

WINTER  
2020



# engage

A Journal for  
Church of God  
MINISTRIES

## IN THIS ISSUE

Embracing a Passionate  
Generation

The Way Forward Into God's  
Future Mission

Seven Ways to Bridge the  
Generation Gap in the Church

Finding Hope in the Midst  
of Hopelessness

WINTER 2020  
VOL. 16, NO. 1

# engage

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# The Year of the Assembly

**J**ANUARY of even numbered years has special meaning for many of us here at the International Offices. It signals, “the Year of the Assembly.” From here on, it’s full speed ahead until delegates gather from around the globe—this year in Indianapolis.

It starts with the release this month of the forms for registration and housing. It first appears in the *Evangel* and then online. This year the official website for all things General Assembly is [www.ga20.org](http://www.ga20.org). Here at the start, there is limited information, but more is coming, including a detailed schedule, featured speakers, exhibit information, and other items of interest.

Over the next few weeks and months, departments and ministries will be submitting paperwork for events, exhibitors will be signing on, and convention center details will be ironed out. By April, the International Executive Council will finalize the Agenda for the General Council, and it will be distributed for the 90-day period prior to the Assembly.

There’s a lot of work to be done between now and July 21, 2020. Perhaps the most important task is for all God’s people to pray for His anointing and guidance in this, our most important biennial gathering. ■

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

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■ by LORINDA ROBERTS

# EMBRACING A PASSIONATE GENERATION

**A** NEW GENERATION is among us. If you have not already met them, you should.

They are a self-confident, passionate generation. These young people, born roughly between 1995 and 2015, are known as Generation Z. If we, as a Church, are willing to embrace Gen Z and their strengths, we will be better aligned to see lifelong followers of Christ

who are making a difference in their world. Furthermore, as we learn to engage these passionate young people, we gain greater confidence that we will not see a mass exodus from the Church in the upcoming years.

So how does the local church engage this generation? First, get to know them and try to understand them, not only as a generation, but what is more important, as individuals. Second, be open to learning *from* them.

Third, expect something great as you join them on their journey of transformation.

## **PASSIONATE**

One of the key attributes of Generation Z is passion. They are passionate about many things. As a Church, we have the opportunity to not only embrace these areas, but also to help direct their passions toward godly endeavors.

### ***Passionate About Relationships***

Gen Z is passionate about **relationships**. With the rapid increase of technology comes anxiety, fear, depression, and loneliness. Though they connect with friends on social media, they still have a deep desire and need for real, personal relationships. Thus, the church should provide life-on-life, face-to-face relationships with them.

The local church can embrace this generation through intergenerational ministries. In these settings, we intentionally create opportunities for meaningful interaction to take place between the generations. As generations learn to live out their faith together, relationships thrive.

One avenue of building relationships with Gen Z is through a mutual mentoring ministry. What is mutual mentoring? Mutual mentoring is *not* the older generations teaching the younger generations everything they know. On the contrary, mutual mentoring is creating a warm, friendly environment where mutual

learning takes place. Intentional and intimate relationships grow when there is mutual respect and reciprocity. One of the defining characteristics of this generation is they want to be heard. Give them an opportunity to speak and then listen to them.

### ***Passionate About Making a Difference***

Gen Z is passionate about **making a difference**. This generation desires to do something important, valuable, and significant. They hope to be part of a cause that matters. The church has the opportunity to tap into this particular passion by helping them embrace the most significant cause that we are a part of: The Great Commission. When we make disciples who, in turn, make disciples for Christ, lives are changed, and ultimately a community is changed.

Further, the local church can partner with Gen Z's passion of serving and caring for the community and world. For example, the church can listen and see what causes interest Gen Z and join them in their efforts to better the community. Let us walk side-by-side with them, including them in *our* efforts and joining them in *their* efforts. This will situate the church better to make a difference both locally and globally. Additionally, our care and concern for Gen Z is actualized by our actions to join them in their causes.

### ***Passionate About Education***

Generation Z is passionate about **education** and **success**. They are extremely career-driven, determined, and tech-savvy.

The church can embrace this passion by focusing its attention toward Gen Z in the area of vocational discipleship. By integrating faith and discipleship with their chosen/potential occupation, the church can engage Gen Z with positive discipleship efforts.

Vocational discipleship is similar to an apprenticeship ministry. In these intergenerational ministries, the local church aligns young people interested in particular careers to successful professionals in the church. Then, the professionals share how they incorporate personal faith into their daily lives and careers. Gen Z appreciates hearing real-life stories; thus, as professionals share relevant stories and struggles, Generation Z learns to view education and career as a high calling, with greater purpose, and more than an avenue for monetary achievement.

### ***Passionate About People***

Generation Z is passionate about **all people**. This generation thinks about issues differently. They are a diverse generation who strongly dislikes hypocrisy. They have a variety of friends and they passionately love them. The church has the opportunity to figure out how to embrace Gen Z's love for people.

One way the local church can do this is by creating safe spaces for young people to ask their touch questions and for deep conversation to take place. We need to routinely provide this safe area for Gen Z to wrestle with their difficult questions without

fear of being judged. This generation places a high value on authenticity. They need a place to belong, before they have a place to believe. As we give them space, practice empathy by entering into the world of their feelings. They may struggle a little longer with issues than we did, but that is okay. In a warm atmosphere, respond with grace, love, and support. Model a passion for God and people. It is here where Gen Z's biblical worldview will begin to take shape.

### **HOPEFUL**

This generation is optimistic and hopeful about their future. As we embrace their passions, raise our expectations of them, and guide them on their journey of identity formation, we too can be hopeful and optimistic to experience a local church full of dedicated, lifelong followers of Christ, known as Generation Z. ■

*Lorinda Roberts is an assistant professor of youth and family ministry and an ordained Minister*

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*If you are interested in learning more about Generation Z and how the Church can embrace them, consider these resources: So the Next Generation Will Know by McDowell and Wallace; Growing Young by Powell, Mulder, and Griffin; Generation Z by Barna Research; Faith for Exiles by Kinnaman and Matlock; Meet Generation Z by White; and Generation Z Unfiltered by Elmore.*



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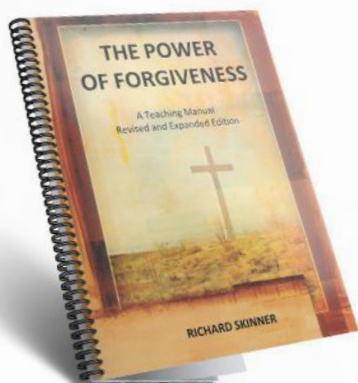
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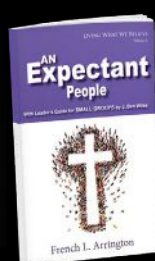
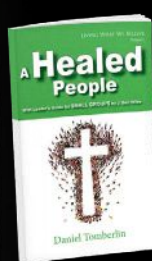
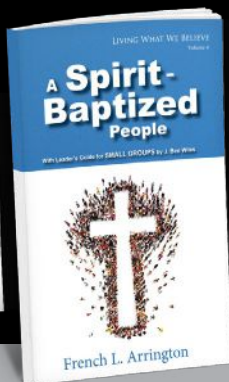
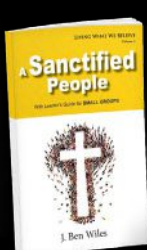
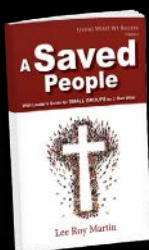
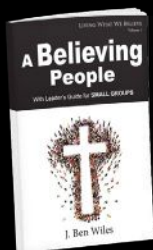
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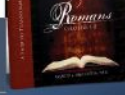
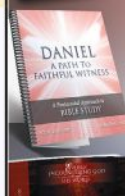
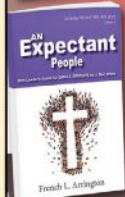
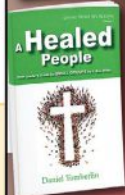
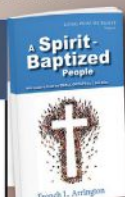
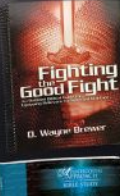
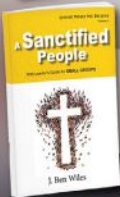
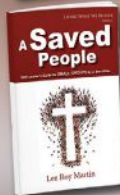
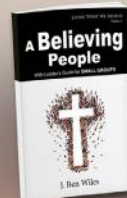
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<p><b>MAY</b> 4 Weeks</p> <p><b>"Understanding &amp; Destroying Strongholds"</b></p> <p>From Chapters 8 &amp; 9 of <i>Fighting the Good Fight</i></p>	<p><b>JUNE</b> 4 Weeks</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK A:</b> "Spiritual Dynamics of Submission &amp; Authority" Chapters 11 from F.T.G.F. (2 weeks) and begin <i>The Power of Forgiveness</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK B:</b> "Overcoming Our Flesh Nature" Ch. 5 from F.T.G.F. (2 weeks) and begin <i>Book of Daniel</i> (2 of 10)</p>	<p><b>JULY</b> 5 Weeks</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK A:</b> "The Power of Forgiveness" From <i>The Power of Forgiveness</i> (5 of 7 weeks)</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK B:</b> <i>The Book of Daniel</i> (5 of 10 weeks)</p>	<p><b>AUGUST</b> 4 Weeks</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK A:</b> "Our Spiritual Gifts" From Ch. 12 &amp; 13 of F.T.G.F.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>SUMMER TRACK B:</b> <i>The Book of Daniel</i> (1 of 10 weeks) and "Put on Your Armor" and "Take the Offensive" from Ch. 3 &amp; 4 of F.T.G.F.</p>
<p><b>SEPTEMBER</b> 5 Weeks</p> <p><b>"A Spirit-Baptized People"</b> (What is Holy Spirit Baptism?)</p> <p>Living What We Believe Series—Volume Four</p>	<p><b>OCTOBER</b> 4 Weeks</p> <p><b>"A Healed People"</b> (Divine Healing/Sacraments)</p> <p>Living What We Believe Series—Volume Five</p>	<p><b>NOVEMBER</b> 4 Weeks</p> <p><b>"An Expectant People"</b> (Christ's Coming/End Times)</p> <p>Living What We Believe Series—Volume Six</p>	<p><b>DECEMBER</b> 3 Weeks</p> <p><b>"Victorious Spiritual Warfare"</b></p> <p>From Chapters 1 &amp; 2 of <i>Fighting the Good Fight</i> 2 weeks off—Christmas</p>

ALL RESOURCES AVAILABLE: adultdiscipleshipcog.com 888.766.9009

All listed resources available in Español



# DON'T FREAK OUT WHEN YOU'RE IN TRANSITION

**T**HREE YEARS AGO this month, my wife and I packed our belongings and made the biggest move of our lives. After living in Florida for 24 years, we pulled up our roots and relocated to Georgia. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done because I'm a sentimental guy who gets very attached to people and places. Yet, I found extra grace for this transition because I knew I was following the Holy Spirit.

