

FALL  
2019



# engage

A Journal for  
Church of God  
MINISTRIES

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New Media and Technology

The Latino Explosion in the  
Church of God

Bring Scripture to Life

Transformation Through  
Tithing

Fall Kickoff at Your Church

FALL 2019  
VOL. 15, NO. 3

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# Extending Our Reach

**A**N ARTICLE IN this issue addresses livestreaming in the local church. It wasn't too long ago that no one had ever heard that term . . . because it didn't exist. The advent of the Internet, websites, social media and livestreaming (in that order) have emerged over the past 30 years or so to alter the landscape of how churches and organizations get their message out to the masses. Today, on a moment's notice, an amateur can mount a phone on a \$20 tripod and shoot video to capture an event. The quality that results rivals anything shot from just a few years ago, and it can be uploaded instantly to reach thousands, not just regionally, but around the globe . . . for free.

These realities have reduced the cost of disseminating the gospel on a global scale. It has changed the dynamics for the local church. No longer is an investment in heavy-duty camera equipment, a full-time staff, hours of pre- and post-production, and an expensive contract with a media outlet mandatory. The playing field has been leveled in many

respects, and the confidence to FINISH the Great Commission can now be shared among all churches.

May we all embrace the latest technology with salvation and discipleship in the forefront. ■

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

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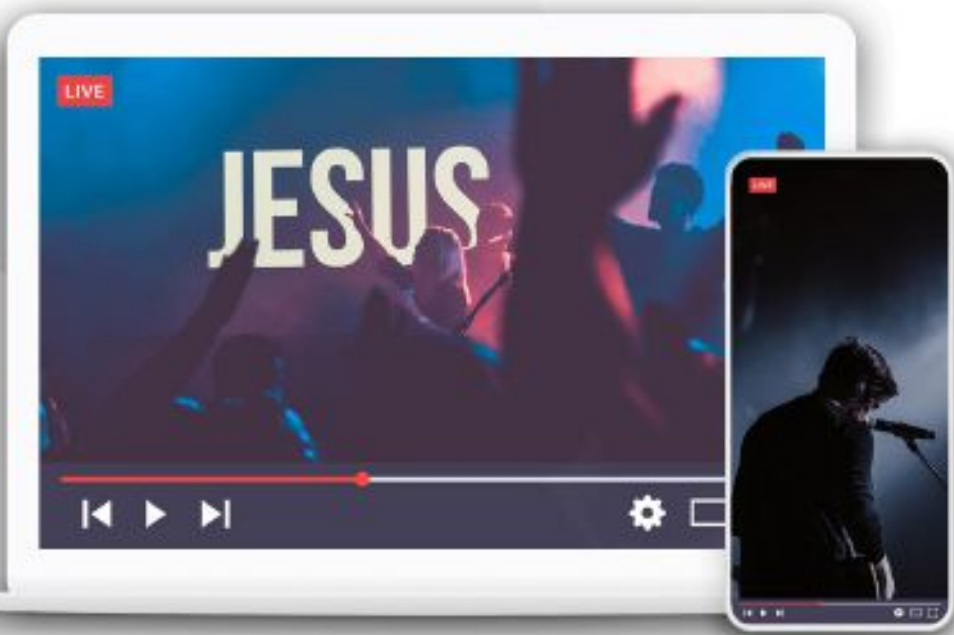
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■ by TRAVIS JOHNSON

# NEW MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY IS A VEHICLE TO BE DRIVEN

**S**TANDING IN MY first church building after seven years of being a portable church pastor, I opened my mouth to dedicate our space. When the words came out, it sounded something like this:

We love this new building. But we are not here so much to dedicate our building as we are to rededicate ourselves to the mission of Jesus. We are grateful for this space. It is beautiful. We will worship here.

We will reach this city with this space as our home base. But, when it no longer works for us, we will get rid of it and get something else that better serves us as we pursue God's mission for us in this city.

That building lasted two years for us. Beautiful things happened there. People were baptized. The church grew. Memories were made. Then, we went into a new property and experienced new adventures. New ground was

taken. However, we stepped forward into a property 10 times as big, which catapulted us into a completely new level of engagement for our region.

I remember leaving that place and feeling a sense of loss. Actually, some people wanted to stay. In some ways, I did, too.

I wonder how many times the church has missed critical moments to step forward into new vehicles for carrying the gospel because of our comfort or uncertainty about new territory.

## **NEW MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY**

We stand at such a moment where we need to adapt to new vehicles and technologies coming along. If we don't, we can miss out on something that could catapult us into a new level of gospel engagement with our cities and world.

## **GOSPEL PIONEERING**

I have magnetic wire reels carrying my grandfather's sermons. Some of the great Pentecostal, faith evangelists, and evangelical leaders leveraged the printing press, TV, and radio while these technologies were in their early phases. We can learn from that, especially in a day where media and technology are super available and ready for us to accelerate the advancement of the gospel.

Where would we be today if they had not been willing to use new avenues for Kingdom advancement?

We do our fathers and mothers no favors by preserving their vehicles. We honor them

and Christ by driving whatever vehicles we can get our hands on to move the unchanging gospel forward with gusto while remaining doggedly on mission.

## **MY FEAR OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE CHURCH**

I don't want to get buried in sharing all my concerns, but I will share one such fear. I'll also share what happened when I faced it down.

I wanted to livestream my services. However, I knew that when I did, some people would miss services in person more often. I also knew that if I didn't throw open the doors to my church, there would be people who needed to hear the gospel and people who needed to be part of the church that would not have the opportunity to be connected to us.

We launched our livestream anyway. Sure enough, some people missed church. Maybe they'd always done that. But now we could see them engaging with us while they were missing being with us in person. Of course, I did the same. When I was on vacation, in addition to attending church somewhere, I always joined in with my Pathway Church family online.

While some people may have missed church more, more people began to learn about us and attend church. We had to let go of one thing to take hold of another. It was worth it, especially when you consider that there are only two ways to grow your local church:

1. Get more people to attend church, and,
2. Get people to attend church more often.

Rather than trying to preserve our spot, our place, our moment, we launched out for a new one. In the end, we took ground, and God took care of my concerns. More people called Pathway Church home. And, people regularly told more people about their church family on social media platforms.

## LEVERAGE YOUR PLATFORMS

We started a church in South Florida using Myspace. We were rallying local Indie bands together for concerts. Some of my pastoral staff today came out of Myspace, the concerts, and church services which came out of those thrusts.

Today, Myspace is a cyber ghetto. Nothing is happening there now.

What platforms are effective today? Many.



Some are broadcast and narrowcasting platforms.

Some are productivity platforms.

Some will be fun and managed by adults; but many adults will be shown the way by teens and kids. That's crazy. I know.

But, however it shakes out and whether you develop leaders by empowering leaders and teams, or if you are the team, go for it. Grab your phones, laptops, cameras, and most important, the gospel story, and put it in whatever vehicles you can get in your fleet. And, drive the wheels off these media platforms for the sake of the kingdom of God and the world around you.

- Tweet
- Gram
- Status update
- Stream
- Text
- Write
- Engage
- Comment back
- Talk
- Shake hands
- Look people in the eye
- Have a conversation

And by all means, preach . . . never being afraid to preach, whenever and wherever. Don't shy away.

Do it the best that you can, being thankful for how you've ministered in the past, effective in your present season, and courageous as you move forward. ■

*Travis Johnson is the lead pastor of Pathway Church in Mobile, AL and executive director of People for Care and Learning.*



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"A Believing People"		"A Saved People"		"A Sanctified People"
LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 1		LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 2		LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 3
January		February		March
<b>5 Weeks</b>		<b>4 Weeks</b>		<b>4 Weeks</b>
"Principles & Power of Intercessory Prayer"		"A Spirit-Baptized People"		"A Healed People"
(Chapter 6 - 7 from "Fighting The Good Fight")		LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 4		LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 5
April		May		June
<b>5 Weeks</b>		<b>4 Weeks</b>		<b>4 Weeks</b>
"An Expectant People"		"Understanding & Destroying Strongholds"		"Pentecostal Bible Study" <b>2 weeks and</b>
LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE SERIES VOL 6		(Chapter 8 - 9 from "Fighting The Good Fight")		"Daniel - Faithful Witness Bible Study" (10 wks) . . . or choose
				"James - Path To Discipleship" (10 wks) . . . or choose
				"Romans Vol. 1 - Path To Transformation" (10 wks) . . . or choose
August		July		December
<b>5 Weeks</b>		<b>5 Weeks</b>		<b>2 Weeks</b>
		(One week off)		"Surviving Spiritual Abortion"
				(Chapter 10 from "Fighting The Good Fight")

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All listed resources available in Español



# FALL KICKOFF at Your Church!

■ by HUBERT SEALS



**S**EPTEMBER is just around the corner, and churches are ramping up for the new church year—September through May. Years ago, I heard someone use this little jewel of a jingle/quote: “Methods are many, principles are few...methods always change, principles never do.” With this in mind, let me share two things with you.

## PRINCIPLES

In planning for fall programs, discipleship classes, and events, here are the key principles to remember.

## REACHING:

You not only need to reach out to your own people, but to the unchurched as well. As a matter of fact, utilizing your people to reach out to others is the best way. This

will help create an “invite culture.” There are some people who will not witness, sing, teach, or lead, but EVERYONE can “invite.” To enable them to be effective in inviting, it is important to equip them with printed invite cards and some simple tips. Also leveraging social media to the hilt is strategic in creating a culture of invitation.

## TEACHING:

Once people come to classes, groups, or events, it is important to provide a quality learning/fellowship experience for them. This will include a warm welcome, solid content, and an opportunity for involvement.

## KEEPING:

This is not only the most challenging but also the most rewarding phase. Following

up on all people (especially newcomers) is essential. And you can't just stop with a form letter, postcard, or call. Those are effective, but you must take people from the "follow-up" phase to the "assimilation" phase. This requires a longer and stronger commitment—a commitment to call, re-call, and *invest* to the point that they have also found a fulfilling place of ministry in which to serve. Then, the cycle of growth and development continues.

## METHODS

In planning for the fall, there are numerous ideas to consider in creating a climate of celebration and excitement. Here are just a few.

### BACK-TO-SCHOOL BBQ:

It could be an all-church picnic, cookout, or other fellowship events. Regardless, it serves as a focused "Welcome Back" for your church family. It also serves as a "reaching" opportunity for parishioners to invite friends and family, as well as providing a perfect opportunity to introduce your church programs.

