

Spring/
Summer
2016



A Journal for Church of God Ministries

engage

IN THIS ISSUE

Five Ways to Keep Balance in the Ministry

Nondiscipleship: The Elephant in the Church

Ten Common Frustrations of Pastors

The Ebenezer of Adoption

Does God Show Up and Show Out?

SPRING/SUMMER 2016
VOL. 12, NO. 2

engage



CONTENTS

- 3 From the Editor
- 30 PENTECOSTAL MINISTER FLASHBACK:
Facing Conflict in the Church *French Arrington*
- 67 Church of God Highlights

ARTICLES

- 4 The Ebenezer of Adoption *Alethea Allen*
- 8 What's Good About the Church of God? *Bill George*
- 11 Ten Common Frustrations of Pastors *Thom Rainer*
- 14 Churches Continue to Face Budget Shortfalls *Bob Smietana*
- 16 Does God Show Up and Show Out? *Tom George*
- 40 Five Ways to Keep Balance in the Ministry *Tricia Reyes*
- 42 Nondiscipleship: The Elephant in the Church *Randy Ballard*
- 48 Hope Deferred Makes the Heart Sick *Anthony Adams*
- 51 Adoption: Is Someone Knocking on Your Door? *Bob and Terrie Bayles*

RESOURCES

- 54 LEGAL NOTES *Dennis Watkins*
- 56 MONEY MATTERS *Art Rhodes*
- 58 FAMILY FOCUS *H. Lynn and Mary Ruth Stone*
- 62 POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF *Josh Rice*
- 64 RESOURCES - Book Reviews *Jerald Daffe, Tom George*

The Adoption Option

SIMPLY BY coincidence, this issue of *Engage* contains two articles about international adoption by Christian couples. Also, coincidentally, both adoptions were of children from China with special needs.

International adoption has had its share of negative publicity through the years, from overpriced logistical costs to secure the children, to the squalid conditions of some orphanages.

While orphanages serve a noble purpose, and there will always be a need for them, getting children out of those orphanages through adoption is a commendable pursuit of hundreds of thousands of families. An example of a ministry that models both is Samaritan's Place in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. Church of God missionaries Marc and Marilen Morris have spent the better part of their lives building a home where orphaned children can thrive, yet they prepare their residents for eventual adoption by Christian families. Most of the SP adoptions are by families outside the Philippines.

When you read the accounts in this issue, they will be similar to the struggles

and triumphs it took to get these families where they are today. But the memories of the struggles are erased with every smile and hug from the new member(s) of the family.

Thanks to every family who has chosen to show the love of Christ through adoption. ■

Engage journal is published in the interest of providing resources for Church of God pastors.

Church of God Executive Committee

Mark L. Williams, *general overseer*

David M. Griffis, *first assistant*

J. David Stephens, *second assistant*

Wallace J. Sibley, *third assistant*

M. Thomas Propes, *secretary general*

ENGAGE Journal

Mark L. Williams, *executive editor*

Cameron Fisher, *editor*

David Ray, *consulting editor*

Bob Fisher, *graphic designer*

Shirley Williams, *marketing assistant*

Nellie Keasling, *copy editor*

Engage invites feedback from readers on the content of the journal and suggestions for future issues. Please email comments to cfisher@churchofgod.org or mail to *Engage*, P.O. Box 2430, Cleveland, TN 37320-2430.

The Ebenezer of ADOPTION

by ALETHEA ALLEN



*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood.
How his kindness yet pursues me . . .**

I HAVE BECOME A MOTHER three times, twice through childbirth and the third time through adoption. While I prayed for my first two babies every day they were growing in the womb, it was only my third child that I pursued with an unwavering passion for months on end. He was a stranger, but I sought him out and labored day after day to bring him home from China.

The journey to my son taught me what it really means to walk in the Spirit, to live with no certainty except the deep soul knowledge that God was ordaining our

every step. We had found his file almost by accident. His beautiful face stared at me across the computer screen with the words “deaf” and “heart defect” underneath. He had been waiting a long time for a family because most people were scared away by the labels. My son has a condition called unilateral microtia and atresia, which means that his right ear and ear canal did not form correctly, but his left ear is fine. There is no other way to explain it, except to say that when I saw his picture on our agency’s website, a still small voice whispered to my



**The lyrics above are from the hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” originally written by Robert Robinson in 1758, now in Public Domain.*

heart: *Those labels aren't true. You need to look at his file.* I will never forget opening his file, looking at his tests and realizing that he wasn't deaf, and he didn't have a serious heart defect. He was mislabeled. He was just sitting there, hidden in plain sight, a perfectly healthy baby boy who needed a family. The miracle isn't that I am a pediatrician who could interpret his medical tests and know instantly that he had been given a "fail" on a hearing report that should have said "pass," or that I could read an echocardiogram report and understand that he had been born with a very common and tiny hole in his heart that was almost certainly already closed. The miracle is that I listened to the Spirit's whisper in the first place. Without the whisper, I would have scrolled right past his photo and missed all the grace that followed.

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.*

All those months I was pursuing that beautiful baby boy with "special needs" in China, I had no idea that God was going to use my son to rescue me from my own superficial faith. I thought our adoption story was about the journey to find my son and bring him home. Naively, I believed

that we were rescuing him, the way God rescues us. I thought that we were following in the footsteps of our heavenly Father, bringing an orphan into our family, claiming him as our own, renaming him, "redeeming" him the way God redeems us. Isn't that the story we tell? Hasn't God adopted us, called us His children, and therefore we should adopt the orphan and call him/her our child? Yes and no. Adoption may begin as all those things, but it does not end there.

Adoption, like salvation, is not a one-time event, but a lifelong journey of healing and grace. It is a lifelong commitment to trust in what Teilhard de Chardin called "the slow work of God." Children like my son, who have been abandoned and neglected, carry deep soul wounds. The trauma of their past has scarred their hearts in ways we are only beginning to understand. Science tells us that early childhood trauma will forever change a child's neurobiology. My son's body has scars that point to a past we will never fully comprehend, but which certainly included many months of pain and suffering. Those scars didn't go away just because we adopted him and now call him our son. We can't love away his past anymore than getting saved on a Sunday morning can erase the havoc you wreaked on Saturday night.

Grace doesn't work that way. We all have wounds from our past that we would like to forget. We all carry scars—some more visible than others. We need grace in order to give grace. As parents, we have to seek healing in our own hearts in order to help another

little heart heal. This is how adoption rescued me. It forced me to dive into the deep waters of what had, up to that point, been a pretty shallow faith. I had no choice but to confront the doubts and fears and insecurities that I would have rather kept hidden from everyone, including myself. You can't wrestle with Leviathan, if you are standing safely on the shore.

The months after we brought my son home from China were much more difficult than any of the newborn baby phases I had previously been through. I felt isolated and overwhelmed by this new type of parenting that came with its own set of "attachment" rules. I was hurt deeply by persons dear to my heart who did not understand the choices my husband and I made. Yet, even then, God was faithful. My son was frightened and hurting, and so was I. We were two wounded strangers, mother and son, trying to learn how to love each other. Like a great surgeon, God began to heal our wounds and to bind our wandering hearts together. Stitch by stitch, the goodness of God tied us to each other and formed our beautiful little family.

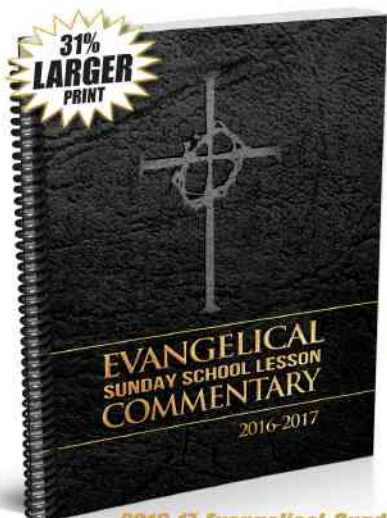
When I began this journey, I thought it would be about claiming this child as my own, but the real miracle of our story is that *he claimed me*. His toddler brain had no way of understanding ideas like adoption, family, and home. I was a stranger who scooped him up and carried him away to a foreign place with strange foods, smells, and sounds. He had no reason to trust me, but

for some reason, he decided I was worthy of his love. Every time he calls me, "Mommy" or tells me he loves me or demands good-night kisses and hugs, I think to myself, *This is a love I did not earn and do not deserve, but he gives it to me just the same. This is grace.*

*Here I raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.*

In 1 Samuel, after God rescues the Israelites from yet another invading army, Samuel raises up a large stone monument and calls it "Ebenezer" or "the stone of help," because he wants everyone to remember what God has done. Samuel knows that when it comes to God's mercy, we often forget what we aren't forced to remember. Samuel knew that we all needed an Ebenezer, some type of stone monument that we couldn't ignore to keep reminding us of the God who is our help. My children are the living stones who remind me daily of God's faithfulness. I see their love for each other, and I cannot help but look with awe at what God has done. My youngest child talks constantly. Seriously, he does not stop talking. This is my great gift—this child that China labeled as "deaf," now talks all day long. He wasn't always my child; however, the miracles that brought him into my home are the same miracles that brought me home to God. Adoption is my Ebenezer. Adoption is my monument of grace. ■

Order your 2016-2017 Evangelical Sunday School Lesson Commentary today!



**2016-17 Evangelical Sunday
School Lesson Commentary**

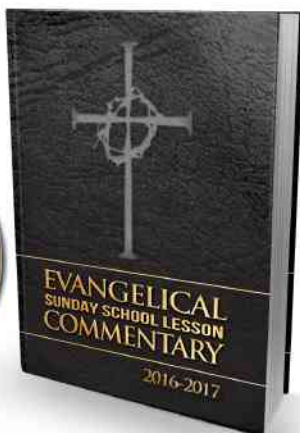
Item# 9781596849037

Large Print \$19⁹⁵
ea.

Available in LARGE PRINT!



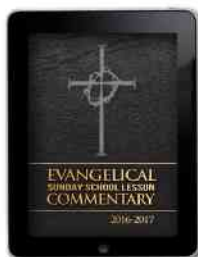
**Each Microsoft PowerPoint® & Word®
Edition Commentary disk contains editable
files allowing you to customize each
lesson to meet your individual
teaching styles and needs!**



**2016-17 Evangelical Sunday
School Lesson Commentary**

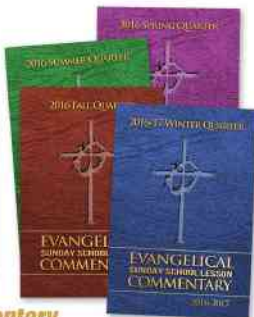
Item # 9781596840020

Hardback \$15⁹⁵
ea.