Counselors say relocation is one of the most stressful things in life—ranking right up there with the death of a loved one. It's a huge combination of stressors—selling a house, buying or renting a new house, hiring movers,

leaving friends, and stepping into the dark unknown. Not fun!

Little did I know that the stress of this transition would be made worse by the loss of my father in 2018 and the loss of my wife's mother just two weeks ago. To make things worse, my own mother is in hospice care now. Deaths or illness of family members can make us feel rootless and unsettled.

Perhaps you are about to step into a transition, or you are already in the middle

■ by J. LEE GRADY



of one. I'm comforted by the fact that the Bible is full of people who were directed by God to move. Abraham, the father of our faith, began his spiritual odyssey when the Lord said: "Go from your country . . . to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1b).

When God wanted to do something important, like start a new nation that would serve Him, it began with a relocation. Spiritual blessings often aren't realized until someone moves! Moses had to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. David had to move to Jerusalem. And Jesus' last words to His disciples were about moving to foreign countries.

If you are in a season of transition, consider these helpful steps:

**1. Be brave.** When Joshua was preparing to relocate the people of Israel to Canaan, God said three times: "Be strong and courageous" (Joshua 1:6a, 7a, 9b). Moving requires a leap of faith, and doubters always get cold feet. Has God given you a big promise about the land you are about to possess? Don't be surprised if the devil tries to make you fearful. Take a deep breath, resist fear, and forge ahead.

**2. Take one step at a time.** Moving isn't just one decision; it's a tangled mess of many decisions that can overwhelm you. You don't have to handle everything at once. The Bible says you are not on your own; you don't have to figure out your relocation plan by yourself. You have a Shepherd, and He is good. He leads you "beside still waters" and He guides you "in

paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:2-3). Trust your Shepherd's leading. He will make your transition peaceful.

**3. Let go of the old.** When God wanted to bless Naomi, He told her to leave the forsaken land of Moab and move to Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth pledged to go with her, but her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, stayed behind. Orpah couldn't tear herself away from her culture, even though God was doing good things for His people in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:14-16).

Sometimes when God calls us to a new place in the Spirit, we discover that we are hindered by many soulish distractions. You must love Jesus more than you love your comfort zone. It's good to have roots in a place, but you must never let those roots become stronger than your willingness to follow God anywhere.

I have also learned that since I began putting down roots in my new town, the process of "settling" takes time. You don't immediately find the right church and the right relationships. Don't let feelings of unsettledness cause you to rush and make wrong choices. Be expectant. God has new things for you, but you must wait patiently for Him.

**4. Cry if you need to.** The day I left Florida in 2016, I walked through my house one last time and locked the front door. Then I sobbed in my car as I remembered playing with my young daughters in the backyard, hanging Christmas decorations on the shrubs and burying our family dog in the backyard. Then, after my father died,

I cried again when I sold my parents' home and said goodbye to all those memories. It's totally normal to feel sadness when we move. The best way to process your feelings is to let the tears flow.

**5. Be open to God's detours.** One important lesson I learned in my transition is that we must never lock ourselves into "our" plan. You may sense the Lord leading you to leave where you are, but when you begin moving to your new destination, God may redirect you. The apostle Paul was heading to Rome to preach the gospel, but a shipwreck took him to Malta—where he led an unscheduled revival. Don't be so headstrong about your destination that God can't gently nudge you in a different direction.

**6. Expect miracles.** When I knew for sure God was calling my wife and me to Georgia, we asked our friends to pray with us. I shared seven specific prayer requests, and the first item on the list was: "Quick sale of our house." Guess what? Our house sold in less than 24 hours—to the first people who walked in the door! Since then, all but the last request on my list has been answered.

Moving can be a thrilling adventure when you invite God into the process. When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. When He calls you to leave the old and step into the new, He propels you to a new spiritual level. ■

*J. Lee Grady is a former editor of Charisma magazine for 11 years.*



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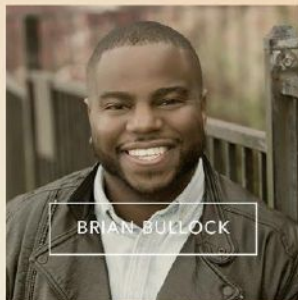
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A photograph of a stage performance. Several people are on stage, some with their arms raised. In the background, a large, illuminated cross is visible against a dark, textured wall. The stage is lit with warm, orange and yellow lights.

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SCHEDULE

## FEBRUARY 21-22, 2020

**Friday, February 21**

3:00 p.m. Registration Begins

6:30 p.m. Service Begins

**Saturday, February 22**

9:00 a.m. Service Begins

## Hotel Information

We do not have any deals coordinated with nearby hotels. Typically the best nightly rate can be secured by booking online, so we recommend this booking method.



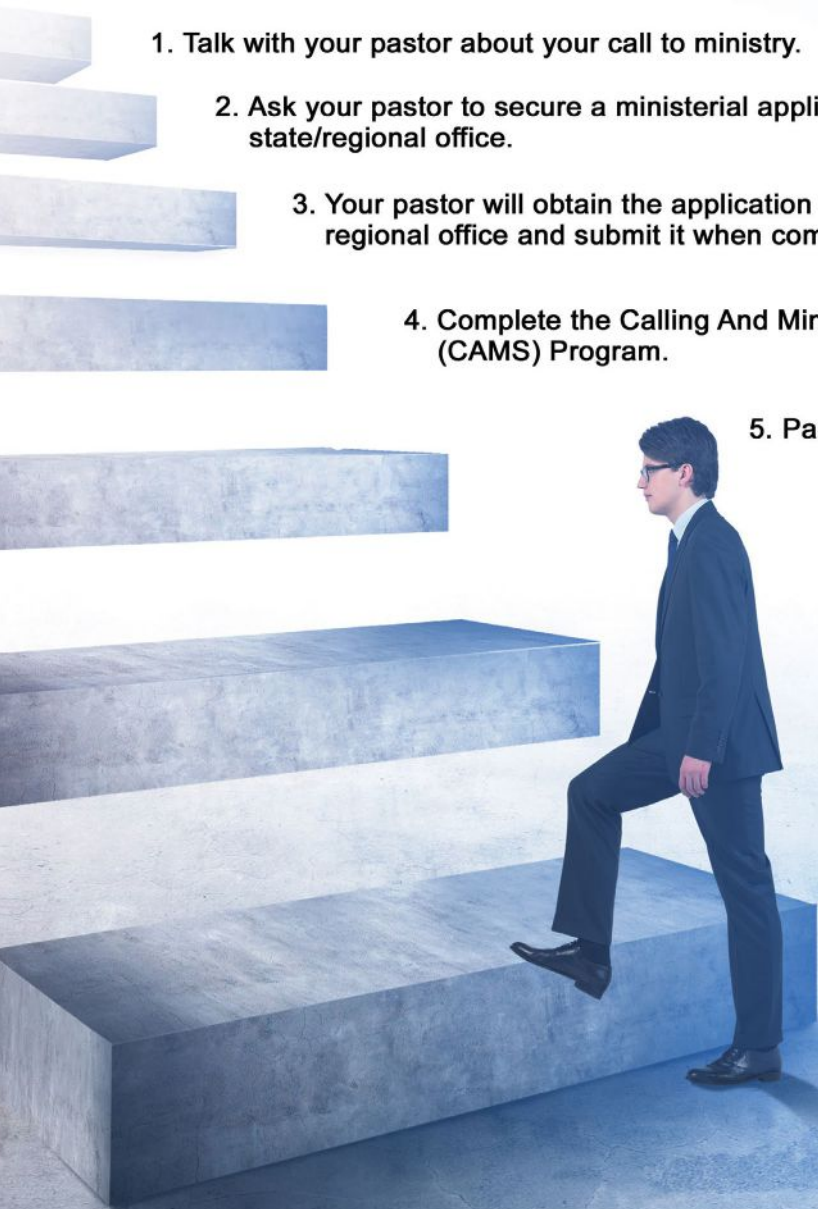
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5. Pass the Exhorter exam.





# WEPRAYCOG

## Reaching Around the Globe

**T**he #WEPRAYCOG initiative, a 40-week period of consecrated prayer that began last October, has now reached into over 100 countries.

Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill formally announced the prayer focus during the regular session of the International Executive Committee last September. Joining Hill as co-chair is Niko Njotorahardjo, pastor of the Gereja Bethel Church in Jakarta, Indonesia. They are joined by Pastor Loran Livingston whose Charlotte, N.C. Central Church has been engaged in a “Monday Night” revival since last July. Also leading the effort is Church of God Prayer Coordinator Doug Small.

Hill announced an ambitious goal of recruiting 1.5 million people to officially sign on to the movement as prayer partners. To assist in the endeavor, Hill asked the field directors of five regions of the world to each seek at least 250,000 partners. The regions

include Caribbean, Latin America, Asia/Pacific, Europe, and Africa. Livingston will chair the efforts to recruit prayer partners in the USA.

The 40 weeks of #WEPRAYCOG officially began on Sunday, October 20, 2019, and continues through the International General Assembly July 21–24, 2020. Between October and July several events have been scheduled that draw an even higher concentration on prayer. They include Agree '20, three days of prayer originating at the International Offices, which took place on January 6–8, 2020; 40 Days of Prayer between Easter and Pentecost Sunday where there will be a daily noonday Facebook Live session; GO FINISH 2020, a one-day salvation event in May; and 40 Hours of Prayer, a final, nonstop prayer focus that will take place at the International General Assembly.

