visited” online a church other than their own congregation, and 29 percent more likely than others to say their online church experience was better in at least one way than attending in person.

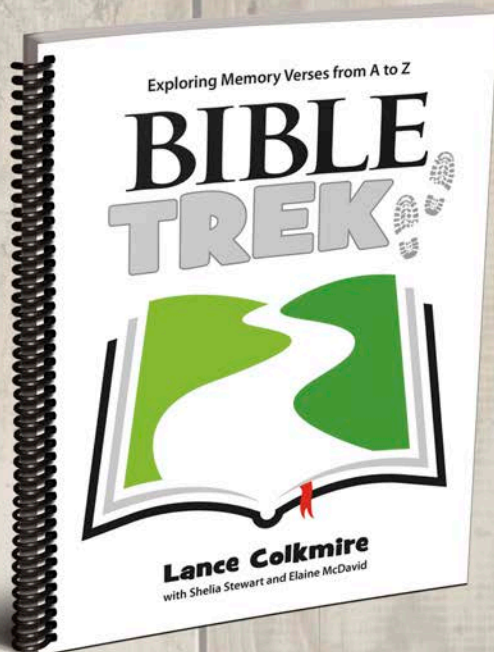
Dreistadt notes that all these issues combine to create some unique challenges for Pentecostal and Charismatic church leaders. “Renewalists provide less funding for their church, but at the same time have higher expectations for activities that require funding,” he explained. “They often disagree with each other on the issue of church and politics. And a significant number have already visited other churches online. This paints a picture of potential concern for the growth and stability of churches that serve this sector of the evangelical community.”

For the full report, visit infinityconcepts.com/the-renewalists/

(This article originally appeared on ChristianNewswire.com on August 4, 2022. Source: Infinity Concepts.) ■



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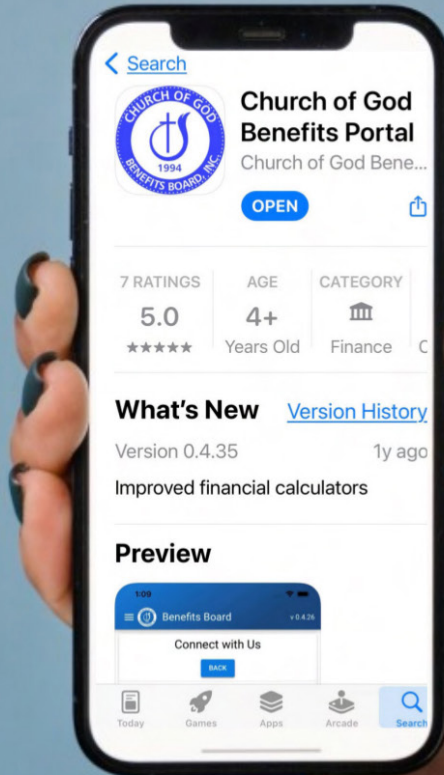
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LEGAL NOTES
DENNIS WATKINS

Insurance Issues for Churches, Continued: Director's and Officer's Liability Insurance



Introduction

In my last article, I discussed some of the basic and fundamental aspects of insurance for churches. In this article, I would like to expand my thoughts into some of the areas of church insurance that do not receive much attention.

One such topic is that of "Director's and Officer's liability insurance," also known as "D & O" insurance.

D&O Coverage

There is a need to discuss D&O coverage because I have had numerous instances

of reviewing church insurance policies and have found this type of coverage lacking. This is a cause for great concern because D&O coverage should be recommended to every church when considering this aspect of church operations, even if you as a pastor are the only church employee!

What Is D&O Coverage?

D&O insurance is a coverage offered to the church and sometimes to church leaders, for claims of negligence or wrongdoing by the leaders in performance of their duties. Church leaders are held to the standard of following good business judgment, and failure



to meet that standard can engender liability lawsuits against them personally. This may even include an officer's spouse.

Church leaders sometimes are sued by people who simply are unhappy with them or who do not like decisions that the leaders had to make. D&O insurance offers protection in these events. I should point out that D&O coverage likely does not cover criminal acts.

Who Are Directors and Officers?

This is a very important question because D&O coverage extends beyond just you as a pastor, but also applies to pastor's council members, elders, deacons, trustees, and possibly other church leaders. I can imagine that "the lights may be turning on for you" that this type of coverage might be very helpful for an array of church workers who fall under such a classification.