**2016-17 Commentary
Digital Download**

Available at Google Books
& Kindle Books.



3 Commentary Savings Packs Available!

Commentary Pack 2

PowerPoint® CD Edition,
includes a hardback copy
of the Commentary

Item# 958074 **\$21⁹⁹**

Large Print

Item# 958074LP **\$26⁹⁹**

Commentary Pack 1

Microsoft Word® CD Edition,
includes a hardback copy
of the Commentary

Item# 958073 **\$21⁹⁹**

Large Print

Item# 958073LP **\$26⁹⁹**

Commentary Pack 3

Microsoft Word® CD Edition,
includes a hardback
copy of the Commentary

Item# 958075 **\$28⁹⁹**

Large Print

Item# 958075LP **\$33⁹⁹**

Pathway
P.R.E.S.S.



1080 Montgomery Ave. NE • Cleveland, TN 37311

800.553.8506
www.pathwaybookstore.com

What's Good About the CHURCH OF GOD?



by BILL GEORGE

PASTORS, other credentialed ministers, local churches, and the laity within those churches are learning that worshiping and serving as part of the Church of God generates benefits and blessings beyond what they might initially have envisioned.

A group representing church backgrounds in Alabama, Ohio, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida, Michigan, and California sat down together recently and considered the advantages of being associated with the denomination. They were surprised at the list they assembled, which follows.

This register of blessings is collected, in no certain order, and expresses the benefits in short, concise statements.

- **Doctrinal Stability**—The Church of God has an established body of doctrine to which it is committed, upon which its members are agreed, and to which its pastors are faithful. Accountability is required for any deviation from the church's doctrinal stance, at any level.

- **Biblical Theology**—Ministers are trained in a Scripture-based theology in the context of their ministerial credentialing protocol within the church. This equips their preaching and teaching to be orthodox and approved.

- **Ministerial Accountability**—Ministers are required to make monthly written reports to state and International Offices. They indicate their vocational activity outside the

church, reveal their personal tithing practice, and report their current marital status. This helps inspire accountability.

- ***Lifelong Friendships***—Close relationships are forged through the years because of the multiple opportunities for gathering in church-related settings—camp meetings, prayer conferences, camps, work projects, and so forth. The friendships become bonds that strengthen during times of need and trial.

- ***Ministerial Placement***—Under normal circumstances, a credentialed minister is assisted by the denomination to find a place of ministry where he or she can fulfill the calling God has given.

- ***Member Relocation***—One in five families will move during a typical year. Church of God families can be assisted to find a similar church to the one they are leaving, if they request this assistance.

- ***Pastoral Transition***—A centralized governmental system like that of the Church of God can help a departing pastor find a new place of ministry and can assist the church to identify and receive a replacement pastor. Unassociated churches often have difficulty making transitions and are sometimes without a pastor for a lengthy period.

- ***Congregational Safety Net***—When a local church goes through a difficult time financially, spiritually, or in other ways, the state and International Offices serve as a safety net, helping in various ways as needed.

- ***Property Ownership***—The Church of God provides for local ownership of

property, held in trust by a locally chosen Board of Trustees in the name of the church. They ensure that only action by the congregation can authorize sale or modification of the property. A pastor or small group cannot take the property away from the people who have purchased or bought it.

- ***Retirement Programs***—The Benefits Board of the denomination provides a 403(b) retirement program for ministers and church employees, such as staff members, secretaries, and bookkeepers. The program invests the contributions of participants to increase earnings, pays shareholders monthly upon retirement, and under certain conditions loans it to churches to finance building.

- ***Governing Guidance***—Horror stories are told of local churches that got into legal and financial difficulties because adequate governance was not in place. The Church of God *Minutes* provides governing guidelines covering most situations, which help pastors and local leaders know what to do. The correct practices and protocols are outlined, a benefit not available to unassociated congregations.

- ***Legal Counsel***—Lamentably, churches sometimes become entangled in legal circumstances. The Church of God maintains an Office of Legal Counsel that provides direction in cases that arise. The experience of the office over many years of dealing with church-related matters keeps a church from making serious mistakes.

• **Educational Opportunities**—The denomination offers a plethora of educational opportunities. Lee University, the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, the School of Ministry's Certificate In Ministerial Studies (CIMS), the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP), Calling And Ministry Studies (CAMS), Hispanic Educational Institutes, and other preparatory programs offer unmatched procedures that enable a person to enhance his or her ability to serve God.

• **Discipleship Curriculum**—It is vital to undergird local church discipleship efforts with trustworthy, quality curricula materials that are faithful to the church's doctrine. The Church of God develops and distributes such materials.

• **Youth Ministries and Activities**—Young people must have dependable and reliable settings in which to develop their Christian life and companionship. The Church of God conducts hundreds of youth camps each year throughout the country. Numerous other organized activities, such as Winterfests, mission trips, evangelism training events, Teen Talent, and similar programs help young people grow in Christ and develop in discipleship. It also provides opportunities for young people to meet other like-minded believers.

• **Disaster Relief**—Answering the call when a hurricane, flood, fire, earthquake or other tragedy strikes is the hallmark of an active, ministering local church. The effectiveness of rescue efforts is multiplied

when churches can link arms and join their strength. Through its Men and Women of Action, Operation Compassion, God's Pit Crew and other organizations, the Church of God helps its people respond with love and efficiency.

• **Evangelical Council**—The covering of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability enhances the image of the church. ECFA examines the church's audited books and determines that financial record-keeping is adequate and accurate.

• **Interdenominational Memberships**—The Church of God has memberships in key interdenominational organizations, and its leaders serve on committees and task forces that help advance causes such as the National Association of Evangelicals, of which it was a founding member. Cooperation with these various bodies enhances the church's witness beyond its walls.

• **World Missions**—A global missions program that emphasizes soulwinning, discipleship, education and training, care, and wellness ministers to millions of people in 183 countries. Each local church in the Church of God may choose to sponsor one or more missionaries, adopt mission projects, sponsor mission trips, hold mission training conferences, and otherwise engage in Great Commission ministries. This is one of the most powerful and effective ways of following and obeying Christ. ■

Dr. Bill George serves as editorial assistant to the Office of the General Overseer.

10 COMMON FRUSTRATIONS of Pastors

YOU WON'T HEAR pastors express these frustrations often, but they are very real. Indeed, some of these issues hinder their ministries. Here are ten of the most common frustrations, followed by close approximations of quotes I've heard from pastors.

1. Church members who treat church attendance as a low priority. "We have families who treat soccer attendance as a nonnegotiable, but a few drops of rain means they will miss church."

2. Criticisms over minutia. "She sent me an email complaining about my socks. I'm serious! My socks."

3. Concern over financial well being of family. "A prominent member of the church told me they were keeping my pay low to keep me humble. I guarantee you he doesn't practice the same humility."

4. Expectations to understand the business and leadership side of church life. "I have no idea about some of the financial decisions I'm supposed to lead at the church. Seminary did not prepare me for this."

5. Complaints to or about family members. "A church member complained to me because my wife isn't in the choir. She's never been in a choir and has no desire to be in a choir."

6. Inadequate uninterrupted sermon prep time. "Unfortunately, some of the members think my sermon preparation time is free time for them to chat."

7. Losing church members. "I wish I could handle losing church members, but I still take it personally."

8. Concerns over church budget. "Giving has been down for two years straight. We may soon have to cut staff or pay."

9. Declining or plateaued church. "I've done everything I know to lead our church to growth to no avail. It's so frustrating."

10. Designated giving toward personal preferences. "We no longer meet our budget because we have six or seven families designating their giving for their pet projects."

I have the honor and opportunity to hear from pastors who are otherwise reticent to express these very real frustrations. Do you have others you would add? What do you think of these ten? ■

(Source: *ministrytoday*
mag.com)



CHURCH OF GOD



Multi-Cultural Ministries



**Portuguese & Indonesian State Executive Offices
USA and Canada**



Dr. Wallace & Dorothy Sibley
Assistant General Overseer



Dr. Kenneth & Evangelist Janice Hill
Director Multi-Cultural Ministries



Vaughn & Dianora Akers
Executive Assistant To Director
Multi-Cultural Ministries



Euler & Sarah Cecilio
Coordinator Portuguese Ministries
USA/Canada



Raymond & Juliet Pranoto
Coordinator Indonesian Ministries
USA/Canada

Lord
Mold
Assimilate
Know
Empower
us one
Ephesians 4:13

Cultural
Diversity
Awareness

Connectivity
Creativity
Continuity

Black
Ministries
Legacy

Ethnic
Leadership
Empowerment

Education
Degree
Opportunities

50 Indigenous
People Groups
(Diaspora)

Multi-Cultural Ministries Board 2014-2016



FRONT ROW – Left to Right

William M. Holloway, Jr.; Othon O. Noel; Arlene O. Hall; Kenneth L. Hill – Director;
Wallace J. Sibley – Chairman and Assistant General Overseer; Reather G. Campbell;
William H. Golden, Sr.