To learn more about the initiative, find resources and register a congregation or as a prayer partner, please visit [wepraycog.com](http://wepraycog.com). ■





# WEPRAYCOG

THE CHURCH OF GOD UNITED IN PRAYER



**1.5 MILLION INDIVIDUAL PRAYER PARTNERS**

250,000 participants from six regions of the world

**5,000 LOCAL CHURCHES**

Congregations commit to becoming #wepraycog churches



**40 WEEKS OF PREPARATION**

Prayer focus from October 2019 through the International General Assembly in July 2020

**40 DAYS OF CONSECRATION**

Daily Facebook Live video from the International Offices between Easter & Pentecost Sunday



**40 HOURS OF DEDICATION**

A time of intense prayer focus during the International General Assembly

*As the 78th International General Assembly approaches, and we continue to focus on FINISHING the Great Commission, the church must move from talking about prayer to engaging in prayer. In response to this call to prayer, the Church of God is launching #WePrayCoG, a 40-week prayer initiative that focuses on three primary areas: Pentecostal Renewal and Revival, Prevailing Unity, and Purposed Direction.*

*You or your entire church can join this initiative by visiting the web address below and registering as a prayer Partner.*



**Dr. Timothy M. Hill**  
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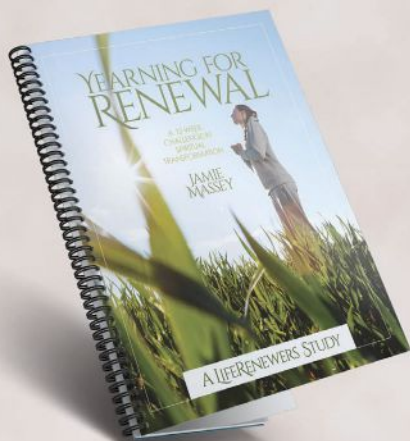
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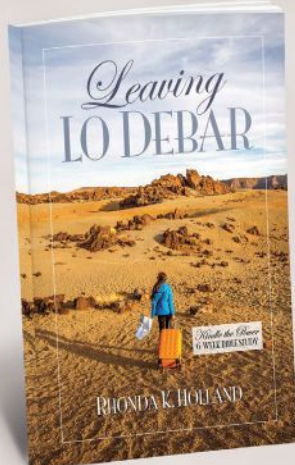




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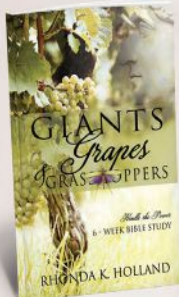
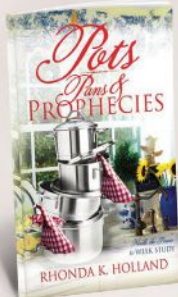
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# NINE WAYS Church Leadership Conferences Can Attract More Small Church Pastors

■ by KARL VATERS

**W**HY DON'T MORE small church pastors attend church leadership conferences? It's not because we're lazy, uninformed, or don't want to learn; it's because of several significant, but removable roadblocks that keep most of us from coming. In recent years, church leadership conferences have had a much bigger impact on my life and schedule as I'm being invited to speak at more of them. Attending all these conferences—as both a speaker and an attendee—has also taught me a few things about what most conferences are doing well, and how we could (must) do better for the average-sized church.

While as many as 90 percent of our churches are small, the registrations at most conferences often have less than 50 percent of attendees from smaller churches.

Because of that, those who hold conferences aren't getting an accurate

picture of the church. Since they have far more attendees from bigger and urban/suburban churches, the average church seems bigger, newer, richer, and younger at a major conference than it is in everyday life.

If you oversee church conferences, here are nine ways to reduce that disconnect and remove some of the roadblocks that keep many small church pastors from attending your events:

## 1. TAKE SMALL CHURCH REALITIES INTO ACCOUNT

At a recent conference, I saw workshops for breaking the 200 barrier, the 500 barrier, and the 1,000 barrier, but not even one for how to pastor well while being under 200.

Yet, as many as 80 to 90 percent of Church of God churches are in that category. Don't just help us break through barriers, help us know what to do *before* we break through.

## **2. HAVE SOME SPEAKERS WHO LOOK LIKE US**

We can learn only so much from someone who has blasted through growth barriers in their church.

While we appreciate their stories of numerical increase, we also need help from those who have learned how to lead a church to health and effectiveness while staying small; for example, pastors who have overcome the frustration of trying to get bigger, and churches that have found a niche of powerful, effective ministry on a small scale.

## **3. STOP MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT US**

One of the few times small churches are ever mentioned at many conferences is when we're told how many churches are dying, stagnant, or stuck.

This is important information that should never be ignored, but we need to get past the assumption that all small churches are stuck, or that all numerically steady churches are stagnant.

## **4. STOP SPEAKING DOWN TO US**

In the South, they say, "Bless your heart." It sounds sweet. But if you're on the receiving end of it, you're not being praised, you're probably being pitied.

When conference speakers talk about growth, then throw in a line like "of course, there's nothing wrong with being small," what we hear is "bless your heart." Quit telling us there's nothing wrong with being small and help us do small better!

## **5. GIVE US BETTER PRICING OPTIONS**

When a conference registration costs \$300, it's not costing \$300. After adding food, travel, and hotel, it's going to be \$1,000 and up. That is way beyond the affordability of most small churches. (Actually, so is \$300 for many.)

Then, for bivocational pastors, when you factor in the loss of income and/or vacation days from their paying job, the price quickly becomes impossible to meet.

Even when conferences let you bring your whole staff for one price, it helps very few small churches, because most of us don't have a staff.

Start by offering tiered pricing for different sized churches and make that front-and-center in your advertising. Find sponsors who can cover the food, travel, and hotel costs for small churches. I've seen it done, and I've been witness to the grateful, tear-filled responses from pastors who have been blessed by it.

One great way of reducing the price is by holding conferences in smaller towns, instead of bigger cities. The cost is far less for hotels and food that way. And using a campground opens even more possibilities, with options for hauling an RV or pitching a tent with the whole family.

## **6. COME CLOSER TO US (IRL AND ONLINE)**

Many groups are holding the same conference in two venues on opposite ends of the country to make travel easier. For big



churches, this makes their trip doable. Small churches need even more options to make the time and travel expenses affordable.

The closer you can bring a conference to where we live, the more likely we'll be able to attend. Plus, give us more online options. This is happening more often, but still not enough.

## **7. STOP MAKING UNREALISTIC PROMISES**

"If you do this, your church will double in the next two years!" Stop. Just stop.

Maybe the Lord did that in the church you're pastoring. If so, I celebrate it. I truly do.

And maybe (probably) a big part of that growth happened because you made necessary changes structurally and spiritually to prepare for that growth. If so, I want to learn what you did. But a move of God can't be bottled and sold.

I know you can point to a couple of other churches with similar successes, but unless the average church that tried your good ideas had the same explosive success (with stats to support it), please stop making outrageous, unsupportable claims about it. Teach us, encourage us, help us, but stop making promises to us.

## **8. INCORPORATE SIZE DYNAMICS**

In a previous article, "Responsive Design: If Your Church Leadership Ideas Don't Adapt for Size, You're Behind the Curve," I wrote about the importance of making sure your ideas are adaptable to all sizes of churches. Size dynamics are ignored

in far too much church leadership teaching.

Don't just tell us what works in larger churches, help us see how that idea can be adapted for smaller churches, too. If it can't, that's fine. Not everything works for all sizes. Just let us know that so we don't waste time and energy on something that doesn't fit us.

## **9. MAKE THEM LESS ABOUT DEVELOPING SYSTEMS AND MORE ABOUT DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS**

Systems change for different sizes. But relationships work everywhere. If you keep that in mind when you teach us, more of what you say will fit more of our situations.

## **THE DISCONNECT IS UNNECESSARY**

Most church leadership conferences don't intend to exclude small churches as much as they do. What it takes is a determination to keep small churches in mind as you plan the location, schedule, price, speakers, and content of your next conference.

We want to learn from you. We know you work hard at these events. We know your content is good. But our needs, strengths, and concerns must be acknowledged if we're going to receive real value from the hard work you're doing. ■

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# THE WAY FORWARD INTO GOD'S FUTURE MISSION

■ by GRANT McCLUNG

**W**HAT WILL DEFINE the future on missions with God? How will we stay on track and move with the Holy Spirit? I believe it will be in our answer to a threefold call to sanctified *living*, strategic *leading*, and sensitive *listening*. These calls are coupled with anticipated characterizations of the way forward into God's future mission:

- Sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*: God's future mission will be sanctified, Spiritized, and scriptural.

- Strategic *leading* toward sustainable *models*: God's future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.

- Sensitive *listening* toward surprising *moments*: God's future mission will be spontaneous, sudden, and surprising.

- Sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*: God's future mission will be sanctified, Spiritized, and scriptural.

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and coming King! We embrace the promise of the second coming of Jesus Christ our Lord and consecrate ourselves to sanctified living:

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the

God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:19- 23 NIV 1984).

“So then, dear friends,” Peter reminds us, “since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” (2 Peter 3:14 NIV 1984). We are urged on toward ongoing spiritual formation with a call to godly living, “...while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13 NIV 1984).

We bear witness to the necessity of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the indispensable, biblical, God-ordained empowerment for God’s mission. Let us not take another step into God’s missional future until we also have fulfilled Christ’s command to wait upon supernatural anointing. These were His specific instructions to the first disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they would be, “...clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49b NIV 1984). When this was realized on the Day of Pentecost, Peter testified:

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear (Acts 2:32-33 NIV 1984).

The gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter says, is both present and into the unseen future.

It is, “...for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39 NIV 1984). We are called to, “sanctified living toward the Savior’s manifestation,” understanding that the way forward into God’s future mission will be sanctified, Spiritized, and scriptural.

### **Strategic leading toward sustainable models: God’s future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.**

Strategizing involves projecting, forecasting, and scenario-planning toward what is called a “preferred future.” We focus on basic questions such as, “What does the Lord want us to do? How are we going to do it?” The Holy Spirit begins to lead us through specific processes which I have outlined in *Globalbeliever.com: Connecting to God’s Work in Your World* (pp. 241–248; see “Read the Book” at [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org)).

**Summons**—a summons is a call to attention. It is the burden, calling, and vision from the Lord, initiating and perpetuating mission.

**Supplication**—fasting and prayer are central in strategic planning. They both precede and follow the summons of the Holy Spirit.

**Scripture**—the Bible is both our message book and method book. The Scriptures will lead us forward in missional definitions, practices, and strategies.

**Stories**—People are media. Their experiences and testimonies provide a “tracking” or “hearing of what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

**Statistics**—Gifted women and men bring us research, mapping, and reporting to help us understand, engage, and disciple cultures and communities.

**Strategies**—A strategy is a working plan, a “faith projection” of what we expect to see develop under the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. A clearly articulated mission and vision points the way forward for the future.

**Structures**—structures provide a vehicle to deliver the strategy in practical, systematic forms. The global outreach of our international coalition of missional local churches is facilitated by the structure of Church of God World Missions. It is complimented by the cooperation of local and national missions boards as mandated by the International General Assembly of the Church of God.

Structure is Scripturally strategic. We are called to “strategic leading toward sustainable models.” The way forward into God’s future mission will be strategized, structured, and sustainable.