Knowing that if personal insurance coverage is provided, if they are sued in their capacity as church officers, it might provide a level of comfort and assurance to well-meaning church workers who accept church positions. When you enlist the services of such dedicated persons, you should be able to tell them that your church insurance policy contains a D&O provision!

How Does This Play Out in Real Life?

Thankfully, it is not exceedingly common, but from time to time, I have seen local church pastors or boards sued by some malcontented person arising out of a dispute over how the church was run or for their decisions as church officers. In some cases, these lawsuits were frivolous, but it will add a level of comfort and safety to your leaders to know that if they are sued in carrying out the function of their church service, there is some type of insurance protection.

Nuances of D&O Coverage

D&O coverage does not operate exactly like other liability insurance coverage, particularly general liability coverage, which I discussed in my last article. There often is some type of "deductible" or required amount which the church must pay in its share of the legal cost of these claims. In some cases, this amount can be substantial.

Also, the amount of coverage that you can obtain for D&O varies from company to company. Some companies offer what should be considered as larger amounts of coverage, while others only provide minimal coverage. But it is better to have some D&O coverage than to have no coverage at all.

What should you do?

As the pastor or business administrator of your church, you should acquaint yourself with the church's insurance policy or policies and look directly for indication of what the D&O coverage for the church is. Directly ask your agent: "Do we have D&O coverage, and if so, for how much?"

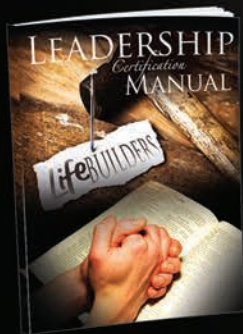
Conclusion

While this might not be the most riveting subject that you can consider in church operation, make sure that you cover the question of Director's and Officer's liability insurance for your church when you review your church's coverage!

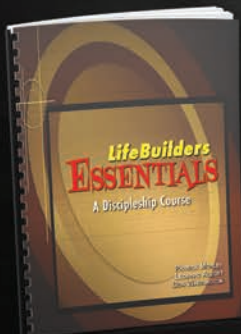
Dennis Watkins is legal counsel for the Church of God. The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. ■

Special thanks to Grace Tinsley and Kayla Foley for their assistance in writing this article.

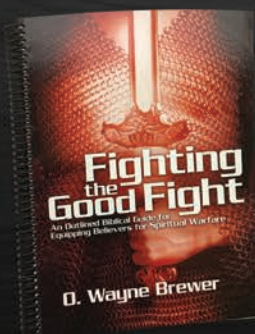
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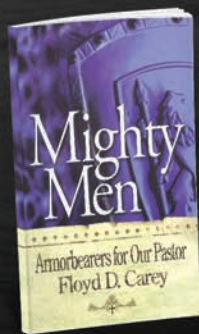
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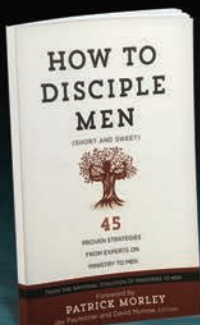


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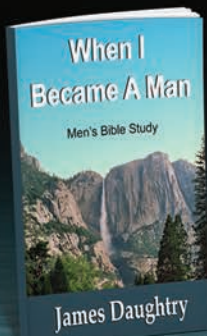
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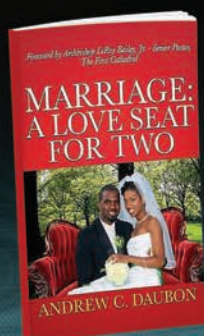
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If you look at the newspaper headlines or watch the evening news, there is much to be fretful about. For example:

- “Home Sales Fall for Sixth Straight Month.”
- “Investors in Bed Bath & Beyond Sell Stake, Stirs Stock Frenzy.”
- “Wall Street Bets the Fed Is Bluffing in Inflation Game.”

These were just a few of the headlines on one recent day in a leading financial

newspaper. No doubt, there is much turmoil in the financial market, and no one seems to have a clue as to where this may all end.

According to recent data, inflation has moderated some, but we are still seeing price increases in excess of 9 percent. For low-income consumers and those on fixed incomes, such as retirees, inflation is devastating to their budgets. Most in these categories do not have extra savings that they can tap into as the cost of gas, groceries, and rent climb higher and higher.