BACK ROW – Left to Right

John P. Diamond; A. Steve Smith – Advisory Member; James R. Izzard, Jr.;
Florin T. Cimpean; Earl Andre Hester; Richard S. McCray

MULTI-CULTURAL MINISTRIES BOARD MEMBERS unavailable for pictures:
Georges M. Morisset; Serge Jerome; Joseph Noncent; Robert M. Charles

MULTI-CULTURAL ADVISORY MEMBERS Unavailable for pictures:
Andrew Binda; Tony P. Lane; Anthony T. Pelt; Doyle P. Scott, Sr.; Lennox D. Walker

Multi-Cultural Mission # 020-0812 | Black Ministries Mission # 102-9347

USA Representative - International Advisory Council Reverends Edmond & Rebecca Barr Memorial Marker

International Prayer Garden

Dr. Wallace & Dorothy Sibley
Hall of Prophets Scholarship

National Advisory Council
SERF, NERF, PNWF & States

Black Ministries Awareness Sunday
2nd Sunday of February

Pentecostal Theological Seminary
Advisory Council

General Assembly Cabinet

PO Box 2430 | Cleveland, TN 37320 | 423.478.7337

www.cogmcm.org



76TH CHURCH OF GOD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Multi-Cultural Ministries



Fellowship Luncheon

July 21, 2016

12:00 - 1:45 PM

Legends Ballroom

OMNI  HOTELS



*Dr. Kenneth and Evangelist Janice Hill
Director of Multi-Cultural Ministries*



*Honorees
Dr. Wallace and Dorothy Sibley
Assistant General Overseer*



*Featured Artist
Jenny Vassell*

**TOGETHER
WE GO**

Matthew 28:19-20

**\$60 Individual Ticket
\$110 Couple Tickets**

Registration Information: I would like to be part of the
Multi-Cultural Fellowship Luncheon. Please check one:

I am registering for the lunch: ☐ Individual ☐ Couple
I am placing an ad: ☐ Full Page ☐ 1/2 Page ☐ 1/4 Page
(8.5 x 11) \$300 (5.5 x 8.5) \$150 (2.25 x 4.25) \$100

All ads must be received by **June 25**. Email your camera ready ad with a 1/4" bleed in PDF or
JPG format to dakers@churchofgod.org.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Four Ways to Register:

- ♦ Online: www.cogmcm.org
- ♦ Fax: 423-478-7998
- ♦ Email: dakers@churchofgod.org
- ♦ Mail Completed Form To:
Multi-Cultural Ministries
2490 Keith Street, NW
Cleveland, TN 37311

Payment Method: ☐ Money Order ☐ Check

☐ American Express ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

Credit Card #: _____

Exp: _____ Security Code: _____ Total \$ _____

Billing Zip Code: _____

Signature: _____

Churches Continue to Face BUDGET SHORTFALLS

WHEN IT COMES TO finances, the new normal for American churches seems to be “just getting by.” A third of Protestant senior pastors say their church’s giving was under budget in 2015, according to Life Way Research. One in five saw their finances decline.

Overall, about half of the pastors say the economy negatively affected their churches this year. Scott McConnell, associate director of Life Way Research, says pastors are still uneasy about their church’s finances. “Wages grew in 2015, and inflation and unemployment remained low,” said McConnell. “Yet the financial picture for many churches did not improve.”

Life Way Research has polled Protestant pastors about their churches and the economy since 2009. During that time, pastors reported the sluggish economy’s toll on their churches has lessened. In October 2010, most pastors (80 percent) said the economy negatively impacted their church. That number dropped to 64 percent in 2012 and then 56 percent by 2014.

The most recent telephone survey of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors found 51

percent said the economy is hurting their church—the lowest total since Life Way began researching the topic. One in eight (13 percent) say the economy had a positive effect on their church. About three in ten (32 percent) pastors say their church failed to make budget. That’s better than 2010 (46 percent), according to Life Way Research, but not as good as 2012 (22 percent).

In the most recent survey, larger churches fared better than smaller churches. About a third of the churches with 100 or more people (32 percent) saw their offerings exceed budget expectations. Among churches of fewer than 100, one in five (21 percent) had higher than budgeted offerings.

Life Way Research also asked pastors if offerings at their church increased, remained the same, or declined over the past year. For the most part, pastors say giving remained steady. Offerings went up in four of ten churches (41 percent). Three in ten (29 percent) saw no change. One in five (21 percent) saw a decline. Larger churches also fared better in total giving. About half (51 percent) of churches of more than 100 people saw their offerings go up in 2015. Among churches with less than 100 people,

about one in three (33 percent) had higher offerings in 2015.

Life Way Research's report echoed the findings of other studies. The "Giving USA" report from *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* found giving to churches and other religious causes has lagged in recent years. While charitable giving overall increased by 5.4 percent in 2014, according to "Giving USA," giving to religious causes like churches grew by less than one percent. Giving to churches and other faith-based causes now makes up about a third (32 percent) of charitable giving in the U.S.—down from 56 percent in the 1980s, according to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

A recent *Faith Communities Today* report found the median church budget fell from \$150,000 in 2009 to \$125,000 in 2014. McConnell said not all the financial struggles churches face can be blamed on the economy. "Many factors affect a church's finances," he said. "Pastors are quick to blame the economy when in fact attendance trends, spiritual growth, and good stewardship all play a part as well."

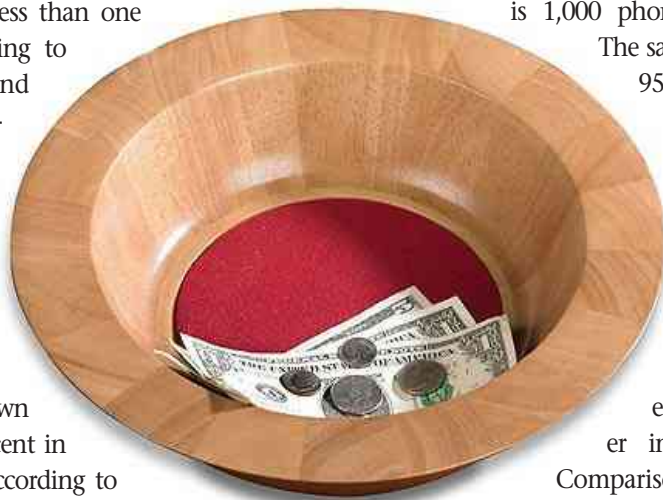
METHODOLOGY

The telephone survey of Protestant pastors was conducted January 8–22, 2016. The calling list was a stratified random sample drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister, or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Protestant churches. The completed sample is 1,000 phone interviews.

The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Comparisons are also made to the following telephone surveys using the same methodology: 1,000 pastors conducted October 7–14, 2010; 1,002 pastors conducted January 17–27, 2011; 1,000 pastors conducted May 23–31, 2012; 1,000 pastors conducted September 11–18, 2014. ■

Bob Smietana is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine. (Source: *Ministrytodaymag.com*)





Does God SHOW UP and SHOW OUT?

by TOM GEORGE

GOD SHOWED UP, AND
SHOWED OUT!

Several times recently, I have seen this posted on Facebook, and I have heard it at least four times from Church of God pulpits. I believe I understand what is trying to be conveyed by this crude expression. Those using this expression want to say that there was a great move of God in

their church services. Unfortunately, their intent is missed because their theology is completely wrong.

God does not show up at our services, because He is there all the time. Before we unlock the door, turn on the lights, and begin the service, God is already there, because He is an omnipresent God. Omnipresence is one of the natural attributes of God, along with omniscience and omnipotence.

Our all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful God is also everywhere present; and if God is everywhere present, He is everywhere active and possesses full knowledge of all that happens in every place.

This does not mean that God is everywhere present in a bodily sense. This presence is a spiritual, not a material presence; yet it is a real presence. In the Book of Jeremiah, the question was posed: "Am I a God near at hand," says the Lord, "and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the Lord; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:23-24 NKJV).

The psalmist asked:

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You (Psalm 139:7-12 NKJV).

Since God is everywhere, He does not "show up." In saying that He "shows up and shows out," we relegate God to something less than the majestic, sovereign, and holy God that He is, and we bring Him down to our human level.

Again, the psalmist said: "The Lord is in His holy temple, The Lord's throne is in

God does not show up at our services, because He is there all the time. Before we unlock the door, turn on the lights, and begin the service, God is already there, because He is an OMNIPRESENT God.

heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men" (Psalm 11:4 NKJV). God is on His throne in heaven, but His Spirit fills the earth. When we have an outstanding service, it is the result of our reaction to God's Spirit. When our hearts are in tune with God's Spirit, we can expect wonderful things to happen.

Once, it was common for people to gather before a service and pray. Fifty-four years ago, when my wife and I joined the Church of God, we would arrive for a service, and before we entered the building, we could hear the people praying. And, when the service began, the fire would fall, not because we prayed for God to show up, but because in prayer the people had gotten their hearts prepared for a move of God's Spirit.

The truth is, we can't control what God does with our prayers or any other action. I once heard a televangelist say, "Nothing leaves the hand of God in heaven, until something leaves the hand of man on earth." If that were true, millions of people around the world would receive nothing from God, because much of this world's people live in

extreme poverty and have nothing material to offer God from their hand.

So, does God show up at our churches? No, He is always there, even before we get there and get in tune with His Spirit.

Does God show out? No! Absolutely not! God's ways are higher than our ways. God said, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9 NKJV).

Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1 NKJV). God is sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing, and He is everywhere. He is at

church before we get there, and when we have turned out the lights, locked the doors, and gone home, He is still there.

And, because He is God, He deserves our highest respect and sincerest praise. David said:

I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name. In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord (Psalm 138:1-5 NKJV). ■

An excellent way to train your lay leaders.


In MOBILIZE, they will be trained in one of these ministries:

Cell Group Ministry	Music
Children's Ministry	Prayer
Christian Education	Stewardship
Counseling	Teaching
Evangelism	Women's Ministry
Marriage and Family	Youth Ministry



 [INSTAGRAM.COM/COGDOE](https://www.instagram.com/cogdoe)

 [FACEBOOK.COM/COGDOE](https://www.facebook.com/cogdoe)

 [@COGDOE](https://twitter.com/cogdoe)

WWW.COCDOE.ORG 1.877.344.0488





CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL
GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016

NASHVILLE, TN · MUSIC CITY CENTER
JULY 19 - 22, 2016



GA16.ORG

#GOCOG

**NEW AND EXCITING
ASSEMBLY EVENTS!**

Special Orders of
the Day *p 23*

Lunch & Learn *p 24*

LEAD

JULY 18 • PRE-ASSEMBLY
10 AM - 4:30 PM
LUNCH PROVIDED



GABE LYONS
Engaging the
New Culture



REBEKAH LYONS
Mental Health
& Women's Ministry



CHRISTINE GAINÉ
Leadership



ED STETZER
Mobilizing Your Church
for Missions



SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ
Future of the Church



GORDON BANKS
Dallas Cowboys
Hall of Fame

LEADERSHIP / ENRICHMENT / AFFIRMATION / DEVELOPMENT

TICKETS AT GA18.ORG / \$20 FOR REGISTERED DELEGATES *

*MUST BE A REGISTERED DELEGATE TO ATTEND

EVENING ASSEMBLY SPEAKERS



WEDNESDAY

Pastor Tim Oldfield
The Potter's House



THURSDAY

Pastora Ana Ruth Diaz
Oasis de Amor, Honduras



FRIDAY

**Newly Elected
General Overseer**

A new Presiding Bishop will be elected during the Assembly and will be the featured speaker in the Friday evening service.