**Sensitive listening toward surprising moments: God’s future mission will be spontaneous, sudden, and surprising.**

Our generation has been shocked, staggered, and surprised by the sometimes

almost unbelievable events we have seen during the last three decades. We have seen rapid acceleration in the spread of the gospel worldwide. The turning of entire people groups and populations to the living God is *unsurpassed, unanticipated, and unprecedented.*

The text for our times (evidenced by its occurrence in numbers of missions-related sermons and publications over the last thirty years) could be, “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Habakkuk 1:5 NIV 1984).

In their last meeting with the Lord, the disciples wanted a trends forecast, “insider information,” some sort of predictable pattern as to what He had in mind for future times and dates. “It is not for you to know,” he told them, but “to receive power” and “be my witnesses” (Acts 1:6-8 NIV 1984). Immediately, “While he was blessing them . . .” (Luke 24:51 NIV 1984), “. . . he was taken up before their very eyes” (Acts 1:9 NIV 1984).

Then, things began to happen suddenly, with surprising spontaneity in the evangelistic expansion of the early church:

*“Suddenly* a sound . . . from heaven” on Pentecost baptizing them in the Holy Spirit (2:1-4 NIV 1984).

*“. . . suddenly* a light from heaven” at Paul’s conversion/calling (9:3; 22:6 NIV 1984).

[At the house of Cornelius]: “Peter wasn’t planning to stop at this point, but the Holy



Spirit *suddenly* interrupted and came upon all the people who were listening" (10:44 The VOICE).

"*Suddenly* there was a violent earthquake . . ." resulting in the conversion of the Philippian jailer, his entire "household" and "all his family" (16:26-34 NIV 1984).

We cannot know the future, but we can count on our missionary God to convert and *call*, act and anoint, speak and send—*suddenly*. We bear witness to our amazing and astounding God when we say that the work of God on missions is *unlimited, indescribable, unimaginable, and unpredictable*.

Therefore, we allow room for the unanticipated, always ready to proactively respond to the "kairos" missional moments created by the spontaneous, sovereign, saving God of history. These "kairos" moments awaited the early church at every turn. They were moved by the unforeseen "surprises of the Spirit" that advanced the gospel, quite unexpectedly, into new missional directions among new peoples.

For example, there was: the unanticipated commissioning of a lay evangelist to an African seeker (Phillip to the Ethiopian in Acts 8); the unexpected vision revealed to a reluctant disciple, sending him to a religious terrorist who was destined to be an apostle to the nations (Ananias prays for Saul in Acts 9); and the startling summons sent to a recalcitrant Jewish preacher to enter the home of a Gentile, a Roman military officer (Peter preaches to Cornelius in Acts 10).

In Acts 13, a team of local church leaders

respond to the spontaneous, sudden, and surprising God. The command of the Holy Spirit was, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (13:2 NIV 1984). After fasting and prayer, ". . . they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (13:3 NIV 1984). As the Holy Spirit hovered over and moved upon the waters in Creation (Genesis 1:2 NIV 1984), the creative movement of the Spirit of God hovered over church leaders worshiping and waiting in fasting and prayer, moving them to release the first intercultural missions team.

In Acts 16, we see the unpredictable moving of the Spirit by closing two doors so another could be opened. Paul and his companions were ". . . kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia" (NIV 1984). The King James Version says they were, ". . . forbidden of the Holy Ghost. . . ." (16:6). They tried another direction, toward Bithynia but, ". . . the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to" (16:7 NIV 1984). Instead, Paul and his team moved on to Troas. There, in a direction-changing night vision, the Lord led them unexpectedly into Macedonia (16:9-10).

The rest of the story is history. Paul, and succeeding generations of pioneering innovators, followed this unpredictable and surprising God to the ends of the earth. We must make this *apostolic heritage* our *anointed horizon* into God's future mission.

The promises and descriptions of a spontaneous, surprising, and suddenly

moving God are not just *promises* from our miraculous past. They are more than *projections* of God's future mission. They are most certainly supernatural *power* now in our present "kairos" moment. The Triune God is bringing sudden empowerment and callings; accelerated favor; unusual, unexpected financial provision; unanticipated open doors; and unforeseen, miraculous receptivity to the gospel among the unconverted.

On mission with God, let us be characterized with sanctified *living* toward the Savior's *manifestation*, strategic *leading* toward sustainable *models*, and sensitive *listening* toward surprising *moments*. These are the prayerful expectations of the way

forward into God's future mission.

Now to the God who can do so many *awe-inspiring things, immeasurable things*, things greater than we ever could ask or imagine through the power at work in us, to Him be all glory in the church and in Jesus the Anointed from this generation to the next, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21 The VOICE). ■

*Grant McClung is a member of the Executive Committee of the World Missions Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship and is an international missionary educator with Church of God World Missions (grant.mcclung@gmail.com). His books and World Missions resources are found at: [www.MissionsResourceGroup.org](http://www.MissionsResourceGroup.org).*

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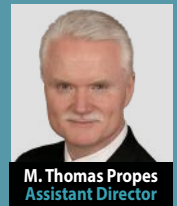


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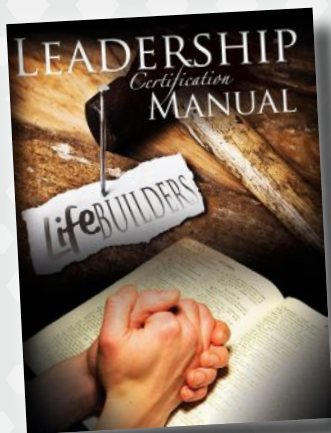


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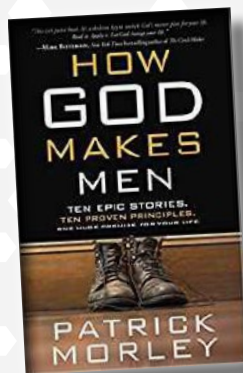
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# SEVEN WAYS to Bridge the Generation Gap in the Church



by J. LEE GRADY

**I**F YOU WATCHED the Democratic Party's presidential debate on September 12, 2019, you'll know why San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro got poor marks from so many commentators and viewers. Castro seemed to be attacking former Vice President Joe Biden for his age, implying that the 76-year-old candidate is losing his memory.

"Are you forgetting already what you said just two minutes ago?" Castro said to Biden during the September 12 event. The 45-year-old politician was upset that Biden didn't seem to remember what he had just said about his plans for a national health care system. (It didn't help when Biden suggested that low-income parents should "make sure you have the record player on" to encourage better education.)

Castro's comment during the debate revealed the obvious: There is a growing generation gap in American politics. Some younger politicians have even said that Biden, as well as Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth

Warren (who is 70) and New Hampshire Senator Bernie Sanders (he's 78), are too old to be president. And many of those same critics insist that Donald Trump should be replaced because he'll be 74 if he wins a second term in 2020.

This caustic us-versus-them mentality has also surfaced in the church today. I constantly hear older Christians complaining about how "those young people" are forcing them to change the music or the dress code on Sunday mornings. Meanwhile, I hear young people griping because the worship, preaching, or attitudes at a particular church are not as hip as they require.

We have marginalized each other. We've reached a generational impasse. Is there any way we can bridge this gap? It won't be easy, but here are a few ways we could build a bridge:

**1. Deal with your prejudices.** Today we're super sensitive about confronting racism and sexism. Yet somehow, we think it's OK to judge others because of age. When Jesus commanded us to "love one another" (John

13:34b), He didn't mean you should love only the people who are in your age demographic. He wants Facebook users and Instagram users to get together instead of avoiding each another.

**2. Stop writing people off.** The New Testament also calls us to "accept one another" (Romans 15:7a, NIV)—which means to be tolerant and patient toward those who aren't like us. That means older Christians shouldn't be offended by tattoos, piercings, technology, or the clothing styles of Gen Xers. It also means younger people should try to learn something from an older person's "old-fashioned" attitudes instead of rolling their eyes at them.

**3. Learn to show honor.** I buried my brain-damaged father last year, and now my 91-year-old mother has dementia. I spend a lot of my time talking to nursing home residents these days, and they have taught me a lot about compassion. Their bodies and minds are worn out, but they are precious to God. We should honor the old, knowing that one day we will be in their condition.

**4. Don't get stuck in your "era."** I don't understand older people who insist on "my way or the highway" when it comes to church styles. God is always moving forward. He is not stuck in the past, so why should I be? Even though I'm 61, I don't mind if my pastor is half my age or if the music reflects today's styles. I want my church to reach younger people, not just my generation. Be flexible and willing to change.

**5. Encourage mentoring.** I spend most of my time discipling younger guys. Even though I'm old enough to be their dad, they

enjoy spending time with me. They learn from my experiences, and I encourage them to achieve far more than I ever did. I hear so many older Christians bashing Millennials and Gen X Christians for being spoiled, but that has not been my experience at all. Today's young Christians are passionate for God and totally teachable.

**6. Be open to "reverse mentoring."** Even though I invest a lot of my time in discipling younger Christians, that doesn't mean I don't learn from them. My spiritual sons and daughters have taught me so much—they've trained me in technology, introduced me to new music and books, helped me adjust my attitudes, and even challenged me in physical fitness. I'm better today because of the input I receive from younger people.

**7. Embrace God's generational mindset.** God is ageless, and He isn't locked into one generation's viewpoint. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He transcends time. He wants one generation to declare His praises to the next. He wants the mantle that rested on Elijah to be transferred to Elisha. Why is this concept so difficult for us to embrace?