If the price of goods has gone up more than 9 percent from this same time a year ago, and your income is basically the same as it was last year, you have experienced a reduction of almost 10 percent in your ability to buy the necessities of life. For most people, this increased inflation is costing them a minimum of \$150–\$200 per month. For higher spending families, the costs have increased in excess of \$500 per month over buying the same goods they bought last year. While some families had savings and money set aside they could dip into, most families have had to reduce what they purchase in order to survive.

For those on Social Security, partial help may be on the way. It is expected that the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to Social Security for next year may be the highest



granted in multiple decades. Not since the early 1980s has there been a Social Security COLA that has exceeded 9 percent. The highest COLA ever granted was 14.3 percent in 1980.

Although the 2023 Social Security COLA will not be announced until October 2022, most predict that it will be between 9 percent and 10 percent, based upon the current rate of inflation. If that prediction holds true, the average Social Security recipient will receive an extra \$150 a month, or about \$1800 more per year.

While Social Security has an adjustable COLA based upon the consumer price index, most pension plans, including the Ministers' Retirement Plan (MRP), does not have such an inflation indexed increase. The bigger issue, according to a recently released report from the U. S. Government Accountability Office, is that 48 percent of households headed by someone aged 55 and over had no retirement savings at all. To further complicate the issue, most of these households have no personal savings, or those savings accounts are extremely limited, to cover the higher prices at the grocery store and elsewhere, prices that are not likely to drop even if inflation rates cool down.

Although rising prices and inflation have been problems that retirees and potential retirees have worried about for years, the reality has been that we have experienced relatively flat to nonexistent inflation over the last four decades. However, current excessive price increases have caused many potential retirees to debate their future plans.

So, if you are looking to retire in the next few years facing the current inflationary fears, what steps should you take?

First, you may want to delay your plans for a few years to build up more in your retirement account and hopefully allow inflation to moderate some. Waiting until you are eligible for full retirement benefits from Social Security should certainly be considered.

Second, you may want to make sure that you have sufficient savings, in addition to your retirement account, to weather any inflationary periods over the next few years.

Third, you may want to make sure that all large purchases, including vehicles and your home, are paid for before going into retirement so that you have extra income to deal with rising prices in the grocery store and at the gas pump.

Finally, the three-legged stool approach to a satisfactory retirement, including Social Security/Medicare, retirement plan, and personal savings, has never been more important. If either of your "legs" are missing or are not carrying their weight, it will be difficult in a high inflationary environment to survive, let alone thrive, in retirement.

Never has it been more important to prepare for your future. Remember, if you do not prepare for your future, no one else will.

Art Rhodes

*President and CEO
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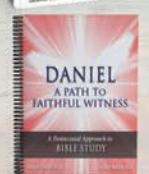
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VOL 1	VOL 2	VOL 3	
<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
4 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks	4 Weeks
"Principles & Power of Intercessory Prayer"	"A Reconciled People" (Living in Harmony God/People)	"A Shepherded People" (Following Jesus as Shepherd)	"A Disciplined People" (Understanding Spiritual Disciplines)
(Chapter 6 - 7 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES
	VOL 4	VOL 6	VOL 5
<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>
4 Weeks	5 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks
"Understanding & Destroying Strongholds"	"Galatians - Path To Freedom" (12 wks) . . . or "Daniel - Faithful Witness Bible Study" (10 wks) . . . or "Romans Vol. 1 - Path To Transformation" (10 wks) . . . AND 1 or 2 Weeks, "Surviving Spiritual Abortion" (Chapter 10 from "Fighting the Good Fight")		
(Chapter 8-9 from "Fighting The Good Fight")			

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DOCTRINE AND POLITY
LEE ROY MARTIN

The Role of Repentance in the Christian Life

The Pentecostal movement is diverse, and the pursuit of holiness takes on a variety of shapes; but, for the most part, Pentecostal believers are expected to resist sin and to practice a lifestyle of obedience. However, in some sectors of Pentecostalism, post-conversion repentance is not encouraged. Also, the recent hyper-grace movement has downplayed the need for repentance, teaching that all sins were forgiven by Christ at the cross; and, therefore, repentance is a redundant act-of-works righteousness. Furthermore, some preaching sounds more like lessons in self-help and positive thinking. If these sermons are to be believed, Christians have the power to make themselves better through their own efforts. The Bible teaches that any genuine growth or spiritual transformation begins in repentance and in our admission of powerlessness. The Lord encourages us, however, when He says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9 NKJV).