### PRAYER SERVICE FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR:

This is an excellent time to refocus after a busy summer, and it serves a great purpose in covering all teachers, students, administrators, and school personnel with prayer for a new school year. In addition,

this kind of event brings attention to your church and its ministry opportunities.

### BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLESSINGS:

This could be providing all teachers in your area with gifts (notebooks or calendars with church logo, box of chocolates, etc.). It could be providing backpacks for students (all schools or an adopted school) loaded with school supplies. It could also be sending a letter to every teacher welcoming them back to the new school year with a commitment to pray for them throughout the year.

### MINISTRY FAIR:

This involves putting all your ministry opportunities on display and inviting all parishioners and others in the community to come and have some free coffee and donuts (or any other appealing refreshment) and view your involvement opportunities.

Your fall kickoff is extremely vital for your church because it is the natural time for everyone to reengage after the summer and get back into the swing of things. It is a prime opportunity for you to involve more people in your church family and win new people to your church. ■

*Dr. Hubert L. Seals has served as Associate Pastor (Adult Discipleship; Couples and Family Ministry) at the North Cleveland Church of God for 38 years.*

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September	October	November
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28	22 23 24 25 26 27 28	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30	29 30 31	29 30

6 Weeks of Bible Studies

October 16 – November 20

January 8 – February 12

January	February
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31	29 30

6 Weeks of Bible Studies

February 19 – March 25

April 1 – May 6

April	May
S M T W T F S	S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28	22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30	29 30 31

6 Weeks of Bible Studies

**Kindle the Power** Bible studies are written to teach us His Word as we study it together. It is our prayer for hearts to be stirred with compassion and the love of God. Further, as we know Him better through these studies, we become more like Him as His disciples. As we are changed, we are able to see God do greater things in our lives and the lives of others as His power works in us for more than we can even ask or think!

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Looking for a discipleship plan for your women? Well, look no further! We are offering two plans from which to choose for equipping Pentecostal women in your church.

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#### October

#### November

September 4 - November 20

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\*Certificate Program

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#### January

#### February

January 8 – February 26

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\*Certificate Program

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#### April

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# THE LATINO EXPLOSION

## in the Church of God

■ by CARLOS S. MORÁN

**T**HE NOTICEABLE PRESENCE and continued growth of Latinos in the United States is a demographic reality. In 2018, Latinos in the United States comprised 17.8 percent of the nation's total population. Regardless of how they entered the country or where they came from, Latinos are here now, participating in and clearly contributing to life in the United States and to the Church of God. Latinos, since before the founding of the United States, have been here and are here to stay.

Latinos in the USA are the second largest ethnic group, but have no common racial identity. They are the latest immigrant wave to transform the country; however, some Latinos have lived in Florida, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado since before the United States existed. Latinos have been identified as, Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, and Spanish-surnamed Americans, and lately as Latinx. But regardless of what they are called, people of different Latin American origins are living in and contributing to the betterment of the United States.

### GENERAL DISTINCTION AMONG LATINOS

The most obvious distinction among Latinos is their national roots. The majority of Latinos in the USA trace their roots to Mexico (63.2 %), followed by Puerto Ricans (9.5 %) who since 1917 have been recognized as USA citizens. They are trailed by Cubans (3.9 %), Salvadorians (3.8 %), Dominicans (2.5 %), and Guatemalans (2.5 %) (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/hispanic-heritage.html>).

Another significant distinction is their regional presence. Latinos of Mexican roots tend to reside in California and Texas, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are the largest groups in New York, and Cubans reside predominantly in Florida. The Latino population of California exceeds 15 million. The Texas Latino population is close to 11 million. The following states have a Latino population of at least a million: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York.

A third distinction of Latinos in the USA is their varieties of cultures. Although Latin

America is connected by two languages—Spanish and Portuguese—similar colonization, and religious experiences, Latinos in the USA are not monocultural. The Latin American groups in the USA bring different traditions, music, cuisines, cultures, and grapple with dramatically different acculturation experiences in the United States.

Latinos in the USA share different migration stories. For example, since 1961, two years after the Cuban Revolution, Cubans were welcomed as refugees. The wet-foot, dry-foot policy allowed Cubans a quick transition to legal residency and citizenship. As to Hondurans, Guatemalans, and Salvadorians, if they are here without permanent residency or if their Temporary Protection Service (TPS) expires, they are returned to their respective home nation in spite of the fact that these countries are commonly listed as the world's most dangerous countries. Many of these Latinos who are deported have lived in the USA an average of more than 15 years, are married and have children born here, own homes, own businesses, and are active in church and in their respective communities.

The disastrous politics of immigration laws play a large role in the USA Latino community. The undetermined, undocumented population of the United States is overwhelmingly Latino. One hears that the undocumented population is as low as 10.5 million and as high as 22 million. These undocumented immigrants pay taxes, help sustain the Social Security Trust Fund, and are less likely to commit a crime (Immigration Council).

Many Latinos live in blended status families, in which one or more parents are

undocumented with one or more children who are U.S. citizens. This is a common reality in the USA Latino experience. Sadly, the number of deportations that separate parents and families is rapidly growing. The rounding up of undocumented residents known as “raids” are continually intimidated as destabilized communities and churches. People go into hiding and stop attending church for fear of being trapped in a raid. Businesses feel the impact of the absence of Latino consumers.

In contrast to most Latinos, Puerto Ricans are free to come and go to the mainland because of their status as U.S. citizens. Despite this freedom, Puerto Ricans have struggled over the question of independence or statehood. Puerto Ricans are confronting this issue with urgency on account of how Hurricane Maria's devastation of the small island is being managed by the U.S. Federal Government.

## **THE IMPACT OF LATINO GROWTH BY BIRTHS**

As we move toward 2020, living conditions for Latinos in the USA are changing. Despite their large numbers overall, migration from Mexico is in decline. Today, Central Americans from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are the fastest growing Latino group in the United States. Moreover, the comparably easy path to citizenship that defined the Cuban experience for decades was ended by President Obama as part of his effort to normalize relations with Cuba. Now, even some Cubans are entering the United States as undocumented immigrants.

The common, shared experiences of Latinos in the USA contribute to their role in

the fulfillment of the Church of God mission and vision. Despite the heated headlines and sensational reports on undocumented immigrants or the beliefs of some of the defenders of the border wall proposed by the president, the largest source of growth in the USA Latino population is not immigration, but births in the United States. Over one-third of all USA Latinos are under 18 years old. Six in ten are younger than 33 years old. In an otherwise aging population, the Latinos of the United States are a young people. Massive deportations will not reduce the number of Latinos residing in the USA.

The USA Latinos are also increasingly acculturated, not necessarily assimilated, with record numbers speaking English—a trend driven by the young. These young Latinos retain many of their parents' cultural understandings. They enjoy hearing the music; they are comfortable watching novelas and soccer games with their parents and grandparents. These young Latinos love to eat hotdogs, hamburgers, and pizza, but also know how to order and consume tacos al pastor, pupusas, mofongo, mangú, ropa vieja, chuchitos, empanadas, horchata, mavi, and a host of other savory and unique Latino dishes and drinks.

## **LATINO BEGINNINGS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD**

According to the Church of God's historical record, the first organized Spanish-speaking congregation in the USA took place in Ratón, New Mexico. In 1912, General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson, visited the "Mexican" congregation led by T.F. Chávez, who was 73 years old. Pastor Chávez is the first ordained Latino min-

ister in the Church of God (Conn, Charles). In the membership rolls of many congregations of the Church of God in Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, among other states, one can find many members with Spanish surnames. The presence of Latinos in the Church of God got a powerful spark with Reverend Maria Atkinson's missionary work in 1930 in Mexico and the powerful Pentecostal revival in Guatemala in the early 1930s.

In the early years, the Church of God had no formal plan to evangelize Latinos. The Holy Spirit used the various immigration waves of Latinos who moved to the USA that were already part of the Church of God in Latin America to evangelize the Latinos residing in the Southwestern States. In the 1940s the need to consolidate the ministry among the Spanish-speaking in the USA, led to the establishment of a Bible Institute and a publishing house (Editorial Evangélica). These institutions accelerated the evangelization of Latinos in the USA. The International Preparatory Institute (IPI) is closed; however, the aftershocks of its impact in Latin America and the USA are still being felt. Editorial Evangélica is a ministry of Church of God Publications that specializes in producing and distributing Spanish resources with a distinct Pentecostal flavor.

It was during the forties and fifties that a structure of Latino regions was initiated to meet the needs of the first generation, Spanish-speaking constituents of the Church of God in the USA. Two regions and their respective state overseers were appointed by the International Executive Committee. The Mississippi River was used as the demarcation line for the Eastern and Western regions.



As immigrants from all Latin American countries continued to arrive in the USA, in order to meet the need to further consolidate and formulate strategies and programs to evangelize them, the Church of God expanded the number of the Spanish-speaking regions. Even today, the Holy Spirit continues to challenge the Church of God with the unique opportunities it has to evangelize the immigrants seeking asylum at the Southern USA border. Several Church of God congregations at the Southern border are accepting God's call to minister to the children and their parents by providing shelter, showers, clothing, and hot meals before they continue their journey to reunite with family members.

Their counterparts on the Mexico side of the border are doing the same as the refugees await the opportunity to present themselves to authorities for consideration of their asylum petition. The shelters on the Mexico side are driven by Christ's love to help those in need regardless of their immigration status. The immigrants that will eventually resettle in the USA will become part of a community, and one prays and trusts that a Church of God congregation will be within their reach to welcome them into God's family.

## **THE PRESENT REALITY**

Every Sunday, close to 100,000 members attend a Spanish-speaking Church of God congregation in the USA. The congregations are predominantly comprised of first- and second-generation Latinos. Some congregations have implemented English dominant services for the children and young people that have

a preference for English as the medium of communication.

One can visit a Latino Church of God congregation in the USA and experience their uniqueness as it relates to how they are engaging their communities. Some churches in megacities like San Francisco, New York City, Chicago, are landlocked and cannot expand their facilities to accommodate the growth; therefore, these progressive churches prepare a team of workers who will go to a community they want to reach. Once the congregation is thriving, they are released for ministry and the process is repeated.

Other congregations have to be creative in the scheduling of their services because the members are employed in industries that never close like Las Vegas, Nevada. Also, the congregations who meet in a storefront understand that parking will always be an issue; consequently, they find ways to accommodate the visitors and worshipers by negotiating contracts with community centers or public schools to use their facilities for their main gatherings. As a last resort, some Latino congregations of the Church of God have entered into partnerships with nominal denominational churches that graciously welcomed them and allowed them use of their facilities with a reasonable rent. A few congregations have exchanged their labor for maintenance of the facilities for rent. These nominal churches are glad to have a vibrant, young Latino church meeting in their facilities.