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared: "'In the last days it shall be,' says God . . . 'your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:17 MEV). The Spirit wants to move across generational lines. He wants to speak through the young and the old. He wants to connect us, blend us, and use us together as one united body of Christ. ■

*J. Lee Grady is a former editor of Charisma magazine for 11 years. (Source: Charisma Media)*

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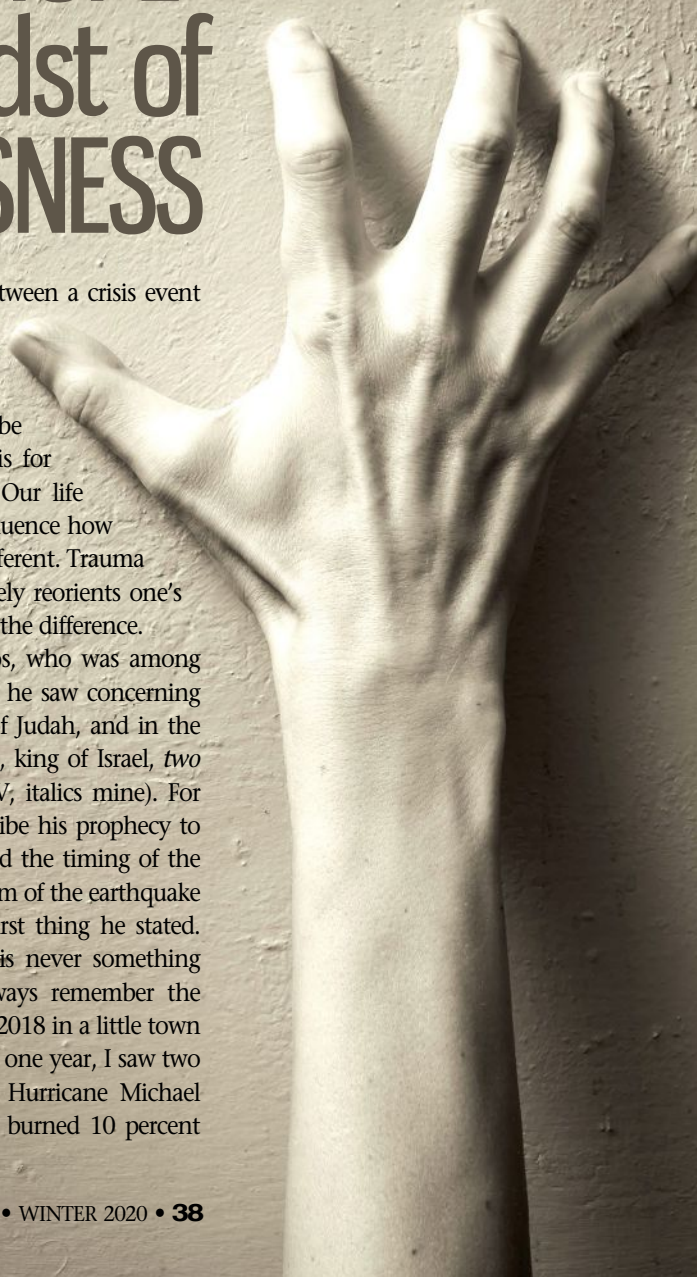
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# FINDING HOPE in the Midst of HOPELESSNESS

■ by LARRY STERLING, JR.

**T**HERE IS A DIFFERENCE between a crisis event and a traumatic event. A “crisis” is a subjective description of a challenging event, which may not be universal. Meaning, what is a crisis for me may not be a crisis for you. Our life experience, education, etc., will influence how we respond. However, trauma is different. Trauma is a universal crisis which completely reorients one's life. The prophet Amos understood the difference.

Amos 1:1, “The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, *two years before the earthquake*” (NKJV, italics mine). For Amos, when it came time to describe his prophecy to the hearers, he orients them toward the timing of the oracle of God when he reminds them of the earthquake of the mid-760s B.C. It was the first thing he stated. Why? Because a traumatic event is never something you forget. For myself, I will always remember the traumatic events that happened in 2018 in a little town in the panhandle of Florida. In this one year, I saw two traumatic events—the Category 5 Hurricane Michael and the Limerock Wildfire, which burned 10 percent



of our town. Much of what I recount in the following paragraphs is a first-person account of these two traumatic events. I do want to recognize the fact that I did not do this alone; it was a team effort and a volunteer base of many people which led to our success.

The key to successfully leading a congregation through any challenging time is to have done the prerequisite work of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines create within pastors a deep well of spiritual vitality sustaining them through trying circumstances. Pastors need to be calm and self-assured (which comes through a relationship with Christ), because the decisions they make will impact the lives of those around them. Trust me, it is a surreal feeling to see every major news network camped on your property; you need the close presence of Christ to guide your words.

Next, within any traumatic event, there is a difference between the emergency stage and the recovery stage, and the church's ministry will differ based on the timetable. For example, during the Limerock Wildfire, my church (during the emergency phase) was the Red Cross shelter for those families who were impacted. We coordinated with the Red Cross about food and basic needs. The key for success is to trust those leaders who frequently serve in emergencies. Their training will be invaluable to you, and for the decisions you make.

In an emergency, the pastor needs to be gracious with those who desperately need help. During the night while the fire was still raging, I drove to the "command center," where local and state agencies had converged,

to see if I could offer assistance. When I arrived, I found a lot of capable people working to stop the fire. We live on the coast of Florida, and we are prepared for hurricanes, but not fires. I stood outside and watched the firelight in the distance and smelled the scent of burning homes filling the air. As I looked into the eyes of the men and women who were working desperately to put out this fire, I realized they didn't know what they were going to do with the impacted people. I offered our church to them as a Red Cross shelter.

The next morning a barefooted woman entered our shelter. She was clearly in shock. Unfortunately, shock is typical of those who have recently experienced a traumatic event. It is crucial at this stage to meet their felt needs immediately. Her clothes were coated with ash and soot; she was lost. I welcomed her to the shelter. We spoke for a minute, and then I asked her where her shoes were. She turned and pointed to her children, who were also barefoot, and said, "We left our home with only the clothes on our backs, we believe our house is gone, but they won't let us back in to check." We talked for a few more minutes, and I made sure that she and her family were fed breakfast. I excused myself to call for assistance. What I discovered astonished me. The county where I live did not have the necessary resources to help in times of emergencies; they had never had one like this before.

It was then we decided to do something about it. First, we bought this lady and her family shoes, and then we contacted the authorities and told them we were going to

take care of the needs of these people. Then a miracle happened—donations flooded into our church. It started small, but as word went out on the local and then national news media, contributions of all kinds filled our facility to the ceiling in every classroom. Semitrucks were filled with supplies! It was glorious! Then about four days later, we learned another hard truth, we were no longer in the emergency stage; we had naturally transitioned to the recovery stage. The most alarming realization was—we were not equipped to handle a long-term recovery.

It is vital to understand the mission and vision for your local church. We wanted to help and assist in any way we could, but it was clear our inexperience created avoidable issues. After several meetings with the Emergency Management office, we agreed to transition the supplies to a new location. Thankfully, the Limerock fire would ultimately give birth to a new emergency plan for the county. Now, we had the volunteers and supplies, just in case of another crisis. Little did we know that four months later, a Category 5 hurricane would hit our region.

In August 2018, we were leaving the International General Assembly in Orlando, and I heard the Holy Spirit distinctly call me to a fast. At first, I was excited; I anticipated a revival that God was going to send! In my prayer time, I wondered if God was going to bless us for being so willing to serve our community during the recent fire. As I prayerfully walked this path, I realized this wasn't a day or two of fasting. He called me to fast the entire month of September 2018.

Then, on October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall. The Lord knows how to prepare us for traumatic events. Had I not fasted, and because of the recent fire, I know I would not have been spiritually ready to serve our community.

My church is 400 yards from the Apalachicola Bay. They clocked wind gusts well over 160 mph in our waters. Before I left to evacuate, I covered the grounds with oil and prayer. The timing of the landfall of the storm would be critical. If the hurricane came during high tide, most of my city would be wiped out due to the floodwaters, regardless of the wind. We missed the high tide by two hours! According to eyewitness testimony, the waters came to my fence, but they stopped at the church's property line.

This time, our community leaders were prepared for the emergency; and once again, the Church of God was the staging ground to reach the entire region. The National Guard deployed to our church, and we worked in tandem with them and many other state and local agencies. These were undoubtedly trying times, but God helped us make it through and still be a light of love and grace to those in our community.

Honestly, I was delighted to see the year 2018 concluded! But even more than a year later, I still have people stop me on the street to say, "Thank you." In this community, the name "Church of God" is respected and loved, because we allowed Christ to love through us! However, to love someone may also mean to get out of the way and find the right person to help. ■



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In 2006, Bishop Ernest Ford Jr. donated a desk, typewriter, reel-to-reel tape recorder, sermons, books, Bibles, photographs, and ministry papers that had belonged to his brother, Bishop W.L. Ford.

The Church of God credentialed Willie Louis Ford (1908–1987), the son of a minister, as an evangelist in 1929 and as a bishop in 1932. Along with pastoring in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, and Kentucky, he served as general overseer of the Church of God Colored Work from 1946 to 1950 and from 1954 to 1958.



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78th GENERAL ASSEMBLY – July 21-24, 2020

# GA20 Headed to INDIANAPOLIS

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME since 2006, the Church of God International General Assembly will be conducted at the “Crossroads of America,” Indianapolis, Indiana. The events surrounding the business sessions of the 78<sup>th</sup> Assembly will include a number of exciting activities sponsored by various ministries. GA20 will be staged on July 21–24, 2020, at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis.

Starting back in February 2019, Global Ministry Forums were held across multiple locations in the United States and around the world. The purpose of the forums, as mandated by the International General Assembly of 2018, was to dialogue about four primary topics: Ministry Ranks, Qualifications for Ministers, Women in Church Leadership Positions, and the Use and Meaning of the Term ‘Bishop.’ Results of thousands of surveys taken during the forums and the discussions that ensued will be the primary focus of the International General Council Agenda at GA20.

In addition, like it is in United States, the year 2020 will be an election year for the

Church of God. The International General Council will be electing members of the Council of Eighteen and nominating members of the International Executive Committee, and the directors and assistant directors for World Missions and Youth and Discipleship. All nominations, as well as business conducted by the International General Council, will be discussed and voted upon by the International General Assembly in a Friday, July 24, 2020, afternoon session of the International General Assembly.

Many improvements and construction projects have taken place in the 14 years since the General Assembly was last held in Indy. The Indianapolis Convention Center has been enlarged to include a hall large enough to accommodate our delegates. In addition, new hotels have arisen, including the JW Marriott. It, and many other hotels, have easy access to the convention center (see map).

Worship services will feature an opening service on Tuesday, with a Thursday night missions service, followed by a Friday closing message by the newly elected general overseer. Surrounding these primary events, there are a number of pre-Assembly gatherings, such



as the popular L.E.A.D. conference, as well as activities taking place once GA20 gets underway. More information about GA20 events is forthcoming in the months and weeks ahead.

As has been the case in past Assemblies, prayer will be an all-week focus. However, this coming Assembly will be significant as it will climax the 40-Week prayer initiative—#wepraycog. GA20 will begin with a 40-hour, nonstop prayer meeting. Prayer services will be held every morning for the remainder of the week.

Online registration for housing and to attend GA20 is available at [www.ga20.org](http://www.ga20.org). Other items of interest will be added to this site until opening day of GA20. Once the week begins next summer, the website will house a livestream of the business sessions and worship services, downloads of documents, viewing of videos and photos, and the latest news and information. GA20 will also have a strong social media presence, including tweets from the floor of the International General Council sessions and frequent posts on the Church of God Facebook page. ■



For information about things to see and do in Indianapolis, go to [visitindy.com](http://visitindy.com).