We normally associate repentance with the initial experience of conversion, and we should (see Acts 2:38). We tell unbelievers to confess their sins so that God

will forgive them. However, the Bible teaches us that repentance is also needed in the Church and in the lives of individual Christians. In the New Testament, the call to repentance is addressed to the unbeliever (see Acts 17:30), to the Jew (see Acts 2:38), and to the Christian alike (see Revelation 2:5). For each group, the Greek word for “repent” is the same (*metanoeo*). True repentance includes the act of confessing one’s sins, whether one is an unbeliever (see Mark 1:5), a Jew (see Matthew 3:2-7), or a Christian (see 1 John 1:9). The repentance expressed in Psalm 51; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; and Revelation 2:5 is not the repentance of unbelievers who are turning to God for the first time; it is the repentance of believers. Although confession is certainly required of sinners, the Bible teaches that believers also must confess any sins that they commit after becoming a Christian. In what we call “The Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus teaches us to pray, “Forgive us our sins . . .” (Luke 11:4).

The Church of God Teaching on Repentance

The Church of God has affirmed the importance of repentance and confession. The “Declaration of Faith” states, “We believe . . . 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." While this statement clearly requires unbelievers to repent, the fact that repentance is "necessary for the forgiveness of sins" might also suggest that Christians who commit sin must repent if they hope to obtain forgiveness from God. The New Testament assures Christians that they can live in obedience to God. For example, John declares, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1 NKJV). However, *if* a believer sins, they must turn to God in repentance (1 John 2:2). The role of repentance in the Christian life is clarified in the "Practical Commitments of the Church of God", where we find the following: "Through confession of our sins to God we are assured of divine forgiveness" (1 John 1:9-2:2). The sharing of our confession with other believers provides the opportunity to request prayer and to bear one another's burdens (see Galatians 6:2; James 5:16). Confession signifies the acknowledgment of our sins, the admission of guilt. In the Bible, the word "confession" is a component of repentance, and it is often used interchangeably with "repentance" (see Leviticus 16:21; Nehemiah 1:6-9; Matthew 3:2-6; Acts 19:18).

Repentance of Believers in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were the covenant people of God, but they were instructed to confess their sins (see Leviticus 5:5; 1 Kings 8:47; Jeremiah 25:5; Ezekiel 14:6). Nehemiah is a great

example. He was in captivity, serving as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. He received news from Jerusalem that the city was in great distress and that the walls were broken down. The bad news drove Nehemiah to his knees, and in Nehemiah 1:4-10, he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. He prayed, "LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, *You* who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with those who love *You* and observe *Your* commandments, please let *Your* ear be attentive and *Your* eyes open, that *You* may hear the prayer of *Your* servant which I pray before *You* now, day and night, for the children of Israel *Your* servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against *You*. Both my father's house and I have sinned" (NKJV). Nehemiah confessed his own sins, the sins of his family, and the sins of Israel. (Compare Nehemiah's confession with that of Daniel 9:3-20).

Repentance of Believers in the New Testament

In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul rebuked the church and pointed out several areas where the believers were falling short. When Paul writes his second letter to the same church, he states, "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:9 NKJV). His rebuke in his first letter made them sorrowful, and their sorrow led them to repentance. Even though Paul's Corinthian readers were Christians, they needed to repent of their sinful behavior.



Scripture encourages us to confess our sins to God, and in some cases, to each other. We read in James 5:16, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (NKJV). There are two positive results from our practice of confession. First, when we confess our sins to God, he forgives us and frees us from the power and bondage of guilt and shame that sin generates. Second, the sharing of our confession with other believers provides the opportunity to request prayer and to bear one another's burdens. James instructs us to confess our sins to brothers and sisters in the Lord who can be trusted to maintain confidentiality. These faithful and mature believers can intercede on our behalf. The result of this confession and prayer is that we will “be healed.” The word “healed” suggests forgiveness, transformation, and restoration.

The most prominent New Testament call for confession is found in 1 John. John the Elder writes to the Church, saying:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1 John 1:8-2:2 NKJV).