The Church of God Latino megachurches in Tucson, Arizona; San Antonio and Dallas, Texas; Port St. Lucie, Florida; or New York, New

York, among others, are engaged in reaching Latinos of all generations. Some Latino churches have reinvented themselves and have determined to be multiethnic, multicultural, multi-generational, as well as multilingual. In certain areas, the congregations are heavily populated by undocumented immigrants that are welcomed as brothers and sisters in the Lord. They are received into God's house of prayer and freely worship and participate by supporting the furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God, in the exercise of His sovereignty, may even call DACA recipients or undocumented immigrants into ministry.

There are some Anglo Church of God churches that have opened their doors to Latinos and have accepted them into the life of the congregation. The pastors of these churches have seen the gifts that Latino believers possess and have included them in their church councils, leadership positions, and where a pastoral vacancy is created have recommended a Latino pastor to fill it.

The Latinos that gather every week in a Church of God congregation are heterogeneous. Not all of them are immigrants. For example, Puerto Ricans are not immigrants. Puerto Ricans by birth are U.S. citizens. Many Latinos in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Florida have lived in the USA for many generations. The children of Latino immigrants are not immigrants. These young Latinos are U.S. citizens in every sense of the word and did not come to the USA by crossing the border.

Latinos are intermarrying and creating a new ethnic reality. They need to find churches that welcome them and understand their

unique relationship. Although, they may have a Spanish name and surname, they may not speak Spanish. They are English monolinguals and are more comfortable in settings where English is dominant.

The 1,000 plus Spanish-speaking churches of the Church of God in the USA are supervised by eight regional overseers. The sustained growth of first- and second-generation Latinos in the USA, who are Spanish dominant calls for a dynamic, united, Holy Spirit-driven strategy to evangelize them. This necessitates a deliberate, detailed, strategic study of the present geographical and economical potential composition of these eight regions. As migrants resettle, expanding the number of Spanish-speaking regions in the USA is a thoughtful, proactive consideration for the immediate future.

Third-generation Latinos will opt to attend churches where English is the main medium of communication. The brilliant, progressive, open-minded young pastors who lead congregations that are English dominant are evangelizing, discipling, and integrating young Latinos into the Church of God. These churches serve as models for those Spanish-only churches that want to transition to an English-only service.

## **THE FUTURE OF USA LATINOS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD**

USA Latinos in the Church of God contribute significantly to the life and mission of the Church. They are gifted with the ability to communicate in two languages, interact with other cultures, understand the struggles of acculturation and are great bridge builders between people of different ethnicities,

cultures, languages, social, and economical backgrounds.

Latinos are actively involved in propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is in their DNA from conversion to Christ. They inspire other believers with their unwavering trust in God's providence, their inspiring celebration of Pentecost and their appreciation of the sanctity of marriage and life. The open practice of their faith and devotion speak of an intimacy with God that generates unconditional love and care for others.

The strong commitment to family and community life is another desirable characteristic of Church of God Latinos. Despite the adverse circumstances ranging from forced immigration, hardships, discrimination, and family separation by deportations, Latinos strive to form strong families and keep them together.

The future of Latinos in the Church of God calls for their integration and cooperation at every level of ministry. Latinos have paid the price of getting an education and are ready to lead when given the opportunity. They are ready to serve as pastors, missionaries, teachers, administrators, and overseers.

The growth of the Church of God in the USA is strong because it has made room for minorities. Innovative ways to communicate the mission and vision of the Church of God in a variety of languages can be facilitated by gifted Latinos.

## **FINISHING THE GREAT COMMISSION**

In the 2018 Hispanic Ministries Advisory Council meeting, the eight Latino regional overseers committed to planting eighty

churches by August 2020. The church planting and revitalization strategy that has been adopted in partnership with the Church Multiplication Network is having a positive effect. Anglo congregations, near major urban areas, are joining Latino congregations in their endeavors to plant a church.

The Anglo congregations who desire to reach Latinos in their communities must know that language, culture, education, and immigration issues are key factors to consider in reaching them. Interpretation of the services is not enough. Staff has to look like the people the congregation is reaching. Furthermore, Latinos are not seeking validation, affirmation, or appreciation; they are seeking a voice and a place at the table. They are not in competition! They want to FINISH the Great Commission in partnership with other brothers and sisters. Latinos in the Church of God see themselves as strategic leaders, full of grace and the Holy Spirit, committed to fulfilling the mission and vision of the Church of God.

For the Church of God and the broader United States society, from its media to its political systems, creating and opening opportunities for Latinos will be critical to the success of the Church of God and other denominations in the 21st century. The presence and continued growth of Latinos in the United States is an inevitable experience. Regardless of how they entered the country or where they came from, Latinos are here now, participating in and contributing to life and the advancement of the gospel in the United States and throughout the world. They are full of the Holy Spirit power, purpose, passion, and promise. Latinos are here to stay! ■

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# FIEL USA 2019:

## An Attempt for a Redefinition of the Pentecostal Mission of the Church

■ by ENRIQUE A. DE JESÚS

**A**T USA Hispanic Educational Ministries (USA HEM), we are committed to preparing God's people to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission. Through our Bible Institutes in each of the eight USA Hispanic Regions, our Pentecostal faculty teach how to face the actual challenges of this Postmodern/Post Christian Era. We use a diversity of ministerial programs at the national level, which now includes Canada. Because of these educational programs, the pool of global leaders is varied, including educators, pastors, overseers, and the third assistant general overseer. Through the years, these alumni also became involved in the training of other generational groups. FIEL USA is one of the global ministerial training arms of USA HEM.

FIEL stands for the Fellowship of International Educators and Latino Leaders in the USA. The National Summit of Education targets the Hispanic/Latino constituency of the Church of God in the United States and Canada. As a recent global outreach, FIEL USA

invited other ethnic groups, missionaries, and leaders from the International Offices of the Church of God. This makes FIEL USA a multi-ethnic, educational summit in nature and action.

Being inclusive of all races, cultures, and ethnicities, FIEL USA represents a holistic discussion forum made up of constituents of the church regarding ministerial issues. The symposium promotes a ministerial, theological, and educational interpretation, reflecting a Pentecostal perspective of the issues and taking proactive steps for the future. Our primary mission is to gain consensus on how to engage in a missional identity, starting with local church ministries having a global impact in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

FIEL USA is held biennially in different COG Hispanic regions of the USA. It is open to educators, pastors, ministers, and leaders of all origins who pursue connection to what is happening in the ministerial world. All gather together and sit at discussion tables as one people, in one Spirit, and one church. There is an environment of respect and harmony, with all having the same purpose of collaborating in the integration of ideas, visions, and dreams.

FIEL USA took place from July 31 to August 1, 2019, in the city of Mesquite, Texas. The biennial event was planned one year in advance by a Steering Committee. In compliance with the global vision and commitment to "FINISH" as the main theme for the Summit, the Committee stated its goal to be: A Redefinition: A Pentecostal Church Toward an Integrated and Global Mission. Approximately 200 delegates participated from the USA and Canada, representing multiple ethnic groups and origins.

FIEL USA 2019 addressed three ministerial issues which emerged at the 2018 International General Assembly:

- (1) Meaning and use of the term bishop;
- (2) Women in ministry and leadership; and
- (3) Internationalization of the church (focusing on the point of view of the migration and displacement realities as part of the redemptive plan of God).

A highlight this year consisted of young theologians, pastors, and/or educators who served as main speakers, and several of the principal resources were women actively engaged in ministry.

This time FIEL USA 2019 contextualized three surveys used as a principal reference to supplement the one sent by the International Executive Committee and the Global Forum. USA HEM provided cutting-edge resources to assist the speakers in the interpretation of the responses. Approximately 2,000 Hispanic constituents received the surveys, and almost 1,000 sent them back. The survey responses showed a representative amount of the general point of view. Results were shared during FIEL USA 2019 during the first session. The second and third sessions during the second day included general conferences from different perspectives, foundations, and generational groups.

This year (2019), several leaders from the International Offices participated as delegates and expressed their gratitude for the event. The director of Ministerial Development, Dr. Michael Reynolds, the USA English MIP coordinator, Dr. Don Bennett, and the international coordinator, Dr. Dwain Pyeatt were present as an act of solidarity and support



for the educational efforts of the USA HEM. As an example of the general impressions and comments, Dr. David Ramírez, Third Assistant General Overseer, mentioned his gratitude for FIEL USA, especially for continuing with the group reflections at the round tables where everyone could express himself or herself with respect. One of his comments was: “Extraordinary summit where three prominent theologians offered presentations that led to reflection and dialogue on women’s leadership, the internationalization of the church, and migration as a mission tool.”

USA HEM and FIEL USA are committed to continue fostering these kinds of relationships and Pentecostal educational encounters with mentors and pioneers of the Pentecostal faith, as well as from all generational groups. We are committed to continue establishing alliances with people from all countries that may engage in lifelong learning to produce life-giving ministers. We intend to be a synergizing agency among the global Latino emerging generations in the USA and Canada. May God continue helping and anointing His servants as they join efforts to “FINISH” the Great Commission. ■

*Dr. Enrique A. De Jesús is the director of USA Hispanic Educational Ministries and FIEL USA President.*

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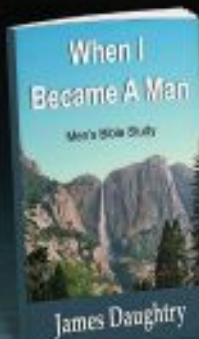
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# Romans 16: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

■ by TERRY CROSS

*(Editor's Note: This article addresses the subject of women in leadership within the church and is in response to an item to be discussed at the 78<sup>th</sup> International General Assembly next summer in Indianapolis, Indiana.*

**A**MONG THE FOUR Scriptural passages that we are considering in relation to women in leadership within the church, Romans 16 presents something like a counter-balance to the Pauline passages that seem to restrict a woman's activity in the body of Christ. In this "farewell" chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul offers greetings both to people he knows and some he does not. Among the twenty-eight (28) people addressed, no fewer than seven (7) are women. Of greatest importance for our consideration will be the following: Phoebe (16:1); Priscilla (16:3-4); and Junia (16:7).

While we have offered two different sides for interpreting texts in previous presentations,

this text is different. Unlike previous texts, there is no "debate" over a statement made by Paul regarding the place of women in the church; instead, there is a difference of interpretation over the precise nature of leadership roles that these women played. Therefore, we will provide differing interpretations of what these women were doing in the church. Since these are not necessarily broken down by a Side A or Side B, we will simply offer the varying interpretations proposed by scholars.