W O M E N ' S S E R V I C E

with **Christine Caine** // Tuesday, July 19 • 7 PM

TICKETS AT GA16.ORG • \$10 FOR DELEGATES

Reserved seating for registered delegates





WE ♥
NSHVL

THREE AREAS OF MINISTRY:

Food • School Supplies • Ministry Project

HOW CAN I HELP?

Donate a **canned good** (1 per family member)
at GA16 registration

Donate **school supplies** (1 per family member)
at GA16 registration

Donate **\$20** to We Love Nashville (see registration form)

Volunteer to collect, sort, and distribute canned goods
to **Second Harvest Food Bank**

For more information visit ga16.org,
email gareg@churchofgod.org or call 800-323-7264

WAKE

A STUDENT MISSIONS EXPERIENCE



For more information visit ga16.org,
email gareg@churchofgod.org or call 800-323-7264

NEW!

GENERAL COUNCIL / SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY



TUESDAY, JULY 19

Dr. Mark L. Williams
State of the Church



WEDNESDAY, JULY 20

Dr. Tony Evans
Great Commission & Urban Evangelism



WEDNESDAY, JULY 20

Larry Stockstill
Spiritual Fathering & Mentoring



THURSDAY, JULY 21

Jimmy Evans
Sanctity of Marriage



THURSDAY, JULY 21

Dr. Ed Stetzer
Great Commission & Culture

Lunch & Learn

NEW!

WEDNESDAY
12:00 noon - 1 PM

FOR MORE INFO
+ TO REGISTER:
GA16.ORG

URBAN EVANGELISM

Dr. Tony Evans

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

*How to Become the
Best Leader You Can Be*

LEGAL ISSUES

*IRS Compliance - Health Care
Reform Act*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

*How to Minister
to Your Community*

SOCIAL MEDIA & BRANDING STRATEGIES

*How to Grow Your Church through
Social Media and Branding*

MULTI-CAMPUS STRATEGIES

*How to Develop a
Multi-Campus Church*

HISPANIC TRACK

*Issues Hispanic Churches
are Facing*

THROWBACK THURSDAY

FREE EVENT

with
**JASON
CRABB**

and other Gospel Artists

Food trucks,
concert, and
fellowship on a
closed street
following the
evening service
on Thursday





KIDS

WORSHIP

7 PM · TUESDAY - FRIDAY

New secure child check-in program

Age Level One: 3 yrs (if toilet trained) - Kindergarten

Age Level Two: Grades 1 - 6

KIDS DAY CAMP

1 - 5 PM · WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY

Cost: **\$20/day** for first child

\$10/day for each additional child of same family

MASS CHILDREN'S CHOIR

FRIDAY NIGHT · PRE-SERVICE

CHILDREN'S LEADER TRAINING

9 AM - NOON · WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY



76th INTERNATIONAL
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 19 - 22, 2016

PLEASE NOTE

If paying by check or money order: **DO NOT FAX** Mail to: Ordinal Event Solutions, Church of God 2016, 175 S. West Temple - Suite 30
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101
Make checks payable to: OES/CA2016
(If paying by credit card, you may fax form to: MJS/ES20)



/COGCHO



@COGCHO



CAreg@churchofgod.org



800.323.7264

NAME Please type or print all information legibly

Last _____ First _____ M.I. _____
Ministerial File # (if applicable) _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
☐ Male ☐ Female
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Country _____

SPOUSE NAME If attending and registering

Last _____ First _____ M.I. _____
Ministerial File # (if applicable) _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
☐ Male ☐ Female

YOUNG ADULT Age 16 - 19

Last _____ First _____ M.I. _____
Ministerial File # (if applicable) _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
☐ Male ☐ Female

YOUTH Children under age 15 will qualify for the Family Fee Plan

Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
Persons 16-19 must complete a separate form from their parents and must complete Lay Delegates Affirmation to vote.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email _____ Cell Phone _____
Daytime Phone _____

TO REGISTER: Contact Ordinal Event Solutions by email

COG@ordinal-eventsolutions.com or phone 888.757.7816 Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (EST). TO REGISTER ONLINE and book HOTEL RESERVATIONS, go to www.CAchoing.org (please do not duplicate your registration by registering online AND completing this form). The pre-registration **DEADLINE** is 7/11/16. Registrations submitted or received after the deadline will NOT be processed and will be returned. Onsite registration will be available in Nashville. Delegates should receive confirmation within 3 days of registering. Credentials will be awaiting your arrival in Nashville and can be picked up at onsite registration.

ETHNICITY

☐ African-American
☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
☐ White-Non Hispanic
☐ Decline to self-identify

AGE

☐ 16-28
☐ 29-35
☐ 36-48
☐ 49-62
☐ 63-70
☐ 70+

MINISTERIAL STATUS

☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Retired
☐ N/A

LEAD PASTOR

☐ Yes
☐ No

PRE-REGISTRATION

☐ Individual
☐ Married Couple
☐ Young Adult (16-19, married not included)
☐ Family (Household, 18 yrs. children under 16)
☐ Widow of Retired Minister
☐ Retired Minister (Must be 65 or older)

PAYMENT

REGISTRATION MUST BE PAID IN FULL TO PREPARE
☐ Cash
☐ Check
☐ Money Order
☐ Credit Card

ACCE

☐ 16-28
☐ 29-35
☐ 36-48
☐ 49-62
☐ 63-70
☐ 70+

MINISTERIAL STATUS

☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Retired
☐ N/A

LEAD PASTOR

☐ Yes
☐ No

LEAD PASTOR

☐ Yes
☐ No

PRE-REGISTRATION

☐ Individual
☐ Married Couple
☐ Young Adult (16-19, married not included)
☐ Family (Household, 18 yrs. children under 16)
☐ Widow of Retired Minister
☐ Retired Minister (Must be 65 or older)

PAYMENT

REGISTRATION MUST BE PAID IN FULL TO PREPARE
☐ Cash
☐ Check
☐ Money Order
☐ Credit Card

MINISTERIAL RANK

☐ Ordained Bishop
☐ Ordained Minister
☐ Exhorter
☐ Minister of CE
☐ Minister of Music
☐ Numberr
☐ Widow of Minister
☐ File # _____
☐ Lay person

MINISTERIAL RANK

☐ Ordained Bishop
☐ Ordained Minister
☐ Exhorter
☐ Minister of CE
☐ Minister of Music
☐ Numberr
☐ Widow of Minister
☐ File # _____
☐ Lay person

LEAD PASTOR

☐ Yes
☐ No

LEAD PASTOR

☐ Yes
☐ No

PRE-REGISTRATION

☐ Individual
☐ Married Couple
☐ Young Adult (16-19, married not included)
☐ Family (Household, 18 yrs. children under 16)
☐ Widow of Retired Minister
☐ Retired Minister (Must be 65 or older)

PAYMENT

REGISTRATION MUST BE PAID IN FULL TO PREPARE
☐ Cash
☐ Check
☐ Money Order
☐ Credit Card

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Lay Delegate Affirmation

Must be completed to register as a Lay person. I affirm that I am a member of the below church:
Church _____
City and State _____
Regional Office Name _____
Lay Delegate _____
Spouse Lay Delegate _____

Signature _____

Exp _____ CSV _____



Delegate Hotel Reservation Form

INSTRUCTIONS

Reservations can be made in one of the following ways:

INTERNET

www.churchofgod.org

TELEPHONE:

Toll-free: 877-259-4716

International: 615-259-4700

FAX Completed Form:

615-259-4126

MAIL Form to Nashville Housing Corp

One Nashville Place
150 4th Ave. N, Ste. G-250
Nashville, TN 37219

DEADLINE: Reservations must be made by June 14, 2016, or until the discounted rooms sell out, whichever comes first.

REQUESTS & CONFIRMATIONS: Special requests cannot be guaranteed. Hotels will assign specific rooms upon check-in, based on availability. Nashville Housing Corp will send an email confirmation for your reservation, review all information for accuracy. Contact Nashville Housing Corp if you don't receive a confirmation or have questions.

TAX RATE: All rates are per room and subject to 15.25% tax plus a \$2.50 city tax (subject to change)

DEPOSITS: All reservation requests must be accompanied by a credit card guarantee or check in the amount equaling a deposit for one night's room and tax for each room reserved. Forms received without a valid guarantee will not be processed.

CHANGES: Contact Nashville Housing Corp for changes and cancellations through June 14, 2016. After this date, contact your confirmed hotel for changes and cancellations.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Reservations cancelled after June 14, 2016 are subject to the hotels current cancellation policy.

MULTIPLE ROOMS: Complete one form for each room requested. Multiple reservations will not be accepted under one name.

GUEST INFORMATION

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Email (required) _____

Daytime Phone _____ Fax _____

Church/Office _____

Address _____

Address 2 _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

HOTEL SELECTION *(No shuttles provided)*

Church of God discount with Uber – Up to \$25 free on first ride for New Users. Promo Code GA16UBER

Room Type: ☐ Single (1 bed) ☐ Double (1 bed) ☐ Double (2 beds)
☐ Triple (2 beds) ☐ Quad (2 beds)

Hotel Choice: Please list 4 hotel choices with hotel code in order of preference, refer to list of Official Hotels on map.

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

List all room occupants: (max four persons per room)

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

 ☐ Check here if you have a disability requiring special services

Special Requests: _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Your hotel may charge this card a deposit for one night's room and tax for each room reservation after June 14, 2016. This credit card must be valid through July 2016.

☐ Amex ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

☐ Check payable to NCVC Check # _____

Card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name on Credit Card: _____

Signature: _____



DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE MAP

WELCOME TO MUSIC CITY

Downtown Hotels:

1. Omni Nashville Hotel - \$199
250 5th Ave. S. Distance from MCC: Adjacent
2. Renaissance Nashville Downtown - \$199
611 Commerce St. Distance from MCC: 3 Bl.
3. Sheraton Nashville Hotel - \$195
622 Union St. Distance from MCC: 5 Bl.
4. Courtyard Nashville Downtown - \$195
170 4th Ave. N. Distance from MCC: 4 Bl.
5. Doubletree by Hilton Nashville - \$185
315 4th Ave. N. Distance from MCC: 5 Bl.
6. Hilton Nashville Downtown
121 4th Ave. S. Distance from MCC: 1 Bl.
7. Hilton Garden Inn Nashville Downtown - \$209
410 3rd Ave. S. Distance from MCC: 1 Bl.
8. Holiday Inn Express Nashville - \$169
920 Broadway. Distance from MCC: 3 Bl.
9. Millennium Maxwell House Hotel - \$199
2025 Rosa L. Parks Blvd. Distance from MCC: 2.5 mi
10. Ramada Inn Stadium - \$149
503 Interstate Dr. Distance from MCC: 1.7 mi
11. Clarion Hotel Nashville - \$169
231 N. 1st St. Distance from MCC: 2.2 mi
12. The Capitol Hotel Downtown - \$169
711 Union St. Distance from MCC: 5 Bl.