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# GIVE BACK

## How Can You Give Back?

The month of May is designated by International Youth & Discipleship as the season to GIVE BACK! Set a Date, Get a Plan and Start Serving!

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Visit our Website for more information and ideas on how to Give Back!

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*Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)*

*"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."*

### WHEN CAN WE START?

Your Group can have a "Be Like Jesus Day" any time, however, the entire month of May is designated by Int. Youth and Discipleship as the season to "Give Back." You may choose when to get busy, set a date, get a plan, and have fun serving and giving.

# KIDS GIVE BACK

For "Give Back" support, contact Randall Parris - [rparris@churchofgod.org](mailto:rparris@churchofgod.org) 423.478.7884

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**For More Information, Contact**

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**LEGAL NOTES**  
Dennis W. Watkins

# Am I Being Recorded?

**T**HERE IS NOTHING more annoying than to come to the end of a telephone conference, and for the person on the other end of the line to tell you: “I’ve been recording this call.” This has happened to almost all of us at some point in time, and it is very bothersome. While we may not be saying anything that we would mind being recorded, the mere fact that it was done without our permission always seems like a violation. The purpose of this article is to discuss the basic aspects of this subject.

A recorded phone call can have detrimental effects on a person’s career and reputation. These effects can be especially amplified if one party is unaware that the call is being recorded. To avoid disastrous situations, anyone who plans on recording a phone call or who is wary of being recorded should be knowledgeable of some of the various laws regarding the recording of phone calls.

## **LAWS REGARDING RECORDING OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS**

All states differ in their laws of recording telephone conversations and it is imperative to be aware of your state’s law. The question to be mindful of when trying to comply with your state’s law is whether one party or all parties require consent of recording the phone call. There are twelve states that deem themselves as “all-party-consent” states. These twelve states are: California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Washington. If a call that is being recorded takes place in one of these states, everyone involved in the call must give consent. That being said, whoever is recording the call must notify the other party or parties, and whoever is being recorded must either proceed and allow the recording to take place, or they may not comply and terminate the call.

The best way to ensure that a call is recorded legally is to have the consent of the party or parties involved, and to have that consent on tape. Avoid any potential liability by not being secretive about the recording, and by trying to be as transparent as possible regarding all aspects of the call.

There are thirty-eight states that do not follow the “all-party-consent” process, and rather follow the “one-party-consent” method. These remaining states require only one party to give consent that the call is being recorded. Essentially, within these states, your phone conversation can be recorded without your knowledge. In these jurisdictions, it is especially important to be aware of this law and to preface every call with the knowledge that whatever you say may be used against you, if you are recorded even without your consent.

Further, it is important to be aware of your state’s consent requirement, and to get consent from all necessary parties, if required. It is also vital to be conscious of the civil and/or criminal liability if a call happens to be recorded illegally, if applicable. The best way to ensure that a call is recorded legally is to have the consent of the party or parties involved, and to have that consent on tape. Avoid any potential liability by not being secretive about the recording, and by trying to be as transparent as possible regarding all aspects of the call.

It should be noted that these same rules may apply in a conversation that is not by telephone, but by oral communication only.

## RESOURCE

You might consider viewing this resource:

<https://www.mwl-law.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/RECORDING-CONVERSATIONS-CHART.pdf>

## CONCLUSION

I think that a good rule of thumb is simply to assume that whoever you are speaking with may be recording your conversation, and to speak accordingly. When in doubt, never hesitate to ask. Finally, I hope that you never are “hung by the tongue,” as the old saying goes! ■

*Dennis W. 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.*



# Trends Impacting the Economy

**Y**OU NEED ONLY to listen to the evening news or pick up your local newspaper to understand that there is much discussion about the future of the U.S. economy. Can the growth continue? Are we headed toward a recession? And the questions go on and on. With so many questions, it seems logical to take a few moments to review our economic status over the past couple of years, and then look forward into the future.

After three very strong quarters in 2018, the U.S. economy saw a massive pullback in Q4 2018 due to the midterm elections, Brexit fears, and tariff battles. After a rough end to 2018 that saw all the gains from earlier in the year wiped away, the economic markets began 2019 on a strong note and have not let up. In the last few days of 2019, the U.S. stock market saw new all-time highs—and it does not seem like the rally is over yet as we enter 2020.

For example, the actual dollar growth of the Ministers' Retirement Plan in 2019 was the greatest in the history of the plan. Such was simply the product of a heated economy that the federal financial policy makers have made more accommodative to growth. As you may know, interest rates have once again declined, housing starts have picked back up, and the

stock markets have ignored the trade wars and tariff battles that have dominated the news cycles, producing outstanding gains.

The question always remains as to how long this growth trend can continue, seeing that we have surpassed the previous longest expansion of the U.S. economy. The current expansion of the economy is now past the ten-year mark. Interestingly, most economists and market-makers believe that the expansion will continue at least another year before recessionary headwinds begin to cause concerns.

Although the U.S. economy is growing, there are some “headwinds” which are very troubling. It is important to consider these potential issues as we make financial decisions in the future.

## NATIONAL DEBT

A financial trend that cannot be overlooked is the soaring national debt and the increasing annual deficits—and their long-term impact on our economy. In 2019, the U.S. annual deficit hit \$984 billion, an increase of \$205 billion from a year earlier, and the total national debt surpassed \$22 trillion. Through taxes and other revenue measures, the federal government in FY 2019 took in \$3.5 trillion, but ended



up spending over \$4.4 trillion on numerous programs and services. Just to debt service (or to pay interest) on the national debt, the U.S. government spent around \$380 billion in interest payments in FY 2019, which is almost as much as the government contributed toward Medicaid.

Of course, should interest rates on Treasury notes increase, the cost of interest on the national debt would go up. Therefore, it is to the government's advantage for yields on Treasuries to "remain low for longer." Historically, the U.S. government has seen annual deficits shrink during periods of economic growth like we have experienced for the past ten years. However, large spending increases (for example, military spending has grown from \$550 billion annually to more than \$700 billion in the past three years) and the passage of the tax cuts at the end of 2017 have both contributed to larger deficits . . . and thus a larger national debt.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

While you must watch closely the financial trends that impact our economy, you also must keep a keen eye on demographic trends, or shifts, that could affect the economy. There is no question that the United States is seeing a massive population shift, both in age and in racial composition. Among older Americans, whites outnumber non-whites three to one. However, in younger groups, the split is more 55-to-45, with whites slightly outpacing non-whites. The most startling statistic is that among whites, the most common age is 58. However, among Hispanics, that number is 11. Therefore, there is no doubt that the demographic makeup of our great country is

changing and is primed to change even more in the coming years.

## OTHER TRENDS

Technology trends are also changing the future of our country more rapidly than we can imagine. It is projected that over the next ten years, computing power will advance a hundredfold over what it is today. In addition, some 2.5 billion people in remote areas of the world will gain access to the Internet. Because of increases in technology and the shifting demographics, urbanization will also accelerate. Across the globe, we are already adding 21 million people a year to urban centers—or the equivalent of three Chicagos per year. Food, water, and energy sources must be found, creating new investment opportunities, but also new challenges and opportunities for church growth.

## CONCLUSION

Because of all these changes and challenges to our economy, you can be assured that the next few decades are going to be a "ride," and one that we will never forget. It is imperative that everyone financially prepare for these changes. With such on the horizon, it is important that every person save, invest, and pray for their financial future. The Ministers' Retirement Plan, through the Church of God Benefits Board ([www.benefitsboard.com](http://www.benefitsboard.com)), is here to help in those efforts. ■

*Art Rhodes is president and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. The Board of Trustees and the staff of the Benefits Board are not engaged in rendering financial advice, legal advice, or other financial planning services.*

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## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Tim Hill, General Overseer

# Observations and Affirmations From the Global Ministry Forums

**A**S I WRITE, I am on a flight to the Pacific Northwest for one of the last scheduled Global Ministry Forums. Flying into Portland, Oregon, it is amazing to see the majestic mountains piercing through the clouds. I am appreciative of my particular vantage point on the plane because it reminds me of the importance of a good view. Similarly, I have had a great view at each of the Global Ministry Forums.

Earlier this year, we began with a list of twenty-five global locations and the hope of being as accessible as possible to our Church of God constituency. Within a few weeks, we will complete the remaining five forums and bring an end to this process required by the International General Assembly. We have already had more than 5,700 people attend the forums and more than 6,100 have completed the accompanying survey. The results of the survey will be shared after the first of the year.

## EMPHASIS OF THE FORUMS

If you have read any of my articles on the forums or if you have attended a forum, you know that I have emphasized the following:

- The forums are not mini-International General Assemblies, meaning that no action has been or could be taken on any issue. These are listening sessions only.
- The forums are not a “Cleveland Show and Tell” performance. There has been no departmental promotion and certainly no agenda promoted by the International Executive Committee.
- The forums are not a perfect format. I have left each forum, suggesting changes for the next forum, hoping for a better experience for those attending.
- The forums have not been a waste of time. Any time spent listening to people who love their church is always a good investment and worthwhile.
- Lastly, the forums were mandated by the International General Assembly. The



International Executive Committee was directed to conduct these very important sessions, and we have been glad to do so.

Although many issues have been raised at the forums at my invitation, the International General Assembly directed that we look at four specific topics:

- Ministry Ranks
- Qualifications of Ministers
- Women in Leadership Positions, and
- The meaning and usage of the term “Bishop”

## **OBSERVATIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS**

Everyone who has spoken at the forums has addressed these topics with conviction, passion, and respect for others that may have different opinions. I fully expect the remaining forums will be no different and that we will see the same spirit carry over into the 2020 International General Assembly as well.

While the series of Global Ministry Forums may not have raised issues that were not already being discussed, I think there have been some very important affirmations. As I have sat through the forums, the following facts have been affirmed to me over and over again:

### ***There Is Interest***

People have a genuine interest in the direction of our church. Regardless of the topic, there is an overwhelming longing for Great Commission involvement as a movement.

### ***There Is Concern***

People are expressing great concern that we as a church remain scripturally accountable and responsible in all that we do as a denomination.

### ***There Is Passion***

People are coming to the forums prepared, and they are speaking with firm and deep conviction about the subjects of interest to them and our church.

### ***There Is Appreciation***

Over and over, many have expressed strong appreciation for the opportunity to speak and to be heard. The opportunity to have an “open mic” for three hours or more and discuss the issues facing our church has created an incredible opportunity for both ministers and laypersons.

### ***There Is Loyalty***

Regardless of the location, I have repeatedly heard, “Bishop, I love God, and I love the

Church of God.” Now, mind you, this isn’t blind loyalty. However, it is loyalty that says that the person will engage in the process, participate in making the right decisions, and work to hold leaders answerable to the Word of God in directing their church.