What is not debated in the historical record of the first-century church is that women opened their homes for meetings of those coming to the Christian faith. What becomes more debatable is the role that such women played in church leadership, particularly, the role of the women on whom we will focus our attention. ■

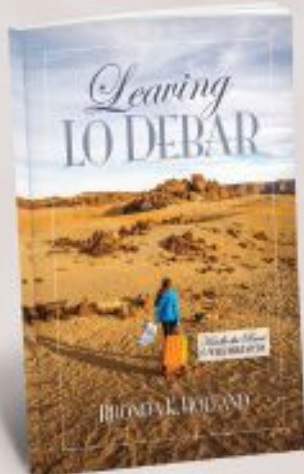
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**EPHESIANS 4:16 KJV**



# TEEN TALENT AND LEE UNIVERSITY:

## A Ten-Year Success Story

**M**ORE THAN TEN years ago, the decision was made to shift International Teen Talent competition away from coinciding with the biennial International General Assembly of the Church of God. Several reasons contributed to the move, which placed Teen Talent on the odd-numbered years rather than the same summer—and location—as the International General Assembly. The final Assembly where Teen Talent was staged was 2008 in San Antonio, Texas. The location of Teen Talent since the summer of 2011 has been the Lee University campus.

There have been five competitions since transitioning International Teen Talent competition to the Lee campus from the Assembly (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019). Upon completion of the 2019 week of Teen Talent, Director of Youth and Discipleship David Blair and his staff reflected upon the event and gathered figures from those five years. Some of the benefits of the transition include:

- Registration/entries have increased from around 550 to more than 800, primarily due to reduction in cost from the housing and meal packages offered through Lee University when compared to the much higher expenses at an International General Assembly location;

- The expense of conducting international competition was drastically reduced for the Youth and Discipleship Department as a result of the multiple venues on the Lee campus and the in-house production team and equipment offered through Lee University;

- Teen Talent has been able to expand registration and allow winners and runners-up from each state, region, and nation to participate;

- Overall expenses of the International General Assembly have realized a substantial reduction through not having to rent convention space or provide production for the various divisions of Teen Talent;

- Additional student-focused activities like Battle of the States, Run4Hope Fun Run, Lee University Worship Night, and a Block Party,



have been added to the Teen Talent week itinerary because of the multiple venues and the flexible schedule Lee University allows;

- Teen Talent has grown as a truly international competition as a result of the reduced cost for international travel to Cleveland, Tennessee, and housing on the Lee campus;

- One of Lee University's most effective recruiting tools over the last eight years has become International Teen Talent Competition.

Blair reported the following figures from the 2019 Teen Talent, held July 29 – August 2:

- Over 880 entries in 60 categories within the six Teen Talent divisions of Art, Bible, Multimedia, Creative Writing, Drama, and Music;

- Eleven countries and twenty-eight states raised thousands of dollars to send hundreds of students to this international competition;

- The first International Teen Talent participants from Taiwan, Cayman Islands, Antigua/Nevis, Guatemala, Argentina, and Belgium competed;

- The first International Teen Talent winners from Taiwan, Argentina, Cayman Islands, and the South-Central Hispanic Region.



- Some \$500,000 in scholarship funds were awarded by Lee University to Church of God Teen Talent participants;

- The Teen Talent 2019 online results revealed:

- 51,186 individual views on Teen Talent Livestream.

- 14,329 individual views on Facebook Live.

- A total of 14,431 hours viewing from across the world.

“The strategic partnership with Lee President Dr. Paul Conn and the superior team of leaders at Lee University hosted us with excellence,” Blair stated. “The constant support of General Overseer Tim Hill, Youth and Discipleship Executive Liaison John Childers, and the entire International Executive Committee is invaluable.” Blair went

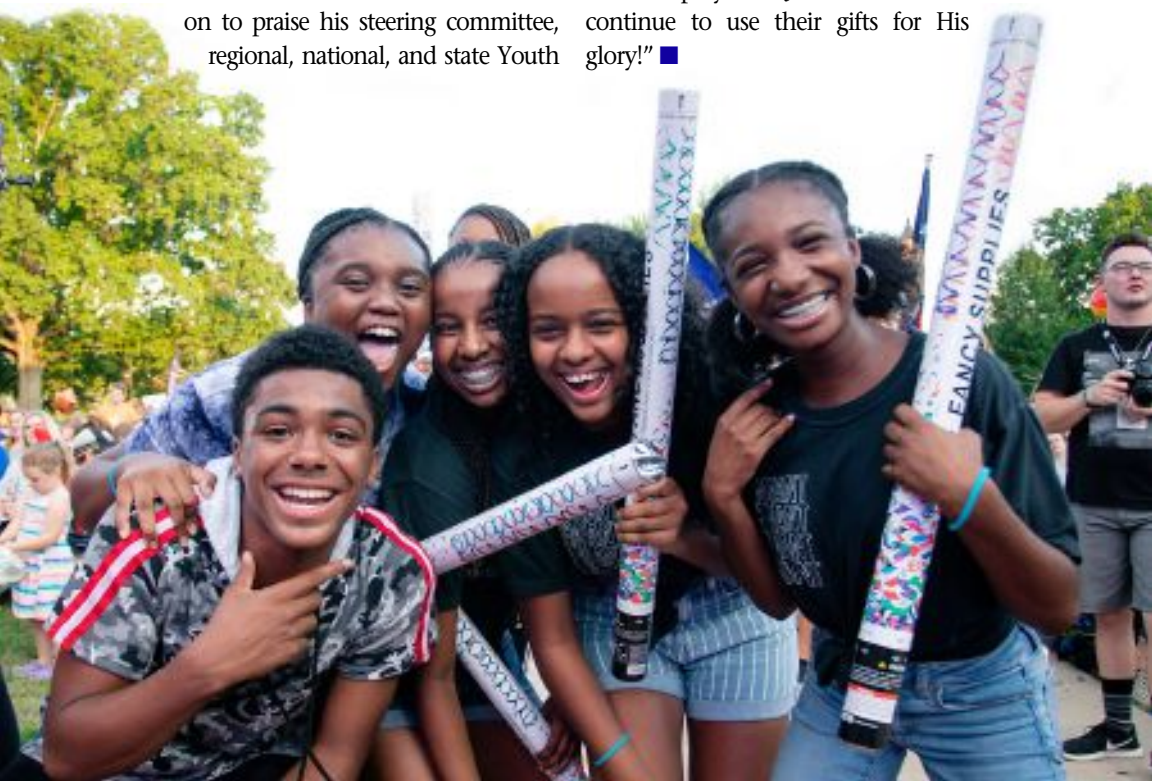
on to praise his steering committee, regional, national, and state Youth

and Discipleship directors, International Youth and Discipleship leadership team and staff, and dozens who assisted in hospitality, registration, judging, marketing, and operations.

Blair went on to say, “There are lots of individuals who make Teen Talent successful, not the least of which are the ‘unsung heroes’ like parents, pastors, local church youth pastors, and choir directors, bus drivers, and chaperones. All of them are vital contributors to the week of Teen Talent. Their sacrifices make the week as smooth as possible for the young people.”

As a final summary of his report, Blair offered congratulations to the winners, runners-up, honorable mentions, superiors, and all participants in the 2019 International Teen Talent Competition.

“We pray the Jeremiah Generation will continue to use their gifts for His glory!” ■



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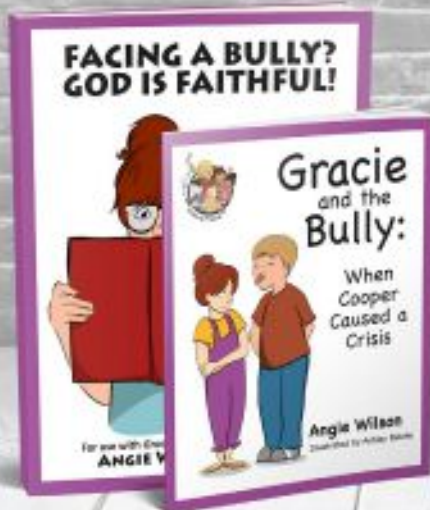


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# TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TITHING:

## REALIZING EVERY CHURCH'S POTENTIAL

by STEVE HALL



**C**HURCH RESOURCES often limit a pastor's vision. Jesus never intended it to be this way, but it can be different going forward. To alter your future trajectory, both pastor and church must reconcile their vision and practice of tithing.

Henri Nouwen said that money is ministry. As a pastor, I admit that when I've actually had the courage to speak those words, I did so anxiously, since money is such a delicate subject with most congregants. In my experience, they see little connection between money and ministry, but Nouwen disagrees. More specifically, Nouwen's exact words were, "Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission."<sup>1</sup>

However, is fundraising the same as tithing? I don't think so. To see this, consider the nuances between fundraising and tithing. Fundraising is tied to a specific initiative or project, such as a clean water well missions project or a new building annex. Both fundraising targets may be Holy Spirit inspired; yet, each has a beginning and an end. When

the wells are dug and the buildings built, the projects end. On the other hand, tithing is theoretically consistent; it is linked to ongoing obedience rather than temporary inspiration.

Tithing did not begin and end with the Mosaic Law, since Abraham responded to God's grace prior to that by tithing (Genesis 14). Later, Jesus tells religious folks they should tithe, but not forget the things beyond tithing, such as justice and mercy (Matthew 23). Jesus is not saying that tithing is the boring or pedantic baseline of obedient giving, and that justice and mercy constitute true giving and should inspire fundraising campaigns. Rather, He indicates that faithful tithing funds his worship temples, enabling leaders and attenders to engage in ongoing works of justice and mercy. His focus is not tithing *or* social concern; it's both. No doubt a case can be made for dispensing with bounded law-oriented tithing (10 percent) in favor of unbounded, grace-oriented generosity (any percentage), yet the wisdom of a consistent tithe-like fiscal baseline for justice and mercy ministry prevails.<sup>2</sup>

Hezekiah's reforms (2 Chronicles 31) are examples of this wisdom. As the people

returned obediently to faithful tithing, the temple storehouses overflowed, amply supplying the temple for the ministry of worship, mercy, and justice. For too long, pastors have favored special-project fundraising over tithing. It should not be one or the other, but both. If God's people return to an original baseline of consistent, faithful, sacrificial tithing, the church would require little, if any, fundraising to transform the community with the gospel. Let me prove it to you.