West End/Vanderbilt Hotels:

13. Aft Nashville West End - \$169
1710 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.2 mi
14. Courtyard by Marriott Vanderbilt West End - \$179
1801 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.3 mi
15. Embassy Suites Nashville Vanderbilt - \$195
1811 Broadway. Distance from MCC: 1.3 mi
16. Hampton Inn Vanderbilt Elliston Place - \$169
2330 Elliston Pl. Distance from MCC: 1.9 mi
17. Hampton Inn Vanderbilt West End - \$169
1919 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.4 mi
18. Hilton Garden Inn Vanderbilt - \$175
1715 Broadway. Distance from MCC: 1.2 mi
19. Holiday Inn Nashville Vanderbilt - \$190
2513 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 2.2 mi
20. Hutton Hotel - \$219
1801 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.2 mi
21. Lanes Vanderbilt Hotel Nashville - \$169
2100 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.6 mi
22. Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt University - \$167
2535 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 2.0 mi
23. Residence Inn Nashville Vanderbilt West End - \$201
1800 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.9 mi
24. SpringHill Suites Nashville Vanderbilt West End - \$191
1800 West End Ave. Distance from MCC: 1.9 mi

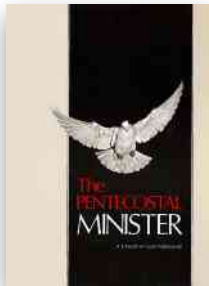
Airport Hotels:

25. Nashville Airport Marriott - \$172
600 Marriott Dr. Distance from MCC: 7.6 mi
26. Sheraton Music City Hotel - \$175
777 McSweeney Pike. Distance from MCC: 7.5 mi



Nashville
MUSIC CITY
VISITMUSICCITY.COM

- Free Breakfast
- Free Parking
- Free WiFi



The Pentecostal Minister Flashback will reprint articles from the forerunner of Engage. The articles will be presented as they were originally written, so dates and cultural references will reflect the period. However, most of the advice and research is still applicable to ministry today.

Pentecostal Minister **FLASH BACK**

FACING CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

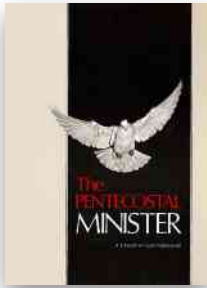
By French Arrington • Spring 1987

THE MEETING RECORDED in Acts 15 has been called the Jerusalem Council. It was the first meeting that convened to settle a theological question: the Gentiles' relationship to the law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). At the meeting were representatives from the two local churches in Antioch and Jerusalem.

Certain Jewish Christians were displeased with Paul's accepting Gentiles into the church without the rite of circumcision. These people, the Judaizers, created divergence of opinion among the Christians of Antioch and Jerusalem.

Apparently, the Judaizers from Jerusalem claimed to be emissaries of the apostles and elders. They came to Antioch and insisted that only by circumcision and observance of the law of Moses could a person enter the kingdom of God. The effort of the Judaizers created a sharp dispute at Antioch.

The Greek word rendered *dispute*, means "uprising, faction, and discord," whereas the Greek term rendered *debate*, means "quarrel, strife." Together, the two suggest a conflict-ridden situation provoked by strife and disunity. Should this situation have persisted, the church could have been rent asunder. Because of the danger of schism and the need to clarify the missionary message,



Paul, Barnabas, and others were sent by the church to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about the problem.

When the delegates arrived in Jerusalem, the church and its leaders welcomed them. At the first public meeting, which seems to have been less formal (vv. 4, 5), Paul and Barnabas reported God's blessings on their recent preaching. They made clear that the great success of their preaching mission was attested by both miracles and the conversion of large numbers of Gentiles.

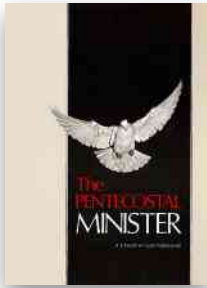
As they spoke, converted Pharisees interrupted them. Upon hearing these strict adherents to the Law, the apostles and elders took charge of the situation. They adjourned the meeting for a more formal consideration of the matter.

At the heart of the controversy was a fundamental theological question: What is required for salvation—the works of the Law, such as circumcision and other Old Testament legal prescriptions, or faith alone? A number of speeches were given on both sides of the issue, but Luke included only a brief summary of what four of the spokesmen said.

When the dispute and conflict had reached their peak, Peter addressed the assembly. He emphasized the divine initiative (vv. 7, 14). At the beginning of the Gentile mission, God had chosen Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, and his friends and to assure them of their acceptance into the church.

Furthermore, Peter appealed to the Gentiles' experience of the baptism in the Spirit as a witness of God's acceptance of them. He insisted that God gave them the Holy Spirit "just as he did to us" at Pentecost (v. 8). As at Pentecost, the household of Cornelius spoke in tongues as the sign that they had been filled with the Spirit (10:45, 46). Their experience had equipped them to be witnesses as did the outpouring of the Spirit on the disciples in Jerusalem.

God made no distinction, Peter noted, between "us" [Jews] and "them" [Gentiles] (15:9). Salvation for Jews and Gentiles came through faith. The hearts of Cornelius and his friends had been purified from heathen defilement—not, however, by



circumcision and obedience to the Law. God himself was responsible; He had granted to them inward purity by the act of faith and had baptized them in the Holy Spirit.

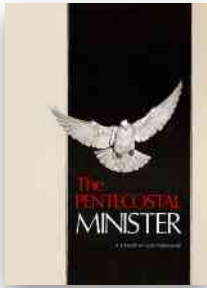
Peter warned against modifying God's plan by introducing new requirements. God did not require circumcision. Demanding it would have tested God and indicated resentment of God's acceptance of the Gentiles by faith alone. How could the assembly put an added yoke on the necks of the disciples (Gentiles)? The reasoning of Peter was twofold: (1) Israel had never been very successful in its observance of the Law; and (2) salvation is not achieved by the keeping of the Law, but "through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (vv. 10, 11).

What Peter said put an end to the dispute. Silence fell on the entire congregation. This gave Barnabas and Paul, the apostles to the Gentiles, an opportunity to speak. Luke does not record what they said. The speeches by Barnabas and Paul were based on "the signs and miracles" of their missionary journey.

Miracles such as the incident of the blinding of the Cyprus magician (13:8-11), the healing of a crippled man at Lystra (14:8-10) and the recovery of Paul from stoning (14:19, 20) attested to God's guidance of the Gentile mission. However, it is not likely that the presentations of Paul and Barnabas were limited to miracles, but included what God had done through them to bring the Gentiles to accept Christ as their Savior (13:12, 14, 48).

James, the brother of the Lord, gave the third speech. The theme of his discourse is stated in Acts 15:14 where, in agreeing with Peter, he says that God had made provision from among the Gentiles to a people for Himself. The task of James was twofold: (1) to show from Scripture that God had always intended the salvation of the Gentiles, and (2) to present proposals, or possible solutions, to the problems raised by the Judaizers.

For scriptural proof, James cited Amos 9:11, 12 (LXX), which shows that the Old Testament agreed with the gospel message. By Amos, God had promised that he would rebuild "the fallen house of David" (Acts 15:16). This promise was fulfilled in the resurrection



of the crucified Son of David. Through Him, God created a new people for Himself that included Gentiles (v. 14). A new era of salvation dawned with the rebuilding of the house of David through the triumph of Christ over death.

The restored house (tabernacle) of David would include Gentiles as well as Jews. God restored the house of David through Jesus Christ, making it possible for Gentiles to seek the Lord and to bear His name. “From eternity,” God had purposed to call all men to salvation. The prophets knew God’s purpose and plan for redemption. Amos was confident that the Lord carries out what He says (v. 17).

On the basis of Amos 9:11, 12, James offered two proposals as solutions to the controversy. The first was that no one interferes with God’s plan of accepting the Gentiles. Through the rebuilding of the house of David, God was forming a people among the Gentiles to bear His name.

Through the preaching of the gospel, Gentiles had been saved and baptized in the Spirit without observing the law of Moses. Agreeing with Peter, James recognized that imposing the Law on the Gentiles would be an annoyance to them and would make their turning to God difficult. He introduced in the Council the motion that the Gentiles should not be subjected to the demands of the Law for salvation.

The second proposal of James reveals a deeper understanding of the Law than that of the believing Pharisees. The Law itself provided the solution—the regulations for strangers among Israelites (Leviticus 17, 18).

He did not recommend that the Gentiles submit to circumcision or to countless legal prescriptions; according to Leviticus 17, 18, he urged that the Gentile believers avoid certain pagan practices:

(1) Abstain from food contaminated by idols. Many Gentiles ate flesh that had been offered to heathen gods. As Christians they must abstain from eating sacrificial meat (cf. Acts 19:35). The scruples of the Jews were to be taken into consideration.



(2) Abstain from sexual immorality. Promiscuous sexuality was bound up with pagan worship and religious feasts. Of course, that made it worse. Many Gentiles did not view sexual laxity in a serious light. Illicit sexual relations are a moral offense, but the other requirements proposed by James are neither good nor bad in themselves

(3) Abstain from the flesh of animals not properly slaughtered, and from blood.

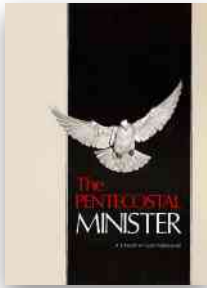
Since the last two requirements are closely related, they can be treated together. Due to certain laws in Leviticus 17:10-15; cf. Deuteronomy 12:16, 23, the Jews avoided eating any animal whose blood had not been drained. The term *strangled* means “to choke to death.”

Among the Gentiles, animals used in pagan worship were strangled to death (NIDNTT, I, 226). Animals killed in that fashion would still have their blood in them and were not to be eaten. Because of the Jewish Christians’ sensitivity, the Gentiles were to abstain from meat that retained blood.