In these few verses, John highlights several very important concepts regarding confession. First, John is writing to Christians; therefore, Christians are expected to confess any sins in their lives. Second, John encourages the believer *not to sin*. Third, “If” we sin, we can rely on Jesus Christ to intercede for us with the Father. Fourth, our forgiveness is based upon the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

Two factors make repentance necessary for the Christian. The first is the believer's growth in grace and knowledge. As we “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:18 NKJV) and as we pursue holiness in our lives (see Hebrews 12:14), we will ask God to search our hearts for anything that is displeasing to him (see Psalms 139:23). Then we will confess anything that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention. The second is the occasion of known sin in the life of the believer (see 1 John 1:9). Every Christian should be careful to avoid falling into any of the works of the flesh (see Galatians 5:16-26). If we discover a root of pride, bitterness, envy, or any other work of the flesh, we must immediately repent. Rather than a one-time event, salvation is a journey that involves both crisis and development. As we mature on our journey, regular searching of the heart and repenting should be a way of living in Christ. It is essential for renewal, and life that is not in continual renewal will die. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, urged his followers to examine themselves daily and to repent of any sins of commission or omission. Consider these six excerpts from an early list of Wesley's questions:



1. Did the Bible live in me today?
2. Am I enjoying prayer?
3. When did I last speak to someone else of my faith?
4. Do I pray about the money I spend?
5. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
6. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?

Wesley's questions were not intended to make the Christian life difficult or to create condemnation in the lives of believers. Wesley knew that God's grace is sufficient to forgive our sins, to overcome our weaknesses, and to keep us on track spiritually. These questions will help us grow in holiness, follow close to God, and become more and more like Jesus Christ, our example. The practice of repentance as a part of continual renewal may be illustrated by entries from the diary of early Pentecostal leader A.J. Tomlinson. On July 9, 1901, Tomlinson writes, "We had a very special meeting last night, which lasted until 2:00 A. M. today. . . . [We] confessed our sins, begged forgiveness of each other. . . .;" and on Dec. 4, he records the following: "We have been having some confession meetings and we are having a general sifting. One person has been asked to leave the work. Others are searching their lives" (pp. 20, 29).

Corporate Repentance

Corporate repentance is a significant topic that shows up in Scripture (see Joel 2:12-19). Although individual repentance

is demanded by Scripture, corporate repentance is called for with equal severity and should be practiced by the Church. After all, in His prophetic messages to the churches of Asia Minor, Jesus seven times calls for repentance (see Revelation 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19). The church at Ephesus is told to repent because they left their "first love" (2:4-5). The church at Pergamos must repent because they tolerated false teachers (2:14-16). The church at Thyatira is called to repentance also because they allowed false teachers and because they permitted sexual immorality (2:20-22). The church at Sardis is commanded to repent of their spiritual deadness (3:1-3). Finally, the Laodicean believers must repent because they are lukewarm (3:15-19). It is the love of God that causes him to call his Church to repentance. Jesus says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (3:19 NKJV).

Pentecostal Practices That Facilitate Repentance

The ongoing life of repentance is facilitated by several Pentecostal practices, including footwashing, the Lord's Supper, and the altar call that may follow preaching. Footwashing, as John Christopher Thomas has shown in his groundbreaking work *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, is the Pentecostal ordinance that speaks most directly to post-conversion sin. Thomas states that the footwashing in John 13 "signifies the disciples' spiritual cleansing for a continued relationship with Jesus. As such, the footwashing functions as an extension of



the disciples' baptism in that it signifies continual cleansing from the sin acquired (after baptism) through life in a sinful world" (p. 152).

The Lord's Supper provides the opportunity for believers to 'examine' themselves (see 1 Corinthians 11:28) and to repent of any known sin. Repentance can also be a response to the preaching of the Word, as the minister gives opportunity for the congregation to pray at the altar or to kneel at their seats and seek the face of God. Believers may also respond in other ways to the minister's call to repentance (see Luke 3:10-14). Even when reading it privately, the Word of God brings us again and again to moments of repentance, times in which a truth in the Scriptures stands over against us as that word of reproof or correction (see 2 Timothy 3:16).

Conclusion

God's grace is sufficient to keep us from sinning; but if we sin, we can confess our sins and Jesus Christ will be our advocate with the Father. If you realize that you have committed a sin, confess it immediately and ask for God's forgiveness. Genuine confession will bring restoration.