In the county where I pastor, average annual household income is \$103,000.<sup>3</sup> This income figure is easy to understand, since the average annual starting salary for a trash truck driver is \$65,000.<sup>4</sup> The average 10-year county schoolteacher makes \$66,000 per year.<sup>5</sup> If the trash truck driver and schoolteacher were married, their combined annual income would be \$131,000, for a tithe of \$13,100 per year.

I have 477 households which contribute regularly to our church. Fewer than 10 percent of those give more than \$1,000 per year, which means about 90 percent of congregants do not tithe. Paradoxically though, we raised \$250,000 last year for a special fundraising project, and more money than ever for missions initiatives.

Imagine you pastored my church and were more effective in conveying biblical tithing than I am. Your giving profile could conceivably reverse, so that 90 percent tithed, and 10 percent did not, which would result in 429 households donating a little more than \$5.6 million annually. With our current church budget of just less than \$2 million, this would yield a \$3.6 million surplus. Sound reminiscent of Hezekiah's problem?

Now imagine all Christian Bible-believing churches in your county were in the same fiscal situation—experiencing an annual multi-million-dollar surplus just because the people were tithing faithfully. Would that be boring? Would that enable you to fulfill your pastoral vision for social justice and mercy? Yes, you should tithe as Jesus said; and when you do, you could abundantly address things beyond tithing, like justice and mercy. Can you imagine the transformation that would take place in your church, community, county, state, and nation? Every church's potential could be transformed through tithing. It's time for a Hezekiah-like *reform* that will *transform*. ■

*Dr. Steve Hall serves as lead pastor of Heritage Community Church in Severn, MD, executive director of Ministry Oasis (ministryoasis.com), and adjunct professor at Richmond and Lee University.*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M. *A Spirituality of Fundraising* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books Kindle Edition, 2010), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, David M. "Tithing: Instruction or Instructive?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (2012), 21 (2): 214. <https://doi-org.proxy.ashland.edu/2648/10.1163/17455251-021102003>.

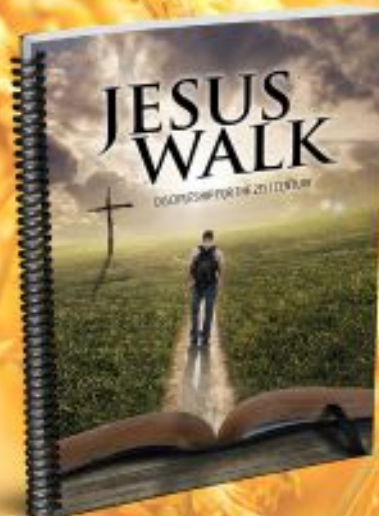
<sup>3</sup> Brown, Pamela. *Poverty Amidst Plenty V*. Fifth Edition (Annapolis, MD: Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County Publishing, 2015), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Personal conversation with Roger McCracken, District Manager for Waste Management of Baltimore Market, June 12, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, 8.



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by JERALD DAFFE

# WHEN IS IT TIME TO LEAVE?

**M**OVING—so many decisions to make, so much effort to be expended, so much expense! Just the word brings up images (or nightmares) of:

- Sorting—keep, discard, donate.
- Packing—boxes of breakables, clothes, bedding, kitchen items, books.
- Multiple details—address changes (seems like they never end), canceling accounts (bank, utilities).

- Physical fatigue—from long hours and constant activities.

- Saying goodbyes—friends and colleagues.

Then when you arrive at your destination, much of it is done all over again, just in reverse. Plus, there are the many adjustments—finding doctors, dentists, plumbers, HVAC technicians, mechanics, schools, friends, and good neighbors.

Hopefully, prior to all this effort and change there has been thoughtful and prayerful



consideration, especially for those of us who are in ministry positions. Several questions frequently appear for those of us in ministry.

1. Should we move to another ministry location?

2. Should we move into another type (position) of ministry?

And occasionally, some may ask:

3. Should we leave the ministry?

The intent of this article is to provide insight to the first two questions. However, some application possibly can be made to the third one. It is always easy to sit on the sidelines and be an “armchair quarterback” or “next-day expert,” telling others what they should or should not do. Not to be overlooked is the value of someone separate from the situation (no dog in the hunt) gently probing with questions or considerations which deserve consideration.

We begin with some general reasons which are not sufficient in themselves to move to a different area of ministry or to leave the active ministry.

**1. Downswings:** A decline in numbers—attendance, finances, or workers is always a matter of concern. Here’s when one needs to step back and view the situation with reality rather than emotion. Are the numbers down due to the death of senior citizens, migration when jobs leave the area, or young people leaving smaller communities for education or job opportunities?

Aging of the congregation may be a factor. Some choose to live in another geographical climate for four to five months (snowbirds).

Others, because of physical decline or injury, are no longer able to fulfill their responsibilities of the past. Some may be involved in seasonal work or in some cases required overtime. They work seven days a week for extended periods of time (months).

**2. Conflict:** No doubt it is difficult to minister when individuals sit in the congregation and refuse to make eye contact with each other. Even more difficult is when members look at you and their agitation for what you represent isn’t hidden. There seems to be two major reasons for conflict. First, individuals are not in harmony with the mission and vision of the church. Second, there are those members (believers) who are problem people. They range from simple agitators to the explosive who want their way regardless. Their existence and efforts alone are no reason to move. New places often reveal different problem people.

**3. Bigger Opportunity:** The option for advancement definitely provides a strong pull to move. It allows for expanded influence and financial support. It suggests and speaks of a level of ministry possibility beyond one’s current station. Let’s not forget that “bigger isn’t always better” and “the grass always seems greener on the other side.”

**4. Closer to Home:** It’s always great to be close to one’s parents and siblings, provided it isn’t a dysfunctional one. Family ties are important! Grandchildren need to know their grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Cousins provide memories and relationships which continue into future decades. However, with our modern technology those ties can be

maintained. Plus, there are vacations. Unless ministry families are willing to travel to distant parts of the country and world, many may never hear the gospel or receive the ongoing pastoral care which they need.

**5. Part-time Salary:** Needing to be a “tentmaker” pastor is in itself not sufficient reason to move. Being the son of a “tentmaker” and personally working a part-time job for many years in order to fulfill full-time ministry, I understand some of the potential frustrations which may arise. Not to be forgotten are the ways our spiritual enemy uses to discourage us. However, there is a positive side. You meet individuals who would not normally be in your sphere of influence and ministry. This can be the place to “grow where we are planted.” Also, you are brought face-to-face with the concrete issues of the people in your community.

We now turn to the opposite side—reasons which may necessitate or encourage leaving a particular location or type of ministry.

**1. God’s Divine Direction:** This is the top of the list reason. He knows where we should be, when that is to take place, and why. Saying, “it is God’s will” should never be stated flippantly. Hopefully when one makes that statement, he or she will be ready to state how that is known when being boldly confronted. Keep in mind that God’s will for a particular move can be spiritually confirmed by one’s spouse, spiritual mentor, or senior pastor when on staff.

By the way, even when it is God’s will it does not mean there will be no struggle, conflict, or sacrifice at the new ministry position. Also, it isn’t necessary to constantly be praying

if it is God’s will for you in your present ministry. If you knew He led you to your present setting, then rest assured, He will let you know when it is time to move.

**2. Church/Pastor’s Request:** This is a no-brainer. It is not debatable or optional. It may be financially driven or a matter of personality conflict. Sometimes, it may even stem from one’s abilities not fitting the job requirements. This underscores the need to view the job description and decide your ability to fulfill it. Occasionally, we hear of a setting when an individual accepts a ministry position because of desiring a full-time involvement, knowing full well it is beyond who they are.

**3. Pastor’s Integrity:** We hope that pastors of low morals and integrity are few and far between. However, reality continues to expose pastors who skim church funds, inflate report numbers, and sometimes tell “bold-faced” lies. A former student calls. The conversation goes something like this. “I know the Lord wants me to take this part-time youth position. The Lord has confirmed it with my wife as well. But, there is one problem. The lead pastor is not known for being an honest, truthful man. What do I do?”

My answer was very simple. “You must do what the Lord is saying to both of you! However, because of your personal integrity, you will resign in a relatively short period of time.” End of story—some three or four months later, I helped him craft his letter of resignation.

**4. Family Crisis:** Consider the following scenarios: a need to be nearer specialized medical care; need to escape a toxic, abusive group of members; need to be near parents



who are ill and aged; need to find a more secure financial basis. In each of these settings, there may be another alternative. However, it seems only logical that each may be a reason to leave one's current situation.

**5. Inability to be Yourself:** This includes being kept from using your spiritual and natural gifts. It may also be a matter of our style of worship, preaching, and leadership. Not to be overlooked is not being able to meet the people's expectations.

Some cautions/considerations need to be analyzed. Have you taken the time to learn and to appreciate the people's interests and traditions? Have you explored the area in which you live and minister? Are you knowledgeable about its history and special offerings? Have you given sufficient time to gain the people's confidence? Keep in mind this could take

several years. Have you verbally shared your appreciation for their skills and commitments? Yes, there are some ministry settings in which each of us will not be sufficiently competent to fulfill the task. However, these are greatly reduced when a sincere, concentrated effort is made to adjust, while at the same time maintaining personal character and integrity.

There are occasions when a person should move to another location or type of ministry. There are settings where a person needs to take a sabbatical from ministry. These include burnout, physical difficulties, family problems, and moral failure. But, in all of them, there should be the reminder that God's call to ministry is never anything less than for life. ■

*Dr. Jerald Daffe is professor of pastoral studies at Lee University*

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# BRING SCRIPTURE TO LIFE IN YOUR CHURCH

**D**ISCIPLING CHRISTIANS to love each other like Jesus does—wholly, without holding anything back—is hard.

It's a challenge for most pastors to find a way to inspire church members to develop a heart for those outside their communities. As followers of Jesus, it's difficult for many of us to think about giving away our time or attention to strangers when we have already packed our days full with our own families and our church community. There is often little room for the Spirit to move us in quiet ways; for example, prompting us into actions that move us away from the familiar and the comfortable, and venturing out into the thick of the struggles all around us—loving others, tangibly, like Jesus.

But what if there were a way to bring Scripture to life for the people in your church? Suppose there were a practical way to “hit the pause button” each night for a week, sharing experiences at home that help them catch a glimpse of the pains of hunger, the discomfort of dirty clothes, and the many needs of the world? What if we could get everyone, from kids to young adults to seniors, excited to dive in and share God’s love with others by putting their faith into action?

It’s all right there in Matthew 25—the key to loving others like Jesus—it’s feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, caring for the sick, the stranger, and the imprisoned.