God had accepted both Jews and Gentiles. James, recognizing that fact, recommended that each should make concessions and accept one another. He did not abolish the Law, but he interpreted it more correctly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28). These restrictions would not be seen by the Gentile believers as arbitrary and burdensome. From the beginning of the dispersion of the Jews (“from the earliest of times”), the practice was to preach the Law in the synagogues every Sabbath (v. 21).

Therefore, the Gentile Christians ought to have known the Law as a standard of conduct and the requirements demanded of them. The attempt was not to revive the ritual and ceremonial Law, but the immediate concern was the relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the church and the integrity of the gospel.

The proposals by James prevailed. An official letter was sent announcing the decision of the Council. The believers stood united on the procedure of handling the whole matter and decided unanimously to send others to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.



Among them were Judas and Silas. In addition to carrying the letter, these two men were sent with strict orders to relate by word of mouth the contents of the letter. The letter was brief and needed some explanation.

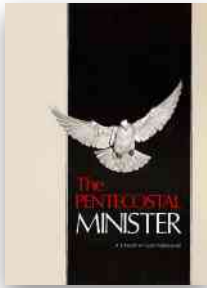
The letter that went forth had the endorsement of the Holy Spirit and the church: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us" (v. 28). These words strongly suggest that the early believers lived in the power of Pentecost and that they reasoned and spoke under the guidance of the Spirit who had directed the entire mission to the Gentiles.

As we might expect, the decision at Jerusalem had been approved by the Holy Spirit and the church. This fact echoes Acts 5:32, "We are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit" (NIV). The words "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us" link together supernatural authority and ministerial authority. Jesus had promised that the Spirit would lead the disciples in their decisions (John 16:13). That is what the Spirit did in leading the Council at Jerusalem not to place on Gentile believers additional burdens.

The Gentiles were asked to abstain from certain pagan practices: things sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled, and sexual immorality. The observance of these nominal requirements were conducive to good relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians and to moral purity. At the same time, the integrity of the gospel was maintained.

The letter from Jerusalem was well received by the Gentile church at Antioch. When the delegates arrived in Antioch, the believers came together in a congregational meeting, and the letter was delivered to them. When they read it, they burst forth in exultant joy. The letter gave them great encouragement. They had received an authoritative word on a point that had troubled the church so much that its existence could have been threatened.

Circumcision was declared unnecessary; the spiritual significance of the Mosaic Law had been confirmed. The Gentile believers were spiritually strengthened, being assured that they were



received fully into the body of Christ, and stood as one with the Jewish Christians.

An appeal can be made to Acts 15 when seeking a model for building theology or for ways of thinking about God and His will for us. A number of guidelines for developing theology can be drawn from the account of the Jerusalem Council.

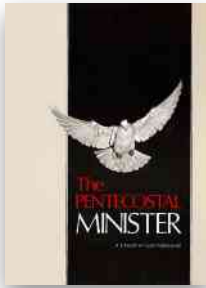
First, the account of the Jerusalem Council assumes that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem had the right to make decisions for the whole church. The delegates from Antioch went to Jerusalem for the purpose of getting the approval of the gospel as Paul preached it. However, the congregations, as well as the leadership, had a voice in the decision of the Council (cf. Acts 15:12, 22f); and, as Acts 16:4 reveals, that decision had much wider application than just to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (15:23).

Second, the whole proceeding gave the Christians present an opportunity to state their judgment upon the important question of liberty from the Law in Christ Jesus. The free and frank debate of the matter continued for some duration (v. 7). No laws and rules were applied to inhibit the deliberations.

Third, the Council saw the issue of circumcision as, first and foremost, theological. That is, the basis of salvation is faith in God's grace revealed in Christ, not faith in the works of men and women. This truth set the gospel free from Jewish religious culture and declared that a Gentile need not become a Jewish proselyte to become a Christian.

Besides raising a fundamental theological question, the Judaizers' insistence that Gentiles must become Jews (that is, be circumcised) to be saved had a sociological dimension. Should the Judaizers' opinion prevail, salvation would have involved the destruction of cultural differences among believers.

Because salvation is based on divine grace and not on the works of the Law, people of all nations can receive salvation as a gift of God without denying their cultural identity. The call of the gospel is from one kingdom to another kingdom, not from



one culture to another culture. Jews remained Jews, and Gentiles remained Gentiles; and all were one in Christ.

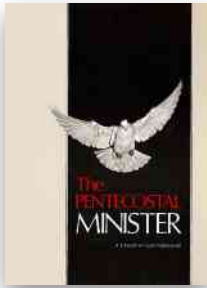
Fourth, the Council reached its decision according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The believers at the meeting were convinced of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their corporate decision at Jerusalem. The speech of James may be an example of a word of wisdom. Acts 15:13-21 is often interpreted to mean that James gave the final word because he presided at the meeting, but the words "It seems good to the Holy Spirit and us" (v. 28) may imply that he was used by the Holy Spirit to bring a word of wisdom.

The activity of the Spirit at the Jerusalem Council, as well as other examples of the Spirit's guidance in the New Testament, provides the basis for our understanding that the Holy Spirit is continually guiding the church and enabling Christians in each generation to face problems as they arise.

Finally, the decision of the Council involved Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. James declared himself to be in agreement with Peter and maintained that Scripture fully concurred with Peter's argument. In fact, all of the prophets agreed with that position. Among them was the prophet Amos whom James cited to show that it had been God's eternal purpose to include Gentiles in His family.

Furthermore, appeals were made to experience. Paul and Barnabas told of their missionary experience in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. They had had success in evangelizing the Gentiles and God had blessed their work with signs and wonders. At the beginning of his speech, Peter reminded the Council of his personal call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

A decisive point in Peter's address was his appeal to the experience of the Gentile Cornelius and his friends. God had cleansed the hearts of those Gentiles by faith in the gospel and had baptized them with the Holy Spirit exactly as He had the 120 Jewish believers at Pentecost. The experiences of the Gentiles made manifest God's will to accept them into the church apart from circumcision and other legal prescriptions.



Still another factor—namely, tradition rooted in Scripture—was appealed to by James as ground for asking the Gentiles to observe the four prohibitions. The justification for the Christian Gentiles' keeping part of the Law is given in verse 21: "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (NASB). The requirements for Gentiles who lived among Jews (Leviticus 17:8, 10-12, 13; 18:6-23) were laid upon the Gentile Christians.

The Gentile believers were expected to keep that part of the Law that applied to non-Christian Gentiles who resided among the Jews, but a Gentile who became a Christian did not need to become a Jew and receive the corresponding mark of circumcision. What was laid on the Gentile believers was thoroughly traditional.

The decision at Jerusalem took a conservative and traditional direction, but it is well to bear in mind that the observance of those traditional requirements had not been understood by the Jews to lead to salvation. Though part of the Law was retained for the Gentile believers, faith remained the only way of Salvation.

In the deliberations of the Council, appeals were made to reason, as well as to Scripture, experience, and tradition. Peter reasoned from the purification of the Gentiles by faith and the outpouring of the Spirit on them that uncircumcised Gentiles who believe should be accepted into the church at par with Jewish believers.

According to Peter's argument, if the legal prescriptions demanded by the Judaizers were laid upon the Gentiles, that would tempt God and would become a burden that the Jews had not been able to bear. Likewise, James reasoned that on the basis of Scripture and tradition, circumcision was not to be required, but that the Gentiles must abstain from certain pagan practices. Consequently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Council reasoned to a common position.

The Council's case rested on Scripture, experience, tradition, and reason. When problems are dealt with from these perspectives and in the spirit of love, they soon find their solution in the power of the Holy Spirit. ■

**PATHWAY IS PACKING A
NEW EXPERIENCE FOR YOU
AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THIS SUMMER.**



WE CAN'T WAIT TO UNPACK IT FOR YOU.

Watch it being built here: PathwayPress.org





by TRICIA REYES

Five Ways to Keep

BALANCE in the Ministry

PEOPLE FACE MANY challenges in full-time ministry. When you answer the call of God in your life, you are not just taking a new job, but you are giving your life to minister to others. Daily, you have to face your own inner issues and ask God to help you overcome. Then, there are the demands of ministering to God's people.

It amazes me to see the many facets of ministry: pastoring, being a missionary, worship leader, doing outreach ministry, being an administrator, and much more. Everyone who does any kind of work in ministry has to learn to keep a balance in the ministry. People in ministry have a passion to reach people, and they tend to pour their lives into the ministry. This, at times, can cause burnout. Marriages and families can be neglected, and sometimes it can affect a person's health.

The Lord doesn't call individuals to the ministry so they can burn out, get sick, or

lose their families. The Lord will equip those He calls. I have seen many people struggle personally, in their marriages and in their families by putting the ministry first. You cannot reach the whole world and lose your family—that is not God's will. You can maintain a balance working in the ministry and within your marriage and family.

FIVE WAYS TO KEEP A BALANCE WORKING IN THE MINISTRY

1. God must be first in your life.

Read His Word and pray daily. You cannot work for God without a personal relationship with Him.

2. Do not put ministry before your marriage and family. Ministry can keep you busy, but always set time aside every week for your marriage and your family. My husband and I pastor, so we set aside Monday nights for our family time with our kids. We watch a movie and eat dinner at home. Our kids love it!

3. Stay healthy. Ministry can require physical labor, whether it's preaching, traveling, or outreach. You have to take care of your health. Try to eat healthy and work out when you can, because God needs you for the long run!

4. Keep your heart soft. Always remember this: "You can love the people, but hate their sin." Help the people get free. Don't get angry or offended with the people you reach.

5. Have a weekly schedule. You must schedule your time so you are not pulled in every direction. You have to schedule time off to rest and regroup so you can be strong to do ministry.

"For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30 MEV).

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26 MEV).

"Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love flaunts not itself and is not puffed up. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 MEV).

Working in the ministry gives you a powerful platform to reach the lost and build God's kingdom; don't let things that you can control forfeit your call in ministry. God needs you to be strong, filled with faith, healthy, and successful in your marriage and family. Your children cannot fulfill their destiny if you don't. Set time aside and ask the Lord how you can get a better balance in your daily life.

Working in the ministry is an honor and privilege, so be thankful God has given you this opportunity. ■

Along with her husband, Pastor Luis Reyes, Tricia Reyes is the cofounder of The New Church of Joy in Waukegan, Illinois. She is a blogger, author, and helps manage her daughter Madison's (Maddie Rey) Music Ministry.