You may want to schedule a regular prayer time when you will ask God to reveal any areas of your life that are displeasing to him. You could use John Wesley's list of questions, and you could make a list of the most troublesome temptations that you face. Then you can repent and seek God's strength for victory over these areas.

For Further Reading

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

TIM HILL, GENERAL OVERSEER

A Pastor's Antidote for Social Media Toxicity

A New Digital Landscape

As a pastor, I embraced the opportunity for our church to have our services televised. As a result, the community had an open window into our church every week. I've never been one to shy away from difficult subjects and certainly never attempted to present our worship expressions as anything but Pentecostal in every sense of the word. As a result, I would occasionally get the anonymous letter scolding me for my presentation of scripture and doctrine. Although it was a very rare thing, I even got some scorching hate mail here and there. For the most part, everything was tame, and our embracing media ministry had more benefits than curses. That was over 30 years ago and yes, times were changing, but there was still a predominant and civil respect toward ministry. Even when folks might disagree with a minister, the respect meter seldom dipped below the average approval range, but the explosion of non-stop social media changed all that. Like never before, ministers are targets for the rapid-fire bullets of criticism and vitriol that flies off of the end of busy fingertips typing away their emotions on a digital keyboard.

In Proverbs 18:21 we read that the power of life and death rests within the tongue. However, as Pastor Lewis Maklin of Holy Trinity Missionary Baptist Church observed, in the age of technology, the computer keyboard has become an extension of the

tongue. *"Some folks will display 'keyboard courage' in attempt to vilify, smear and damage others' characters. And the truth is, any attempt to determine motive behind an individual's malicious attack is really a waste of time and energy."*

Navigating the Toxicity

There is increasing toxicity on social media platforms, and it is occurring with much more frequency. It is often referred to as cyberbullying and it includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false or mean content or statements about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else to cause embarrassment or humiliation. For too many it does not matter if it is fact or fiction, unless it impacts them.

Knowing how to pastor in the age of social media can be bewildering. It certainly comes with opportunities, but it also has its perils. Baptist elder and writer, Jonathan Leeman wrote the following: *"Social media places a Gutenberg Press in the palm of everyone's hand—the smart phone. It makes accessible to everyone the publishing industry. It levels the playing field. A person's personal Facebook post may appear right next to a post from The New York Times. A disgruntled church member's tweet may appear right next to the presidents. By their appearance in the feed, no tweet or post possesses more intrinsic authority than another. All offer an equal claim to defining reality. A woman might spend years*



earning a Ph.D. in a field, but one clever word of snark from the man who has read one article on the topic divides the crowd and leaves her looking frivolous.” (www.9marks.org/article/pastors-on-social-media/)

Social media requires no accountability before the “Post” button is hit. Every man is his own editor. In a normal journalism playing field, writers wait for an editor to read their work. This means any flash of emotion that compelled a person to write something can at least be tempered with the review of another set of eyes. Yet, social media allows individuals to instantaneously announce to the world every flurry of rage and irritation. The medium affords no checks and balances. Unfortunately, this is the world pastors find themselves contending with today.

So, what should a pastor do? What is the acceptable response?

Acceptable Response

Lewis Maklin wrote further in his recent article, *“Remember a hater is simply a confused admirer. Trust God, period. If God be for you, who can be against you? Remember, they said all kinds of malicious things about Jesus, including lying on Him in attempts to destroy His reputation, undermine His influence and tarnish His character. Yet, we all know how that turned out. Your attackers are opportunists. In our own lives, we must rise above the issue or distraction of our own ‘confused admirers.’ Admittedly, that can be a challenge, especially when mean-spirited people are simply exposing the nature of their own wicked heart.”*

To be sure, technology is morally neutral. Social media technology can be used for the purposes of righteousness or wickedness, like any technology. A person can tweet or post on Facebook for the genuine good of others, exercising a proper restraint on themselves, accepting feedback humbly

and graciously, and rejoicing in the victories and virtues of others. Yet every technology offers particular temptations and can encourage certain potentialities to moral, willful, fallen human beings. Granting everyone with Internet access a potentially global platform, opens up public speech to the foolish and the wise both.

Regardless of the size of your public platform, as a pastor, you are a target of someone’s social media scorn and your options for response are few and, in some cases, may be completely nonexistent. Some people just believe that their right to free speech is so broadly absolute that they have a free pass to say anything about anyone at any time on any platform. Thankfully, there are laws that do govern some very specific concerns but all in all, endurance and time are your best defenses.