And whatever we do for “the least of these brothers and sisters of mine” (Matthew 25:40



NIV), Jesus tells us, we do for Him. Often, that takes developing empathy first.

"We think we know what suffering is," says Jim Duran, lead pastor of The River Community Church in Ventura, California. "We think we know what *going without* is. And I don't think we have a clue."

When Jim first heard about the Matthew 25 Challenge from a World Vision representative, he was hesitant. Like most pastors, he was busy. His church was already involved in the community and had several ministries in process. But a video revealing the plight of children in extreme poverty around the world struck a chord with Jim. He thought about the needs of the community that his church wasn't addressing. And he thought about the people in his congregation who weren't serving yet in any capacity. That's when he decided that bringing in World Vision's Matthew 25 Challenge could be an incredible opportunity to activate his church.

*This would be something that we could actually do together*, Jim remembers thinking. *The whole church could actually do this.* "And so, I was inspired."

The Matthew 25 Challenge introduces congregations to practical ways to gain new perspective together, as families. Simple daily challenges encourage people to step into the shoes of our vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world—a taste of what it's like for people who are hungry, thirsty, and in need.

Jim found easy tasks like sleeping on the floor to be more eye-opening than he'd anticipated: "My wife went, 'OK, I'm going to take the couch and you can lay out, but I'll be here

with you.' So, I realized we're not as tough as we think we are. We don't really understand what these people go through on a daily basis."

The Matthew 25 Challenge not only creates an opportunity for good conversation about the stuff that matters, but it also sparks change. It strengthens and connects families. It engages them outside of Sunday mornings. And it creates a culture of generosity in the church.

This weeklong discipleship experience is easily accessible to everyone in your church. Each day, text messages sent right to your phone deliver the daily challenges. But even more, they share compelling stories that engage and bring to light the reality many families around the world face.

#### **The week's challenges include:**

- Monday — skip lunch
  - Tuesday — drink only water
  - Wednesday — sleep on the floor
  - Thursday — wear the same clothes you wore the day before
  - Friday — reach out to someone
- "I would recommend this to any pastor. It will get the church members involved and excited about doing this challenge," Jim says, "It brings unity to the church."

Jim was moved as he watched his church family transform. People became intentional about reading the Bible as a family, giving financially, praying together for their community, and stepping out in ministry. The shared experiences inspired them to feel sincere empathy and love—not only for neighbors, but for strangers, too—and even more, it moved them to respond.

The moment with the most impact occurred when his church gathered on Saturday morning at the end of the week to pray together.

“Because of the Matthew 25 Challenge—because of the involvement of everybody in the church, we had 10 times as many people on that prayer walk than we ever had at the Saturday morning prayer meeting,” Jim says. “We walked our city; we prayed over our city. We ended up in front of City Hall praying over the city officials, asking for wisdom ... It was actually so impacting that our team looked at me and said, ‘We have to do this again.’”

This unique experience can help you disciple your congregation and open their eyes to

the importance of acting out their faith. It can help them understand that when they care for others and meet their needs, they’re not only showing compassion and love to God’s children, they’re also serving Jesus.

What if something as simple as sleeping on the floor could bring about transformation in your church, *and* transformation for our brothers and sisters around the world? Are you willing to see? Sign up for the Matthew 25 Challenge and disciple your church in a fresh, engaging way that compels hearts to act . . . because we can all afford to love more like Jesus.

To learn more about the Matthew 25 Challenge, visit [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org). ■



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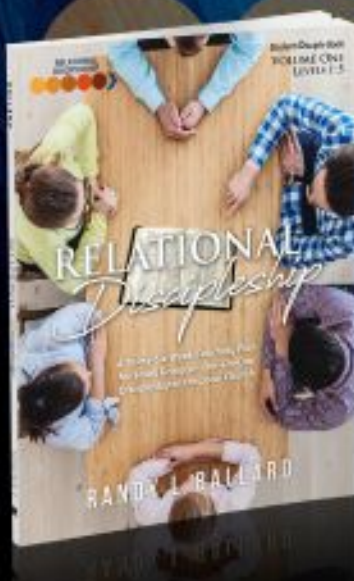
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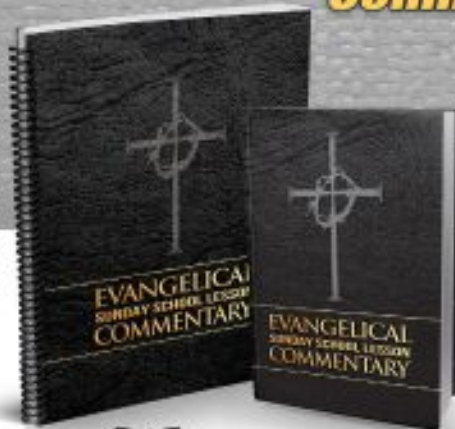
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**LEGAL NOTES**  
Dennis W. Watkins

# Release Forms and Church Liability

**L**IABILITY WAIVERS are commonplace in many churches today and are especially prevalent in many youth ministry settings. While we hope release forms and waivers will never be subject to enforcement and are created out of an abundance of precaution, the reality is that sometimes events occur which necessitate these signed forms be considered. The effectiveness of these waivers is something that all churches and ministries should be keenly aware of, as they often offer less protection than most assume. At the same time, these documents should be utilized in the proper circumstances.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In general, courts tend to *disfavor* liability waivers, since many view them as encouraging a lack of vigilance. Without getting too legal, I would point out that for your liability waivers to have legal standing, they must incorporate the following requirements: “Consideration,” “Mutual Assent,” “Sufficiently Definite,” “Legal Capacity of the Signer”; and, there must be indication of a properly formed contract.

## CONSIDERATION / MUTUAL ASSENT

Consideration is a legal term that requires a contract to be beneficial to both parties. Any release of liability form that your church or organization utilizes should include a generic sentence at the beginning; for example, “In consideration of being accepted by \_\_\_\_\_ Church of God for participation in \_\_\_\_.” “Mutual Assent” assures that both parties—the participant and the church—have entered into the agreement willingly and without the use of fraud or misrepresentation.

## DEFINITE IN NATURE

Your waiver must also be “Sufficiently Definite,” meaning that the essential terms of the agreement are explicitly stated. Vagueness in a release of liability waiver decreases the likelihood that a court will enforce the waiver if needed.

## LEGAL CAPACITY

The “Legal Capacity of the Signer” is an important condition of liability waivers of

which your ministry should be aware. While waivers are commonplace in many youth settings, minors do not have the legal capacity to sign documents; waivers signed by them may be unenforceable in some instances. Further, in most states, even the signature of a minor's parent/guardian cannot release a future claim that a minor may bring once the minor has reached legal adulthood. Our research has indicated that only the states of Alaska, Colorado, and Florida permit a guardian's signature to waive liability for a minor child—along with Arizona and Virginia, which make exception for activities involving horses. This is important to remember when organizing activities for your ministry.

## PRACTICAL TIPS

Always consider these practical tips when using liability releases:

1. The legal effectiveness of liability releases may vary from state to state.
2. A liability waiver should be considered as legally binding.
3. Release forms should be specific to the event. For instance, if the release form covers a swimming event only, adding a side “bungee-jumping” event would not be covered by the release, because it was not clearly set out.
4. While some churches use a “catch-all” general release for all events in a year, church insurance companies prefer an individual release for each specific event.
5. The release form should make the participant's health insurance primary and the church's insurance secondary.
6. If you desire a standard release/liability waiver form that I use, you may request it at [legal@churchofgod.org](mailto:legal@churchofgod.org), and I will send it to you. Be sure to have your local attorney review it before using it.

## CONCLUSION

While liability waivers are a good measure to enact before accepting participants to ministry activities, knowing the liability waivers' limitations is essential. Your ministry should always require waivers to be customized and reviewed by a local attorney. Further, all waivers should be notarized once signed. Most important, remain vigilant and exercise caution in all that you do—never rely on a liability waiver to keep you “off the hook” if an incident arises! The health and safety of our church constituents, especially young people, are our most important concerns! ■

*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.*



**MONEY MATTERS**  
Art Rhodes

# Proposed Changes to Overtime Rules

**M**ANY CHURCH LEADERS think that the “wage and hour” laws, and particularly overtime pay rules, do not apply to churches. That could not be farther from the truth. Churches and church employees are NOT exempt from the “wage and hour” laws—and failure to obey such could result in substantial penalties to the church. To get around these laws, many churches have often wrongly “exempted” their employees from the law.

However, on March 7, 2019, the U.S. Department of Labor issued “proposed” regulations concerning who will be eligible for overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). These new regulations, which are scheduled to take effect on Jan. 1, 2020, could have a substantial impact on churches and other nonprofit entities.

Before reviewing the changes in the regulations, it is important to understand the foundation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The FLSA requires that workers be paid the federal minimum wage (or a higher wage if the local jurisdiction or state has mandated such) for the first 40 hours worked in a regular work week. Further, for any hours worked past 40

hours in a regular work week, the FLSA requires that most employees be compensated at time and a half of their regular hourly wage.

To be exempt from this “time and a half” overtime pay rule, the employee has to be classified as an executive, administrative, or professional employee—often called the “white collar” exemptions. Each category of exempt employees is defined specifically under the FLSA. However, not only do you have to meet the definition for an executive, administrative, or professional employee, but previously you had to be paid a salary of at least \$455 a week (\$23,660 for a full-year worker). Under the new regulations that are scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2020, the minimum salary threshold to be an exempt worker increases to \$679 a week (\$35,308 for a full-year worker).

For example, assume that a church has an employee, such as the director of the church’s daycare, that they have designated as being exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act as an “executive” because the person supervises more than two people, her position is primarily managerial, and she has genuine input into the job status (hiring, firing, promotion, etc.) of the employees she supervises. This person



has been making \$32,000 a year and averages working 50 hours a week at the church. Since the new regulations do not go into effect until Jan. 1, 2020, the church is currently in full compliance with the law. However, after January 1, this person, even though she remains an “executive” and can be paid a salary, must be paid “time and a half” for any hours worked over 40 hours in a regular work week, simply because her annual base salary does not meet the new minimum annual salary of \$35,308.

With the new rules, it is important to remember the following:

- An employee, whether classified by the church as exempt or not, can be paid a salary and still be subject to the new overtime rules.
- Even a worker who meets the criteria of being designated an executive, administrative, or professional employee must be paid overtime (time and a half) if he or she is compensated less than \$679 a week after Jan. 1, 2020.
- Overtime for this purpose is considered to be any hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a regular work week.