### ***There Is Commitment***

People are committed to Scripture and the doctrinal fundamentals of being a Pentecostal church. They are committed to honoring our heritage, while also embracing a meaningful future.

### ***There Is Hope***

Regardless of the age of the person, hope has been expressed in the comments from every person who has spoken. The Jeremiah Generation has especially inspired me with their participation and hope for the future. I truly believe that hope exists for a church that will not adapt to a secular culture, but a church that will “lead” culture with Christ-honoring ministry and anointing.

### ***There Is Dependency***

Repeatedly, it has been said, “We must have the Lord’s help.” In and of ourselves, we know our ability to answer the questions is limited. Having been quoted often in the forums, James 1:5 provides an answer: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (NKJV).

### ***There Is Desire***

The desire to concentrate more on the Great Commission has been expressed over and over. People seem to be ready to move on with the most important work of the church—winning the lost and reaching a global harvest.

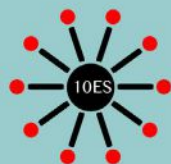
### ***There Is Respect***

While the speeches reveal that there is certainly not uniformity on the answers to the questions and issues, there is unity among us as a people. The forums have proven to be a platform where opinions, thoughts, and convictions could be freely expressed without any awkwardness or critical reprisal. Sure, there have been speeches that represented both sides of the issues and yes, discussions have often been strong and opinions firm. However, at the end of each forum, I have watched individuals with different views meet and embrace in the aisles and even leave together to continue their fellowship and their discussions.

The greatest affirmation I have had is that God is helping us, and we’re going to do His will; because, His is the only agenda that matters, and the only agenda that must always be enacted. ■

.....

To read this and other articles in Dr. Hill’s “Let’s Talk About It” series, please visit [www.letstalkaboutitbytimhill.com](http://www.letstalkaboutitbytimhill.com).



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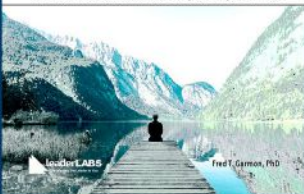
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DOCTRINE & POLITY  
Jerald Daffe

# The Operation of Spiritual Gifts

**H**OW ABOUT THE gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed" (1 Corinthians 12:1 NIV). These words of Scripture written by the apostle Paul nearly 2,000 years ago still apply to all believers in this 21st century! No one is exempt. Once the Holy Spirit begins His work in a person's life, each one will receive a spiritual gift at some point. Both the apostles Peter and Paul emphasize this reality. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10). "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). These scriptures emphasize that spiritual gifts are distributed by the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. We do not control them, but we are to regularly cooperate with the Spirit. This enables the believer to grow in the exercise of the gift or gifts. We nurture our sensitivity and ministry when the Spirit moves upon us.

Our responsibility is to operate in our spiritual gifts. Consider Horton's comments about the church at Corinth: "... Paul is writing to those who, without due astonishment,

were living in an atmosphere charged with the supernatural, where miracles were a daily occurrence, where such manifestations were expected . . ."<sup>1</sup> Donald Gee writes, "The ignorance long ago at Corinth was not experimental, for they 'came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord.' It was ignorance of the relative values of spiritual gifts, their true nature, and in their right use."<sup>2</sup> Adewuya explains, "Because of their idolatrous background, the Corinthians were prone to a misunderstanding of the gifts. So, at the start, Paul lays down a broad principle for discerning matters regarding spiritual gifts: the Corinthians are to judge things by how they relate to Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

The intent of this paper is to provide a broad introduction to the reality of spiritual gifts and their operation in the Church, the body of Christ.

As early as January 1914, A.J. Tomlinson, general overseer of the Church of God, wrote two impassioned *Evangel* articles encouraging our members to humbly pray and weep for the gifts to be demonstrated for God's glory.<sup>4</sup> The next month he wrote asking believers to

press on until the gifts of the Spirit “will be manifested in their fullness . . .”<sup>5</sup>

In spite of articles such as those previously noted and experiences in worship services, “it appears safe to say the average Pentecostal believer [has] heard of spiritual gifts, but in reality was ill-informed concerning their breadth, their definition, and their operation.”<sup>6</sup> Regretfully, it seems that now, over 100 years since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Azusa Street Revival, much of the same scenario exists. Yes, the Pentecostal message of Holy Spirit baptism has spread worldwide; however, there has not been an accompanied understanding and emphasis on the totality of spiritual gifts. Not only has this produced spiritual anemia but also it opened the door for a wide variety of spiritual excesses and false doctrines.

## THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

To begin with, spiritual gifts must not be confused with a person’s natural abilities or talents. They stem from one or a combination of four factors—a person’s gene pool, environment, experience, and education—which are the major influences.

In contrast are spiritual gifts and their source of origin. Lombard and Daffe explain, “Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers enabling them to minister in a means beyond their human capacity. Believers receive these gifts as a result of God’s grace. They are not intended to bring personal glory.”<sup>7</sup> Usually, our attention on spiritual gifts is directed toward the Holy Spirit, but consider 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. These verses

indicate the entire Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are involved in the origination and operation of spiritual gifts.

It is vitally important to understand that spiritual gifts are not an enhancement of a natural talent or ability; neither are your natural talents to be seen as a spiritual manifestation. Just because you can bake a delicious apple pie or raise a beautiful garden doesn’t make those abilities your spiritual gifts.

So, the question arises, “How can a person recognize the presence of a spiritual gift in his/her life?”

One indicator is a growing passion and ability which previously did not exist. A second indicator may be a new ability which doesn’t stem from practice, education, or copying the patterns of another person. Third, on occasion, a mature believer may observe the rise of a spiritual gift in one’s life and encourage careful, prayerful discernment, if this may be true. The community of believers has the distinct responsibility to each other in discerning particular gifts and encouraging their use. Last, consider taking an established spiritual gifts test. However, the trustworthiness of this is based on the length of time one has been a believer, honestly answering what is evident in one’s life, current involvement in church ministry, and the ability to separate natural gifts from spiritual gifts.

The parallelism between some natural gifts and spiritual gifts may cause some confusion. Teaching and hospitality are two examples. Some individuals are skilled teachers because of divine gifting (see Romans 12:7). Others become skilled teachers because of their

education and ongoing experience. Those raised in a home where hospitality was regularly offered to persons needing food and lodging may assume they have the gift of hospitality. When in reality, their actions and attitudes have been learned from family.

## THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The operation of spiritual gifts is for the edification of the people of God before and after Pentecost. Arrington writes, “Instances can be cited from Scripture where many if not all of the spiritual gifts operated in one form or another before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.”<sup>8</sup> Of special interest in the Old Testament are Bezalel and Oholiab. In order to fulfill the guidelines for the construction of the tabernacle at Mt. Sinai, the Spirit gifted them with skill, ability, knowledge, and the ability to teach (Exodus 31:3; 35:30-35).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul shares how spiritual gifts are to edify the church. First Corinthians 14 provides directions (orderliness) by which edification can be accomplished and confusion avoided. Spiritual gifts need to be edifying believers both inside and outside the church sanctuary. They were never intended to be relegated to a side room or discouraged from occurring within the main body of the congregation. Indeed, great care needs to be taken to control those who would disrupt or offer their own ideas. This is when the leader must of necessity discern whether or not this is a genuine spiritual gift operating.

Not to be overlooked is how speaking in tongues is to be a distinct sign to unbelievers. However, this appears to be when just one individual speaks in tongues. If many speak in tongues simultaneously unbelievers will see it as chaos and not being mentally balanced (see 1 Corinthians 14:22, 23).

Prior to leaving this section, it should be noted that the baptism in the Holy Spirit makes us more open to all the gifts. In the Book of Acts, we see the believers being more sensitive to the gifts working in ministry (Acts 3:1-10; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 7; 11:28; 13:11; 14:10; 19:11, 12).

## THE RECIPIENTS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Having previously established that all believers will at some point receive a spiritual gift due to the Holy Spirit's work in salvation, it is important to insert several guidelines. First, the gift one receives does not categorize one of greater or lesser importance. The apostle Paul clearly speaks to this in 1 Corinthians 12:12-24, using the analogy of the human body. Some gifts are more visible and frequently seen as more important. Others are more hidden (backstage so to speak) but just as vital to the body.

Second, the operation of a spiritual gift in a person's life isn't a sign of spirituality or a life of unconfessed sin. Paul describes the members at Corinth as being carnal or worldly (1 Corinthians 3:1), and yet they were blessed with spiritual gifts. Lombard and Daffe write, “God doesn't automatically ‘shut off’ our giftedness. They are gifts of God's grace, not



gifts of our perfection.”<sup>9</sup> The life of Samson is a perfect example. He flirted with and indulged in fleshly desires. But, there is a point of his (and our) crossing the line. Judges 16:20 is definitely one of the saddest descriptions in Scripture. Samson wakes up assuming he would go out in the strength of the Spirit totally unaware the Lord has left him. This reminds us that no one should risk harboring unconfessed sin with the known potential of the Spirit’s removing His empowerment.

Third, the operation of a spiritual gift in a person’s life isn’t a confirmation of their theology or methodology. According to Lombard and Daffe, “Techniques and procedures never are validated by the end result.”<sup>10</sup> For example, some individuals are healed in spite of being hit or their crutches and glasses being broken. Personal violence and bizarre activities are not the pattern of the operation of spiritual giftedness.

## THE EXTENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Is there a specific number of spiritual gifts? The initial response is to reference 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 12:28-30; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:10, 11. A quick review indicates some gifts are repeated in more than one listing. There is a hesitancy to list an exact number, since there may be the possibility of several gifts being the same though listed under different wording. Another reason stems from there being instances of other miraculous giftings being provided to enable ministering and to remain active for the rest of a person’s life.

Consider the following examples. A pastor friend wants to minister to shut-in members of his congregation. He sings but cannot play a musical instrument. After several weeks of prayer, the Holy Spirit enables him to play the piano in two keys—with no lessons and he cannot read a note.

This author knows of two individuals who were given the gift of languages, one Spanish and the other Bulgarian. They speak fluently but cannot explain the grammar. In each case, the ability enabled immediate ministry without language training and continues even now.

“It would be easy to simply pass off these instances as miracles. However, they do not meet the definition or description of a miracle, which is altering the ordinary course of nature. They are truly giftings for the edification and ministry of the Church. Accepting the possibility of there being other spiritual gifts which may be divinely conferred places a tremendous responsibility on us.”<sup>11</sup> Being highly skilled in an area is not the test for spiritual gifting. It is vital to differentiate between natural gifts and spiritual gifts as previously defined.