Remain Faithful

English author, Evelyn Beatrice Hall is often quoted as saying, *“I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”* However, someone else had another version of that statement that went like this; *“I may not agree with what you’re saying, but I will defend to the death your right to make a fool of yourself by saying it.”*

It seems that this is pretty much where it lands with the slings and arrows hurled by social media. People are going to basically say what they please. When they do, the Lord will fight your battle. Don’t allow yourself to be held hostage to someone’s opinion and scorn. Their opinion is not your reality. Stay the course and remain faithful to your call. Preach on, pursue your dream and fulfill your vision.

God is with you!

Timothy M. Hill

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Church of God HIGHLIGHTS

Abbreviated news from faithnews.cc between May 1 and September 1, 2022

South Georgia Hosts Camp Meeting on Burned Tabernacle Location



*Tim Hill preaches under the tent
at South Georgia Camp Meeting*

June 6, 2022—Tifton, Ga.—Less than two months after a fire completely destroyed the iconic South Georgia Church of God Tabernacle, thousands gathered on the site to celebrate what God has in store for the future.

On Sunday night, June 5, (the first night) the South Georgia camp meeting was staged on the concrete footprint of the previous tabernacle that burned to the ground on April 21. An enormous tent was erected, more than 2,600 chairs placed and more brought lawn chairs to enjoy several activities harkening back to the days when many Church of God camp meetings were outdoors under a tent or open-air tabernacle.

Billed as an “Awaken Tent Revival Service under the T.L. Lowery Canvas Cathedral,” the special kickoff celebration of the 2022 camp meeting proclaimed the scripture from Haggai 2:9: “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former.” It featured vials of ashes from the tabernacle as souvenirs and opportunities to purchase bricks toward reconstruction of the facility.

The South Georgia tabernacle was built 50 years ago in 1972 under the leadership of Dr. Ray H. Hughes, who was state overseer before Georgia was divided into two sections. The building was unoccupied at the time of the April 21 fire and no one was injured. It was to be the site of “Junior Talent” that weekend with competition in several categories. When firefighters extinguished the blaze it was apparent the worship center that had hosted decades of camp meetings, youth camps, and other events was a total loss.

“We are here one last time, not to mourn, but to worship,” stated state overseer Gary Lewis. “God’s not finished yet!”

The service took place on Pentecost Sunday, and the special guest speaker was Church of God General Overseer Dr. Tim Hill.

“Out of these ashes God is raising an uncommon anointing,” Hill said. “He is getting down to the very foundation of ministry in this region, raising up the walls of stability, even to the rooftop that will



point people to the Lord Jesus Christ as a witness and testimony of what God is going to do . . . there is an unusual anointing on this state team . . . and there's an unusual anointing here . . . watch it unfold and see what God's about to do in this region."

General Overseer Issues Prayer Alert for Ukraine

June 23, 2022—The Church of God Division of Education's Standing Committee on Certification voted earlier this month to recognize four new schools within the Church of God.

More than 120 Bible schools and educational institutions associated with Church of God congregations and organizations exist around the globe. They consist of newly established certificate programs (Level I) to fully accredited institutions that offer graduate level programs, such as Lee University and the Pentecostal Theological Seminary. The four newly certified schools are located in the Caribbean, Africa, and the United States, and represent a variety of cultures and ethnicities.

Level I schools are usually just beginning, with a one-year, part-time schedule, and a limited curriculum. They are usually smaller schools and offer only a certificate for completion of a course of study.

Schools recently awarded Level I status are:

- The Bermuda National School of Ministry, which offers Certificate In Ministerial Studies (CIMS) courses;

- The New Testament Church of God School of Ministry in the Cayman Islands, utilizing CIMS courses and the Division of Education's MOBILIZE;
- The Maranatha Training Center (MTC), based in Dallas, Texas, which uses a variety of online courses from other schools, along with the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) and CIMS courses, to train the leaders of the Romanian-speaking congregations of the Church of God in the USA.

The Church of God International Bible College, based in Cape Town, South Africa, was awarded Level II status and is primarily online.