Any time there is a change to the overtime rules, there are always questions about the applicability of the new regulations to ministers. In other words, if a minister works more than 40 hours in a week and does not make more than \$35,308 in taxable income in a year, will a church have to pay the minister time and a half?

Currently, there is no clear, specific

answer to this question in the regulations, but the answer seems to be no. While ministers are not statutorily exempt from FLSA requirements, several courts over the years have found that clergy are exempt under the “ministerial exemption”; in other words, ministers performing religious functions are excluded from the definition of employees under the FLSA. The Department of Labor in a 2005 opinion letter seemed to recognize this exemption as well.

Should you have questions about the applicability of these rules to your employees, it is recommended that you check with a qualified employment attorney and seek professional advice regarding your situation immediately.

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*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.*



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT  
Tim Hill, General Overseer

# THE JEREMIAH GENERATION: What's This About, and Does It Matter?

**S**OON AFTER I became general overseer, Jeremiah 1:4-10 exploded in my spirit. The familiar passage describes God's call to Jeremiah and then Jeremiah's response.

The Scripture points out that from his mother's womb, Jeremiah was known of God, and then called by God to be a prophet to the nations. Following Jeremiah's excuse of being "too young," God responded by saying, "Do not say, 'I am too young. You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you'" (vv. 7-8 NIV).

After studying this passage, I was especially moved by the specificity of the Lord's direction to Jeremiah: "I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (v. 9 NIV). What an overwhelming and significant job description to give a young man!

In reading these verses over and over, I became convinced that a similar calling was upon the sons and daughters of the Church of God. At that moment, I believe the Lord instructed me to Embrace, Engage, Empower, and Employ a young generation with a calling and purpose, like the one placed upon Jeremiah, in other words, a calling to a "Jeremiah Generation."

It has not been my desire to place a specific age limit on the Jeremiah Generation, but for the purpose of focus, I have typically identified this group as being those already identified as millennials and Generation Z. Basically, all those born since 1980.

To be overly clear, please allow me to state again what I hopefully made clear at the General Assembly. The emphasis on the Jeremiah Generation is not at all to the exclusion of any other generation or age group. It is simply an intentional effort to bring along our sons and daughters to stand side-by-side the rest of us in ministry.

After developing this dream and focus, I held multiple meetings with other leaders, including the Executive Committee, state overseers, Youth and Discipleship directors and others. In these meetings, I emphasized that the Jeremiah Generation initiative could not be a program or a short-lived, “feel good” attempt to satisfy a segment of the church who was looking for just a place to serve and belong. It had to be more.

To make it meaningful, numerous qualitative and quantitative goals were set:

### **1. The Jeremiah Generation focus had to connect strongly with the FINISH Commitment.**

In keeping with the FINISH Commitment, the Jeremiah Generation project encases four of the six FINISH initiatives, including FIND (finding and pursuing the Jeremiah generation); NETWORK (networking with the next generation through discussion groups, personal engagement, and strategic conferences); and INVEST (investing in the lives of next generation leaders to model, mentor, and train). Ultimately, the purpose of this project is to identify and SEND this amazing and resourceful army out to win the HARVEST.

### **2. The Jeremiah Generation initiative could not be run by a group of older men at Church of God headquarters—of which I am one.**

While the wisdom and support of mature leaders is vital, the Jeremiah Generation must have the handprint of young leaders in order

to reach more young leaders. That’s why I sat down early with the leaders of the Youth and Discipleship Department. In them, I invested trust, funding, and support . . . and said: “Loose your student leaders and the students themselves to run with this vision.” Because of that critical early decision, the Jeremiah Generation emphasis is soaring.

### **3. The Jeremiah Generation had to have a cutting-edge training element for current and future pastors and leaders.**

This training component wasn’t about making an unhappy group of millennials and Gen Z-ers feel better about the Church of God. It was about the Church of God investing in a generation who will lead this movement, sooner rather than later, and they need to know the best methods available.

As part of this process, the Church of God was able to secure the training available through Dr. Fred Garmon and LeaderLabs. To focus the LeaderLabs training on the Jeremiah Generation, scholarship opportunities were made available to leaders 29 years of age and under.

Dr. Garmon recently shared a report about LeaderLabs and the impact on the Jeremiah Generation.

### **4. For the Jeremiah Generation initiative to be successful, there must also be a higher education opportunity attached to it.**

Dr. Mike Baker, president of Pentecostal Theological Seminary, is currently making five partial scholarships available to the

seminary each semester to interested and potential Jeremiah Generation students. Since the inception of the Jeremiah Generation initiative, fifteen individuals have taken advantage of this generous opportunity.

### **5. The voices of the Jeremiah Generation had to be introduced to the Church of God.**

The social media video series, “Voices of the Jeremiah Generation,” was launched by the Church of God to give a platform to the ministries of this incredible group of young pastors, evangelists, and teachers. To date, almost 100 different young women and men have been featured on these brief video vignettes.

Further, the Friday night service at the 2018 General Assembly has been the most talked about service and will long be remembered. In that anointed service, four Jeremiah Generation representatives preached and set the Orlando/Orange County Convention Center ablaze with fervent spiritual fire. Adrian Franklin, Ashley Ramsey, Daniel Pinero, and Eric Petree preached solid theology, focused on the Spirit and Power of Pentecost. I was never more proud and thankful for a group of young people.

Again, not to the exclusion of other generations, but it is good to see more and more state and regional conferences including opportunities for the Jeremiah Generation to share their ministry gifts. Each of these opportunities have revealed that the Jeremiah Generation is well-studied, prayed up, and passionate about the gospel of Jesus

Christ. They also have an obvious love and appreciation for the Church of God.

### **6. The Jeremiah Generation and the leadership of the Church of God must become better acquainted.**

Paula and I are baby boomers who reared three millennials and have four grandchildren who are Gen Z-ers. However, we are not experts and never were on the younger generations. Most of my days are spent with others of my own age or older. If I don't intentionally place myself in the vicinity of younger generations, I'll never know or understand them, nor will they know and understand me.

With this in mind, I decided to go back to Youth Camp. I rode horses and ate camp food. I held discussions with students and let them grill me on topics of interest. And, I plan to do it again. In the meantime, the Executive Committee has partnered with Lee University in the establishment of mentoring groups with students. Each Executive Committee member meets with 10 to 15 Lee University students throughout the semester for a meal and discussion. Collectively, we meet at least once each semester with about 120 students from the Lee University School of Religion to discuss the ministry of the Church of God and how students can be more engaged. These gatherings have proven to be most enlightening and energizing.

### **7. The Jeremiah Generation must have a place at the table.**

I have determined that representatives of the Jeremiah Generation need a voice and



a place at the table of decision, study, and influence. Just think about the impact of blending the wisdom of mature generations with the insight, energy, and eagerness of the Jeremiah Generation.

Almost every appointed board at International Offices now has at least one representative of the Jeremiah Generation assigned to it. In all, some 33 individuals representing the Jeremiah Generation currently serve on leadership and departmental boards. And I encourage state/regional leadership to follow this example as well.

The bottom line is that every generation brings great value to the discussion and impact

of the ministries of the Church of God around the globe. Just as David “served his own generation” (Acts 13:36), we are called to impact our own generation.

Likewise, the Jeremiah Generation is serving the Church of God with impact, distinction, and honor to their generation. May those of us with years of experience on our side, encourage the Jeremiah Generation and wave them on with great enthusiasm and expectation for what is to come. ■

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*To read other articles in the “Let’s Talk About It” series, visit [www.letstalkaboutitbytimhill.com](http://www.letstalkaboutitbytimhill.com).*

A photograph of a church interior with a high, vaulted wooden ceiling and rows of blue chairs. The text is overlaid on the image.

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# HOW WILL I BE REMEMBERED?

Author: Su Vining

DR. SU VINING begins her book by discussing how she wants to be remembered, rather than just missed. She piques the reader's curiosity by asking a series of questions in her introduction. For example, she asks: "What if you knew your life was about to end, how would you spend your last days? What character qualities in you are worthy of emulation?" As we follow Christ and emulate Him, these are the character traits and qualities which shape us into becoming a life worthy of following.

Vining names eight things for which she wants to be remembered. These eight qualities are developed into eight chapters with Bible stories and scriptures to support them. A few of these are: Kind works, table hospitality, an encourager, a woman of excellence, and so forth. As the reader works through the chapters, questions for consideration and response are scattered throughout. Also, one will find Scripture verses to memorize and keep in your heart, which, incidentally, can lead to a certificate for purchase.

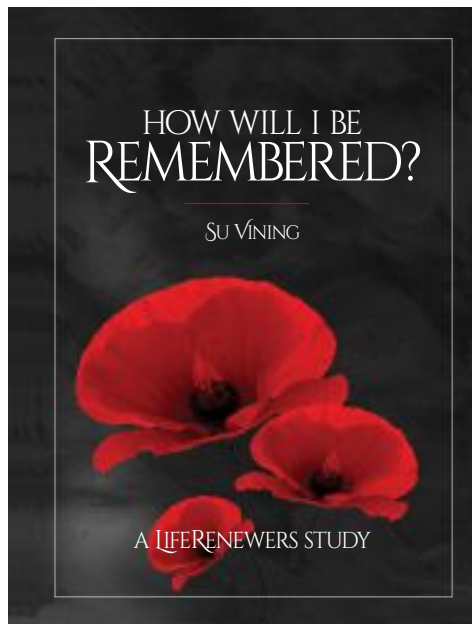
After completing the book, one is left to ponder the theme of being remembered. How will I be remembered? What heritage am I leaving behind for those who come after me? Hopefully, your family, friends,

and acquaintances can say like Paul: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:3 NKJV).

This book was designed to be used as either a small-group study or a self-study resource.

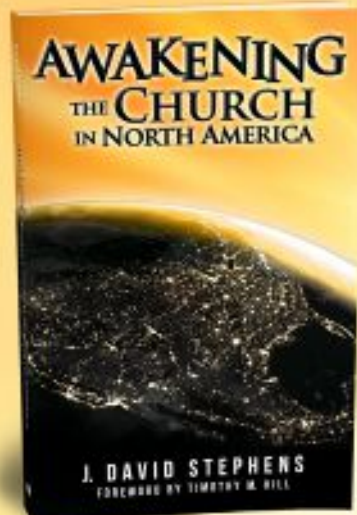
The book is 132 pages and has a retail price of \$14.95. The ISBN number is 978-1-940682-72-3.

You may purchase this book by going to [www.womenofdisciples.org](http://www.womenofdisciples.org) or calling: 888-766-9009.