You must schedule your time so you are not pulled in every direction. You have to schedule time off to REST and REGROUP so you can be strong to do ministry.



STUNNINGLY FEW CHURCHES have a church of disciples,” concludes George Barna, even while he recognizes that most churches have programs for this purpose. While most pastors fail to see the need, this could be the greatest problem in the church, negatively impacting everything it does.

Most pastors assume that their flock is being disciplined. After all, our members attend worship services and Bible classes throughout the week. They listen to Bible teachers and Christian music on radio and

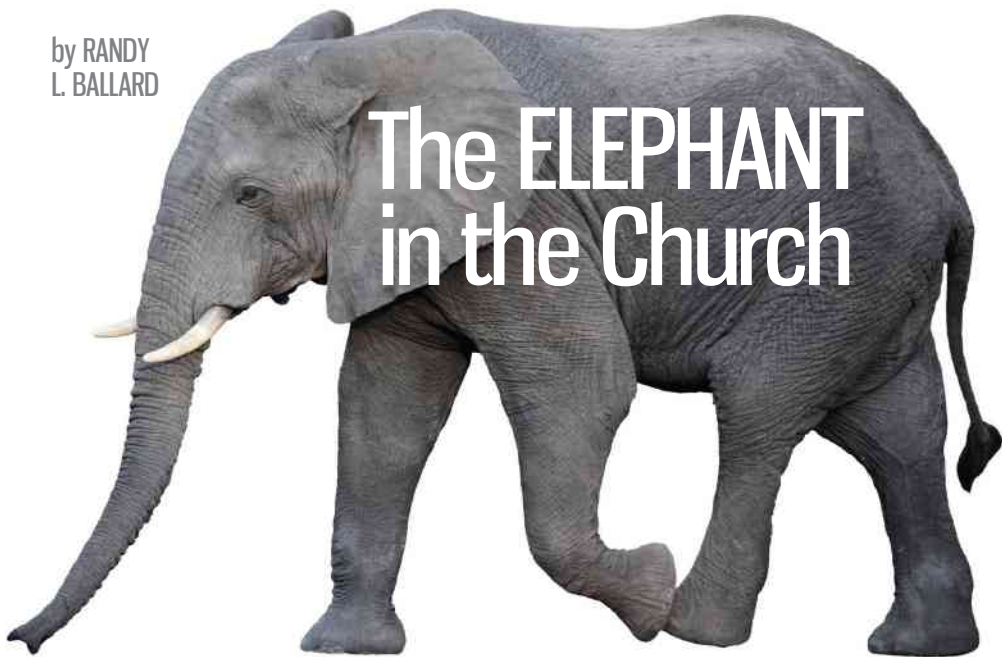
TV, as well as download it on their iPads and iPods. They tithe and give to missions. With all this spiritual nurture and good works, we assume everyone in the church is growing spiritually. We often assume they are mature because of their outside works, without considering whether an ongoing transformation is really taking place.

Nonetheless, we tend to produce members who support the church, instead of disciples who impact their world. We seem to be content with church members who are compliant and zealous. If members

“NONDISCIPLESHIP”

by RANDY
L. BALLARD

The ELEPHANT in the Church



regularly attend church worship services, serve in some kind of ministry, and agree with church doctrine, without creating waves, we are satisfied. Yet, the most faithful church members, as well as church leaders, can do all of these and still live self-centeredly. They can be miserable in their marriage, display un-Christlike behavior, and irritate their neighbors and coworkers—while making little difference for the kingdom of God. It is a common occurrence in most of our churches.

Presently, forty-five percent of Americans claim to be born again, even though eighty percent call themselves Christians. Gallop found that only thirteen percent evidenced behavioral and attitudinal differences compared with the general population. Barna found that only five percent of adults—and less than ten percent of church youth—possess a biblical worldview. Dallas Willard bluntly states, “Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church.”

EXCHANGING OUR GLAMOUR FOR HIS GLORY

First, we have to deconstruct and discard certain philosophies and practices of ministry in the church before we can replace them with biblical ones. Having served as a pastor now for nearly thirty-five years, I have often been guilty of substituting quick and often trendy ministry practices that offer visible impressions of success because these ideas have deeply rooted themselves in church culture. It takes courage, wisdom, and even

tenacity to replace them with biblical paradigms that reflect the ministry of Jesus.

OUTWARD SUCCESS OVER INWARD TRANSFORMATION

For over the first two decades of my pastoral ministry, I considered Sunday morning attendance as the measure of success. Why not? Pastors, like everyone else, like to see visible signs of accomplishment. Growing attendance, tithes, offerings, missions giving, and building size are all measurements we have used in the church culture to mark our success. However, in this age of residential mobility and consumer Christianity, eighty percent of church growth results from believers changing churches. Churches have become skilled at collecting crowds by offering desirable ministries. Through this means—especially in large or growing population areas—new churches can reach an attendance of hundreds and even thousands within a few years. While outstanding exceptions exist, Carl George concludes that mega churches generally sustain growth by being receptor churches for believers from smaller feeder churches.

One of the outcomes is a rampant easy “believism” that has come to mark cultural Christianity, especially in the West. True repentance and life transformation seems to have taken a backseat to these outward signs of success. Jesus said that His followers should be salt and light in a world that because of sin is respectively bland and dark (Matthew 5:13-16). Willard suggests, “Instead of counting

Christians, we should weigh them . . . by focusing on the most important kind of growth—the fruit of love, joy, and peace—in keeping with the gospel and the Kingdom.

SIN MANAGEMENT INSTEAD OF LORDSHIP

Another detrimental practice in the church today according to Stephen Lim, academic dean and professor for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, is what he calls “sin management.” He believes and states, “Serious evangelists and disciple makers need to emphasize the lordship of Jesus. Otherwise, we continue the scandal of millions professing faith without living it.”

In his book, *Mere Discipleship*, Lee Camp bluntly asks, “Could it be that ‘Jesus is Lord’ has become one of the most widespread Christian lies? Have Christians claimed the lordship of Jesus, but systematically set aside the call to obedience to this Lord?”

Over the past thirteen years, the church where I pastor has conducted encounter retreat weekends with an emphasis on seeing people be set free of sinful habits, addictions, bondages, and strongholds in their lives. Most of the hundreds of Christians who have been wonderfully delivered and set free at these encounters are weekly church attenders and even serve as leaders in their local churches. Many admit to having become paralyzed over the years by sin and, as Lim says, have learned to manage their sin rather than giving Christ lordship in every area of their lives.

ACTIVITIES INSTEAD OF MISSION

Another common philosophy and practice is the idea that we have “to be all things to all people,” or we have to keep the church calendar filled with activity. Unfortunately, secondary activities divert our focus, crowding out time, energy, and resources for the Great Commission. Thom Ranier’s research finds that simple churches that eliminate these activities are more effective in evangelism and discipleship than activity-filled churches.

I have come to see that all sizes of churches like all kinds of individuals possess uniquely designed strengths and gifting. Some churches may be great community churches while others are powerful missional churches. Some may be praying and worship churches while others may offer excellent children or youth ministries. Some churches may do well at discipling and equipping people while others are faithful at feeding the poor and caring for the needy. Others are anointed preaching and evangelistic churches while others are equally anointed teaching churches.

One size does not fit all. What’s vital is that the mission drives the ministries of the church. Unless activity contributes effectively to evangelism or discipleship, leaders need to consider eliminating it. We do not need to create and manage more programs in our churches, but instead concentrate on the mission of the church. More is not necessarily better. Peter Drucker urges organizations to assume a policy of abandoning

yesterday to release resources for strategies that work today.



Ways to Create Cultures of Discipleship

DISCIPLESHIP IS INTENTIONAL

As a pastor, it's easy to be confident that growth will naturally occur through participation in church services and activities. It's easy to believe that in a highly spiritual environment strong biblical values will naturally transfer. This is rarely the case in today's church. Most believers spend hardly more than a couple hours a week in church or with other believers where biblical values can be passed on. If we are to be truthful, most Christian church attenders in America obtain their values through different forms of the media because that's where most of their time and interests are.

Church leaders must be intentional about creating lifestyle discipleship cultures where believers can grow and become like Christ—outside as well as inside the four walls of the church. Discipleship can and should happen not only in the church,

but also in the homes, as well as in social relationships, personal preferences of media, and even in their educational choice. Sooner or later in the growth process, there has to be a hunger for Christ in the life of a believer to where they choose to feed on spiritual things and make choices and plans to do so. The New Testament church modeled spiritual worship, prayer, study of God's Word, and the practice of spiritual gifts as they met collectively. From there, individual families lived it out from the home to the marketplace to the community, eventually reaching the nations and the world.

DISCIPLESHIP IS ONGOING

Many churches call their new believers class a discipleship class. Typically, these run for several months, assuming that this amount of time suffices to transform a convert into a disciple. Since discipleship is a lifelong process, however, churches need to develop a means for ongoing growth.

Jesus' discipleship program lasted approximately two and a half years. After His resurrection, He sent them to the Upper Room where they were empowered by the Holy Ghost to go and make disciples. Believers are to be discipled and to make disciples. It never stops; it's ongoing.

DISCIPLESHIP IS TRANSFORMATIONAL THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Most churches assume that if individuals complete the recommended classes and



Jesus demonstrated that discipleship happens in an environment of ongoing nurture through relationships of trust, vulnerability, modeling, and accountability.

absorb the necessary information, they will be discipled. This conveniently avoids the difficult work of engaging people in the confusion and messiness of their lives. Generally, Christians have far more spiritual knowledge than they apply. While needed, we must recognize that curriculum alone cannot effect transformation. Mike Yaconelli regretfully observed, "Spiritual growth has become an industry, a system, a set of principles, formulas, training programs, curricula, books, and tapes that, if followed, promise to produce maturity and depth." Jesus demonstrated that discipleship happens in an environment of ongoing nurture through relationships of trust, vulnerability, modeling, and accountability.

So, how can classroom discipleship groups also include the relationship aspect? One suggestion might be to provide a guide, a coach, a mentor, or mentoring couple to each student/disciple. The mentor could pray with the student, be available to counsel and to listen. Possibly, the mentor could do some ministry with the student, providing real-life opportunities for them to use the things they are learning in the lessons outside the classroom. Even after the completion of the course, these relationships and the process of discipleship would continue. As Professor Lim accurately states, "Churches deal with issues not simply by giving biblically correct answers, but prayerful, ongoing support throughout the difficult process of obeying Jesus and by modeling a better way."