Ukrainian Overseer Bestowed 'Order of the Towel'



General Overseer Tim Hill prays with Ukrainian Overseer Alexie Demodovach

July 27, 2022—San Antonio, Texas—During a special time of pre-Assembly prayer on Sunday, July 24, a traditional



servant award, The Order of the Towel, was presented to Bishop Alexie Demodovach, Church of God overseer in war-torn Ukraine.

The award has been a unique honor at previous General Assemblies. Past recipients have included Peter Thomas, African field director; the late Margaret Gaines and Ed Heil, both missionaries; John Ashcroft, former United States Attorney General; Dr. Robert Fisher, former assistant general overseer; and Pastor Carter Conlon of Times Square Church.

General Overseer Tim Hill recently made a surreptitious visit to the European nation to be with the Bishop and other leaders and assure them of international prayer support and concern. Hill was also on hand to present the award to Demodovach, along with Dr. Steve Darnell, field director for Europe, and Dr. Tom Rosson, educational director.

"It is fitting," Hill noted, "to call attention, with this award, to those who are in harm's way."

Special Offering Helps Replenish Disaster Relief Fund

August 5, 2022—San Antonio, TX—First Assistant General Overseer for the Church of God, Raymond Culpepper, who also serves as liaison to the Division of Care Ministries for the Church of God, made an appeal to the Church of God General Assembly on Wednesday, July 27 during the evening service.

Culpepper shared a special video, spotlighting three independent benevolent

agencies connected with the Church of God: Operation Compassion, Men and Women of Action, and God's Pit Crew. All have made an everlasting impact on the lives of thousands through assistance with cleanup, relief, restoration, and rebuilding, following natural disasters.

"Operation Compassion alone gave \$97 million in gifts-in-kind last year," Culpepper explained. "They represent one of the most vital ways we (Church of God) demonstrate care to the world."

Culpepper explained that while the three agencies operate independently and receive thousands in donations every year, the Church of God assists through a Disaster Relief Fund, available for critical response in the event of a disaster.

"This fund is underwater," Culpepper stated in his appeal. "We want to be able to be one of the first to respond and be there for our people, especially as we head into the heart of hurricane and tornado season. But we can't do that when the funds are not there."

Culpepper then issued a challenge to all delegates to give \$100 in the offering if their way had been paid to attend the Assembly. The offering received on Wednesday came in at \$66,535, nearly two-thirds toward the goal of \$100,000.

Anyone wishing to give toward the goal of replenishing the fund, please designate any offerings to "Church of God Disaster Relief Fund." Donations can be mailed to Church of God Disaster Relief, P.O. Box 2430, Cleveland, TN, 37370-2430.



A portion of the crowd at the 44th General Assembly in Indianapolis. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jack Bridges.

Next General Assembly Set for Indianapolis

August 23, 2022—In less than two years, the Church of God is headed to the beautiful midwestern city of Indianapolis, Indiana, for the 79th International General Assembly in 2024.

Prior to the Covid-19 shutdown, the 78th International General Assembly held last month in San Antonio was scheduled to take place in Indianapolis July 21-24, 2020, at the Indianapolis Convention Center. In an agreement with City of Indianapolis officials, the Church of God will make up for the postponement when the Assembly is conducted in the city on July 8-12, 2024.

This will be the fifth time the General Assembly has been held in Indianapolis and the first since 2006. It was also the site in 2002, 1996, and was first held there in 1952.

Seventy years ago, the venue for the 44th General Assembly was the Indianapolis Fairgrounds where thousands gathered on August 11-17, 1952. A panoramic photo of the event shows thousands of women in stylish hats and men in their Sunday best.

The city of Indianapolis has changed dramatically in the 70 years since that 1952 gathering. When the Church of God was there for the 71st General Assembly in 2006 the venue was the RCA Dome and adjoining convention center. Since then, the RCA Dome has been razed and the convention center expanded into a portion of the space. The 2024 Assembly will be conducted in the enlarged convention center. Restaurants are abundant and several hotels are connected via elevated skywalks. The Circle Centre Mall adjoins the convention center.

Registration for the 79th International General Assembly is set to begin in January 2024. ■

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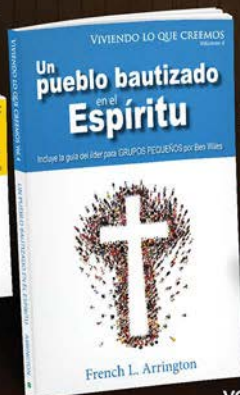
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