# CHURCH OF GOD PUBLICATIONS

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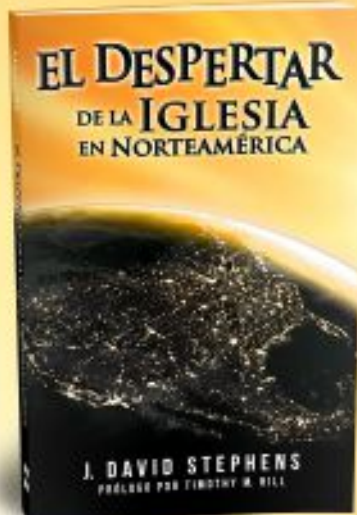


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EDITORIAL  
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# CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*Abbreviated news from faithnews.cc between May 2, 2019, and September 1, 2019.*

## Church of God Girls Ministries Celebrates 50 Years

This year, the Church of God is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Church of God Girls Ministries. Under the leadership of Youth and Discipleship, Girls Ministries endeavors to influence life-change according to God's Word which encompasses the student's mind, body, and spirit.

The first girls clubs were established as local Ladies Ministries envisioned the need to train teen girls as Scripture admonishes in Titus 2:3-5. As a result, the Church of God girls organization—Young Ladies Auxiliary (YLA) for grades 7–12—was officially formed. Later in 1982, the name was changed to Young Ladies Ministries (YLM).

Martha Wong was named the first Girls Clubs coordinator 43 years ago in 1976. Since then, the following women have served in the leadership capacity as International Girls Ministries coordinator: Martha Wong ('76–'84); Karen Martin ('84–'86); Linda Godwin ('86–'88); Donna Fisher ('88–'90); Barbara Fulbright ('90–'92); Sondra Hunter and Ginger Sanders, co-coordinators ('92–'94); Pamela Brewer ('94–'96); Dianna Akers ('96–'98); Paula Noble ('98–'00); Valerie Abbott ('00–'02); Leslie Durham ('02–'04); Janet Blair ('04–'07); Carmela Byrd and Emily Stone, co-coordinators ('07–'08); Lori Lewis ('08–'16); and Janet Blair ('16–present).



As the YLM grew, so did its scope to effectively reach younger girls through a club format. JoyBelles (4<sup>th</sup>- to 6<sup>th</sup>-grade girls) started in 1974, followed by Bluebelles (1<sup>st</sup>- to 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade girls) in 1984, and Little Sweethearts (3- to 5-year-old preschool girls) in 2004. State/Regional and National Girls Ministries coordinators serve across the United States and around the world. These women promote ministry to girls and provide support to Girls Clubs within their areas while working with the Women's Discipleship director to nurture and assist local coordinators and mentors, conduct girls events, offer special training, and participate in leadership meetings.

To find out more about this continuing vital ministry of the Church of God, go to the International Girls Ministries website: [www.girlsministries.org](http://www.girlsministries.org).

## General Assembly One Year Away

Plans are already underway for the 78th Church of God International General Assembly, which will be in session one year from this week (July 2020).

Scheduled for July 21–24, 2020, the Assembly will take place at the Indianapolis Convention Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Assembly returns to Indianapolis for the first time since 2006 when the Church of God gathered for the 71<sup>st</sup> Assembly. During that week, delegates commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> year since the first General Assembly when 21 delegates came together at the home of J.C. Murphy in Cherokee County, North Carolina, on a snowy January in 1906. This



will be the fifth time the Church of God has held an Assembly in Indianapolis.

While much has changed in the 13 years since the Church of God last gathered in the city, much remains the same. Indy features a wide variety of hotels and eateries, including the Circle Centre and a large mall of retail stores and restaurant space connected to the convention center.

The most noticeable change will be the expansion of the Indianapolis Convention Center to include a meeting space large enough to accommodate the thousands of Church of God delegates. In 2006, business and worship sessions were held in the RCA Dome, former home of the Indianapolis Colts. The Dome has since been demolished and replaced with Lucas Oil Stadium.

The Convention Center has been enlarged and modernized to allow the Assembly to gather in a hall more suitable for the Assembly. The updated space is more than adequate to accommodate the many events surrounding the Assembly, including Junior Talent, the Women's Service, and exhibit hall.

Among the many hotels located within walking distance of the convention center is a new Marriott which opened last year. Other hotels include the Westin, Conrad, Hilton, Hampton Inn, Canterbury, Hyatt, and Omni.



Updates concerning the 78<sup>th</sup> International General Assembly will be forthcoming over the next several months. These announcements will include the Assembly theme, keynote speakers and guests, special events, and information regarding registration, which is set to officially open in January 2020. The General Council Agenda will be released next spring following the April gathering of the International Executive Council.

### Church of God Serves in Border Zone

For several months, the Church of God has had an active presence in El Paso, Texas, one of the busiest border crossings between the United States and Mexico. The ministry in El Paso is taking place during one of the most politically charged times in American history as it pertains to immigration and individuals crossing the U.S. border seeking a better life for them and their families.

"No matter how you believe the situation should be handled or what the solution may be, the harsh reality is there are thousands of refugees crossing every day—legal or not—and the burden on cities near the border is staggering," General Overseer Tim Hill stated.

On July 9, the Executive Committee met via Skype with Pastor Maribel and Osvaldo Velasquez. Together, they serve at the El Elyon Church in El Paso. At the government's request, the Velasquezes have opened their facilities at the El Elyon Church of God where they feed and house 60 people per day. Rows of cots occupy the sanctuary where the congregation used to gather for worship. Supplies overflow Sunday school rooms. Wear and tear on the facility shows from the 24,000 meals served



to the just under 8,000 immigrants who have passed through the doors of El Elyon in just four months.

This situation has created a great hardship on the congregation, many of whom have left due to the level of commitment needed to serve the migrants, either through volunteer labor, provisions, or finances. To help assist the El Paso church, more than \$15,000 in goods and finances have been given so far by the Texas Hispanic Offices, Covenant Ministry Team, and the Executive Committee. The Church of God's Operation Compassion has sent numerous trucks of supplies.

In an effort to best address the needs of the region as the situation continues, Hill has appointed Dusty Wilson, administrative liaison to the general overseer, to serve as the connection to the El Elyon Church and those serving in the area. Wilson has visited the border zone twice and will return early next month with a crew of leaders to further investigate ways to assist.

Additional updates on the situation will be posted on Faith News as warranted. To inquire about relief efforts, including ways of assisting financially, email [dwilson@churchofgod.org](mailto:dwilson@churchofgod.org), or call (423) 478-7176.

## USA Missions Becomes Two Ministries

Due to recent growth and progress, the former USA Missions Department of the Church of God has now become two separate entities.

The initiative formerly known as Church of God Church Planting has been relaunched as the Church of God Church Planting Network and will be part of the Church of God World Evangelization Division of the International Offices.

CPN will be directed by Mitchell Maloney, who was a church planter in the city of Detroit, and later went on to pastor the North Cleveland Church of God for 23 years. His heart is to develop strong, healthy, thriving churches through church planting and revitalization efforts.

According to Maloney, on June 1, 2019, important changes occurred with Church Planting and Revitalization.



"Almost three years ago, we began a process to develop a strong church planting initiative and a process for revitalizing existing churches in the USA and Canada," Maloney stated. "Since then, we have developed individual systems—one for church planting and another for revitalization. The Lord is blessing both these important ministries."

A second aspect of the relaunch is that the church revitalization progress will now be

coordinated through the Office of Church Health and Revitalization.

Mitchell Corder was recently appointed as director for this department and will continue the Church of God's dedication to local church development, growth, leadership training, and coaching. Corder most recently served as executive administrator for the Division of Care and is a former administrative bishop for Michigan, Virginia, and Tennessee.

Another aspect of the ministries is the simultaneous launch of two new websites dedicated to the aspects of the Church Planting Network and Church Health and Revitalization. The sites are [cogcpn.com](http://cogcpn.com) and [churchhealthcog.com](http://churchhealthcog.com) respectively.

## 2019 MIP Commissioning Celebration and 40th Anniversary

**Cleveland, TN**—Some in attendance at the 2019 MIP Commissioning Celebration and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary held on May 17–18 said it was one of the best celebrations ever. The more than 1,300 registered attendees were blessed with anointed preaching, inspiring worship, and commissioning of the more than 460 MIP candidates and spouses.

The Celebration began on Friday morning with the MIP Leadership Seminar. Mario Mendoza, an ultra-marathon runner who is ranked ninth in the world and is a Church of God credentialed minister, drew lessons from his running experiences and applied them to the Christian life and ministry.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reflected over the years since the Ministerial Internship Program originated. Mary Fisher, wife of Dr. Robert E.

Fisher, the founder of the MIP, was recognized for her support of Dr. Fisher in creating the MIP. Dr. Larry Hess, the director who expanded the MIP around the world, reminisced about his service with the MIP. Sandra Kay Williams, who is a graduate of the MIP, shared about the meaning the MIP had for her and the hope MIP gives people going into the ministry. Tommy Powell, the administrative bishop of Missouri and MIP graduate, shared about the benefits he has experienced as both a MIP candidate and administrative bishop. And, John Lombard, who has the longest serving record as a state MIP coordinator—37 years—recalled his experience with ministerial training as a coordinator.

The Friday evening service included several leaders who shared their MIP testimonies: (1) Dr. John Childers, secretary general of the Church of God; (2) Vaughn Mathews, who participated in the very first beginnings of the internship with Dr. Fisher in Hawaii; (3) Lillian Turnipseed, the state MIP coordinator in Southern New England; and (4) Wade Miller, state MIP coordinator for Ministry to the Military. Dr. Michael Reynolds preached a message on the Parable of the Sower.

The Saturday morning service was twofold—recognition of the MIP participants and commissioning of the MIP candidates. State MIP coordinators and supervising pastors were recognized for years of service, and the MIP candidates and supervising pastors were individually congratulated by the leadership—Dr. Tim Hill, Dr. Raymond Culpepper, Dr. David Ramírez, Dr. Michael Baker, Dr. Michael Reynolds, and their spouses—as they went through the congratulatory line.

# STEP

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**WHO IS THIS FOR?** Youth Groups & Young Adults, Youth Pastors &  
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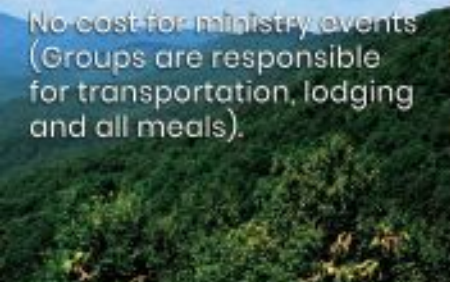
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