## THE ORDERLINESS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40). This verse provides the foundational principle for the orderly operation of all spiritual gifts. Its application must, of necessity, be evident in both small group meetings and corporate

church services. There is no setting in which chaos, unsubstantiated claims, or questionable integrity are to be present! Anyone who claims the Holy Spirit commandeered their body does not understand that He works through us as we are in submission to His will and timing. Bizarre actions and claims frequently are the result of well-intentioned individuals who definitely “get in the flesh” or have good, but unsubstantiated intentions for others.

First Corinthians 14:27-33 provides very specific instructions concerning speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecies. These include the order, number of speakers, and submitting to others when presenting their giftedness. Verse 33 reminds us that God himself is a God of order and peace.

In Deuteronomy, there are guidelines for those who operate as a prophet or in the gift of prophecy. In chapter 13, we see that the prophet’s message must harmonize and be in complete agreement with the Scripture. Another check is the person himself. Does the person’s lifestyle reflect Christian morality and integrity?

Deuteronomy 18:21, 22 emphasizes the need for fulfillment. Lombard and Daffe say, “Unless prophecies are fulfilled within their context (person, location, and time period) the person is not a prophet.”<sup>12</sup> These same principles apply to any person or statements made as part of indicating the operation of the gift of prophecy.

In summary, Arrington says, “The mere presence of spiritual gifts in the Church does not ensure the accomplishment of their

ultimate purpose. Gifts only achieve their goal when they are exercised for some useful purpose. The manner in which gifts are used (operated) is crucial to the building up of the church”<sup>13</sup> and finishing the Great Commission.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1968) 28.
- <sup>2</sup> Donald Gee, *Spiritual Gifts in the Work of Ministry Today* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1963) 2.
- <sup>3</sup> J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2009) 83.
- <sup>4</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, “Pray! Pray! Pray.” *The Church of God Evangel*. 24 (Jan. 1914) 1.
- <sup>5</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, “Pray! Pray! Pray.” *The Church of God Evangel*. 21 (Feb. 1914) 4.
- <sup>6</sup> John Lombard Jr. and Jerald Daffe, *Spiritual Gifts for Today? For Me?* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008) 25.
- <sup>7</sup> Lombard and Daffe, *Spiritual Gifts for Today? For Me?* 50.
- <sup>8</sup> French Arrington, *Encountering the Holy Spirit* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2003) 213.
- <sup>9</sup> Lombard and Daffe, *Spiritual Gifts for Today? For Me?* 191.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. 196.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. 205.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. 94, 95.
- <sup>13</sup> Arrington, *Encountering the Holy Spirit* 247.

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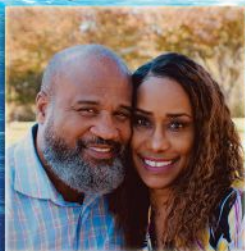
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# CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*Abbreviated news from faithnews.cc between September 10, 2019 and January 10, 2020.*

## 2020 YWEA Project Announced

The Church of God Youth and Discipleship Department has announced the 2020 Youth World Evangelism Action (YWEA) project which focuses on the continent of Africa.

Next year's annual nationwide fund-raising campaign for the youth of the Church of God is subtitled "Piercing the Darkness With the Light of the Gospel." It intersects with the vision of the Church of God World Missions initiative titled, "Send the Light to the Cities," and seeks to establish a Ministry Training Center in the city of Lome, in the country of Togo. The center will serve not only Togo, but also the entire Francophone (French-speaking) region of the African continent. In Lusaka, an existing church structure will be renovated to provide a new ministry training center and offices for the National Youth Ministry in Central Africa.

Under the premise of "protect and provide," another primary goal of YWEA 2020 is to strengthen support for the 1,700 children living in Church of God orphanages across the continent of Africa.



## Hill Launches #wepraycog Initiative

Church of God General Overseer Timothy M. Hill formally announced the inauguration of a 40-week emphasis toward intense and focused prayer, culminating next summer at the 78th International General Assembly in Indianapolis.

Hill explained the initiative "#WEPRAYCOG, the Church of God United in Prayer" during a joint meeting of the International Council and International Executive Council. Both were in town for regularly scheduled gatherings at the International Offices. Hill also introduced the cochair, Niko Njotorahardjo, pastor of Gereja Bethel Church in Indonesia.

"As we approach the International General Assembly, we must have intensive intercession," Hill explained. "We need to move from talking about prayer to engaging in prayer (intercession), moving from a need-based petition to relationship-based communion with the Father."

The #wepraycog involves three primary areas of focus: Pentecostal Renewal and Revival, Prevailing Unity, and Purposed Direction. The plan calls for 40 weeks of prayer, starting Sunday, October 20, 2019, and continuing for 40 weeks until the opening day of the International General Assembly on July 21, 2020. For 40 days between Easter and Pentecost Sunday, a special time will be set aside each day to focus on a specific topic for prayer. And finally, during the International General Assembly, prayer warriors will engage in 40 hours of nonstop prayer.

The formal launch of the 40-week period will take place on Sunday, October 20. Events to follow the launch will include Agree '20, a three-day prayer emphasis from the International Offices, state and regional prayer conferences, 40 days of prayer and fasting (between Easter and Pentecost Sunday), GO FINISH 2020, a

global campaign to see every individual win a least one person to Christ, prayer emphasis during state/regional camp meetings, and the 40 hours of prayer during the International General Assembly.

## Dr. Paul Conn Stepping Down as President of Lee University

Dr. Paul Conn, president of Lee University, announced his intention to leave his position in the summer of 2020. Conn made the announcement to the university faculty telling them he had met with the Board of Directors during the school's Homecoming weekend.

"...I asked the Board to begin the search for my successor. My plan is to stay until our summer commencement, August 1, which would be my last day in office." August 1, 2020 will be 34 years to the day that Conn was appointed president during the Church of God General Assembly in Atlanta on August 1, 1986.

Conn said he will stay on the leadership team of the new president. "Although I will resign the duties of the president, I have agreed

to stay at Lee in a new role, as chancellor, a position which will be established on August 1. In that position, I will continue to be active, doing whatever I can to advise and support the new president."

Conn, 73, has been president of Lee since 1986. His thirty-four years at the post make him the longest-serving CEO of a college or university in Tennessee. He is currently in the second year of a four-year appointment.

Conn stated: "I have made this decision because I believe I can serve Lee better not by directing the day-to-day operations, but by working with a new leader who can bring fresh energy and insight to our shared vision."

Under Conn's leadership, Lee "has been transformed," according to Board Chair Dennis Livingston. Enrollment has mushroomed from 1,000 students to more than 5,000. The physical campus has grown from 23 acres to 125 acres, with the completion of 30 building projects. Athletically, Lee has developed from three sports in the NAIA to the current eighteen sports at the NCAA Division II level. The university's operating budget now exceeds \$100 million, and Lee has become one of Cleveland's largest employers.

## Church Leader Bennie Triplett Passes Away at 90

Rev. Bennie Triplett, musician, songwriter, author, radio speaker and church leader in the Church of God, passed away on Sunday, December 15, 2019. He was 90.

Brother Triplett's entire life has been impacted by the Church, beginning with his childhood which was spent at the Church of God Orphanage. Receiving a call to the ministry at the young age of 11, he has served in multiple





capacities at nearly every level of leadership in the Church of God.

He and his wife, Helen, accepted their first pastorate in Minot, N.D. in 1954. It would be followed by a church in Memphis the next year, and two other pastorates in Nashville (1966–1968), and Lawrenceville, Ga. (1980–1984).

The Church of God recognized the leadership of Bennie Triplett with multiple appointed positions throughout his 51 years of active ministry between 1949 and 2000—the year of his retirement. His first appointment in 1955 was to Tennessee as the state Youth and Christian Education director. The Triplets served as state/regional overseers in the states of North and South Dakota (1968–1972), Indiana (1972–1976), Florida (1976–1980), Southern Ohio (1988–1999), and Alabama (1999–2000). He was program director for the Church of God radio broadcast *Forward in Faith* from

1958–1966 and general director of the Radio and Television Department from 1984–1988. He was elected four times to the Church of God International Executive Council.

While a seasoned church leader, Bennie Triplett is perhaps best known for his prolific songwriting ability. He penned more than 250 gospel songs, choruses, anthems, and many popular hymns sung by congregations around the world. His works appear in countless hymnals and chorus books across many denominations. His original song, “How About Your Heart,” was recorded by the Blackwood Brothers Quarter and became a No. 1 hit.

Besides music publications, he has also authored an autobiography titled, *From the Door of an Orphanage to the Palace of a King, A Contemporary Study of the Holy Spirit, Holidays, Holy Days and Special Occasions—Vol. 1*, and his last book, *Marriage, Home, and the Family*. His musical accomplishments earned him numerous honors and awards, including two Golden Mike Awards for Best New Song, Distinguished Service in Music Award, and the Lee University Distinguished Alumnus. He also received an honorary Doctor of Sacred Music degree from the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, the first in the Church of God to receive an honorary doctorate in music.

## Smoky Mountain Children's Home Hosts Centennial Reception

**Cleveland, TN**—The Smoky Mountain Children's Home (SMCH) held a reception at the Church of God International Offices on January 8, 2020, to formally kick off a year of celebration of the home's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Located in Sevierville, Tennessee, since 1949, the Church of God's signature benevolent ministry was established in 1920 following action at that year's General Assembly.

The reception featured a proclamation by Cleveland City Mayor, Kevin Brooks, declaring Wednesday, January 8, 2020, as *Smoky Mountain Children's Home Day* in the City of Cleveland.

The proclamation called attention to the December 17, 1920, opening of the first orphanage under its first "matron," Lillian Kinsey. The ministry began with three children in a six-bedroom house on Montgomery Ave. in Cleveland and was initially named *Orphanage Number One*. In 1928, a 119-acre farm just south of Cleveland was purchased and the operation remained in Cleveland until 1949 when it relocated to Sevierville, Tennessee, when what was then Bible Training School moved to

Cleveland and became Lee College (now Lee University).

According to records from the Children's Home, the home has ministered to more than 30,000 children and young people throughout its long history. Their residential, foster care, and adoption programs continue to minister to children and youth. The organization has received national recognition from the Council on Accreditation of New York, as well as through licensing with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

During the reception an announcement was made regarding the most significant anniversary event of the year for SMCH, the Centennial Celebration, which will be Tuesday, April 21, 6:00 p.m. at the Sevierville Convention Center. The occasion will include a benefit dinner and auction, as well as an opportunity to share in the historical milestone.





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