SUMMARY

Many churches today seem to be waking up to the importance of quality over quantity, of church health over numbers, big programs, and big buildings. Challenging your church culture as leaders, looking for ways to replace unfruitful, weak approaches with biblical ones can pose some difficulties. Even changing a church culture to reflect biblical attitudes and standards must be small, especially at first, accumulating into small victories. In time as you are consistent in acting out of a prayerful and loving spirit, these victories will create momentum toward greater changes. Then one day, instead of just having a church of supporters, you will have a church that regularly produces growing disciples impacting the world for the glory of God. ■



CHURCH OF GOD

WORLD MISSIONS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES

Monday

July 18, 2016

*Pre-Assembly: Missionary Appreciation
and Worship*

AM

**FINISH Challenge
Global Summit**



Kenneth Ulmer



The Christ Church Choir

PM

**International
Music & Awards
Celebration**



The Gaither Vocal Band

Ticketed Event: Contact info@kogwm.org
to secure "FREE" tickets. Seating is limited
and tickets must be presented at the door.

Thursday

July 21, 2016

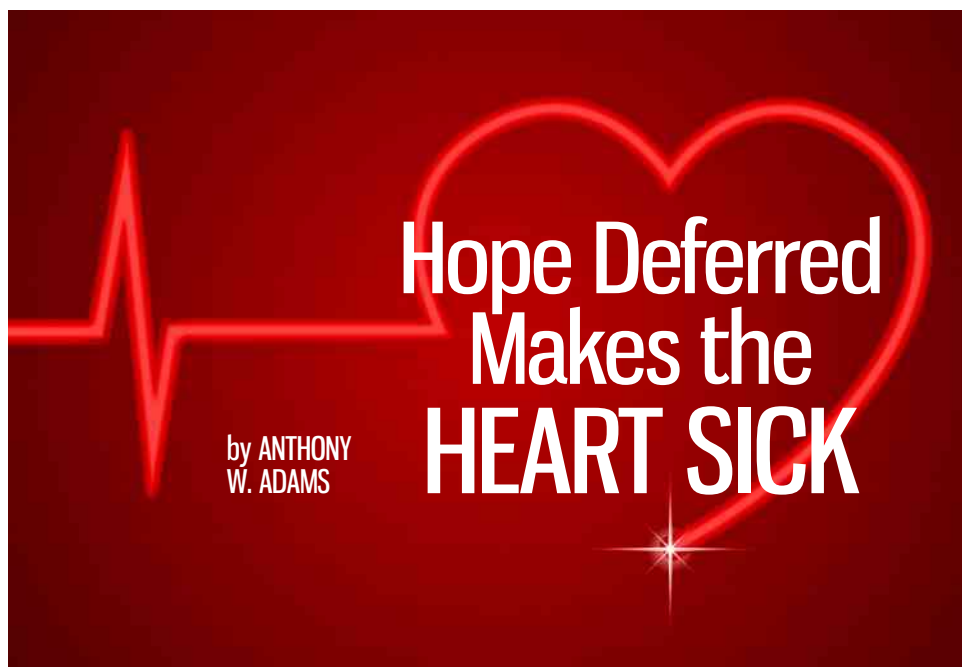
*World Missions Service / Mass Youth Choir
Israel Initiative Update*

W COGWM.ORG

P 1.800.345.7492

E INFO@COGWM.ORG

T [@COGWM](https://twitter.com/COGWM)



THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE of the church is to bear fruit. Jesus said:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful . . . This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. . . . You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you (John 15:1-2, 8, 16 NIV).

Fruit can be equated to whatever results the Lord is presently engaged in as it relates to your ministry, for example, evangelism, discipleship, healing, miracles, and the list could

go on. The point is, we as a church are to be productive and successful in the work of God.

Today, there is a practice among leaders that is impeding the progress and success of the Church. Our leaders are hiding behind administrative duties and practices and are not engaging in real leadership duties—namely, developing relationships with their followers and peers for the purpose of influencing, encouraging, and building up. And because of this practice, or lack thereof, fruit bearing within the church is suffering.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LEADERSHIP DISPOSITION

Proverbs 13:12 states: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (NIV). Within this simple passage there is a tremendous leadership

truth, namely, perceptions and attitudes affect work behavior. To truly grasp the full impact of this statement, it is necessary to break down the words within the passage.

- **Hope** refers to a confident expectation, anticipation, and passionate longing for a desired end.

- **Defer** is to give up one's previous position for another. For example: I will defer my judgment for yours.

- **Heart** refers to the feelings and intellect. This is also a synonym for soul.

- **Sick** is in reference to the physical or symbolic attributes or functions, which are impaired or begin to act in a contrary way to the healthy functions of the body, emotions, or organization.

A simple formula that expresses the truth of this passage is: $LD=f(\text{Hope} \leftrightarrow \text{Deferment})$. Basically, this formula stated that a leader's disposition (LD or Heart) is a function (f) of his or her expectations and longings (Hope) as it relates to his or her impulse to abandon these desires (Deferment). This is important, because a person's disposition has a direct effect on that person's productivity, creativity, and performance.

Abandoning Hope. The key component to this passage is the word "deferred." What causes a person to lose hope? Why do leaders abandon their dreams? The significance of these questions lie in the fact that when people abandon hope, they become disgruntled, negative, apathetic, or, as it is in many cases, they become depressed. In the words of the Bible, their heart becomes sick. The result is work performance that is significantly impaired.

PERCEPTION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

Dr. Amir Abou Elnaga, vice dean of the College of Business Administration, assistant professor at Dar Al Uloom University Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, wrote a journal article titled, "The Impact of Perception on Work Behavior."¹ In this article, he stated that although ability and skills are important and have a direct effect on work behavior, the person's perception and attitude have a tremendous impact on productivity, creativity, and performance. It was also pointed out that these components are often spread to other workers. In other words, the way we perceive a situation or our attitude about a situation has a correlation to the performance of the work.

Spiritual Depression. Psalms 42 and 43 dealt with the issue of spiritual depression. Spiritual depression is not due to sin in a person's life or physical imbalances. The term *spiritual depression*, as I am using it, takes place when a person is living and working for God, but becomes frustrated and discouraged to the degree that it could be classified as depression. It should be noted within these passages that four times this son of Korah declared that he was suffering from depression. "Why am I so depressed? ... I am deeply depressed; ... Why am I so depressed? ... Why am I so depressed?" (Psalm 42:5, 6, 11; 43:5 HCSB). When these passages are

¹Elnaga, A. A. (2012, October). "The Impact of Perception on Work Behavior." *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2 (2), 56.

examined, there seems to be three reasons for this depression. First, he longed to be in fellowship with God's people (Psalm 42:4). Second, he felt abandoned by God (Psalm 42:9). Finally, his faith was challenged by people, society, and circumstances (Psalm 43:1). The result of this leader's disposition, which is caused by his perception of his present circumstances, is inner turmoil (Psalm 42:5, 11; Psalm 43:5). The hope in his life was under assault. Please notice that he was continually reminding himself to place his hope in God. He was resisting the temptation to abandon his hope (Psalm 42:5, 11; Psalm 43:5).

The fact is, the plight of the son of Korah is what many ministry leaders are dealing with today, namely, being spiritually depressed. These leaders are frustrated, discouraged, and resisting the temptation to abandon their former position of hope. Their heart is growing sick. So the question is: How does this relate to the leaders of these men and women?

LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION

In Matthew 26:37-41, we read that as Jesus was approaching the Garden of Gethsemane, He grew depressed. During this time, Jesus asked His disciples for one thing—pray with Me and be with Me while I am going through this. “Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is swallowed up in

sorrow—to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me” (Matthew 26:37-38 HCSB). Jesus desperately wanted and needed companionship. He was looking for support and comfort. He needed someone to come alongside Him and build Him up and strengthen Him for the work that His Father was asking Him to do. However, when Jesus came back, He found the disciples asleep. He said, “Couldn’t you stay awake with me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40 HCSB).

What we learn from this event in the life of Jesus is that during times of spiritual depression, people need companionship. People, and particularly leaders, need someone to help them as they are going through this turbulent time in their lives. The worst thing that can happen during times of depression is being alone or feeling alone.

CONCLUSION

Work performance is significantly increased and improved when people are passionately pursuing their dreams and vision; work performance is impaired when hope is deferred. It is imperative to get from behind the desk and do the work of a leader. Paul told the church at Ephesus, “From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part” (Ephesians 4:16 HCSB). May God help us to be a support and help that the Church may truly accomplish the will of God—to bear fruit. ■



ADOPTION

by BOB
and TERRIE
BAYLES

IS SOMEONE KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR?

ADOPTION. It is a word that brings a smile to faces of hundreds of thousands of people. It is also a word that strikes terror into the hearts of as many people. Children—all children—need to be loved, cared for, trained, educated, and provided for in all areas of life. Most agree on this. But, what happens when this “theory” comes unexpectedly knocking at *your* door? What happens when *you* feel that “tug at your heart” to do more than just nod in agreement and wipe the tear from your eye after a stirring video is shown at church on Sanctity of Life Sunday?

That is precisely what happened to us when “adoption came knocking” at our door. Since our wedding in 1990, we’ve talked about the possibility (mostly from a

theoretical viewpoint) of adopting. It sounds noble and thoroughly religious. After all, the Bible does say that pure religion is looking after widows and orphans. After all, we too are “adopted” into the family of God. OK, so we can write a check to our local church to support kids in some impoverished African country. We can send \$25 a month to a relief agency and perhaps get a photo of a little boy or girl in some so-called Third World country, put it in a nice frame purchased at Hobby Lobby, place it on our mantle right beside our other family photos, and pat ourselves on the back for “doing something for a needy kid” somewhere half a world away. Is that what “pure religion” looks like? We thought so at one point. After all, we believe in “missions.” We give to missionaries. Some of our closest friends are “real live missionaries.” We support a little girl in Central America by a monthly donation. Check, check, check! We are now experiencing “pure religion”! “Not so fast,” God said to us.

Let’s be very clear here: We are not saying that God calls everyone to physically adopt a child, domestic or international. Our route was clearly “international,” but there are many children to adopt domestically. Neither is one better (or more “noble”) than the other. We do believe God calls all Christians to share this burden. That may come by means of prayer, giving, or other types of support. But it is an issue that cannot be dismissed as only for those families who “feel called to adopt.” Some say, “Well,

let me pray about it.” If the Bible is clear about something, especially labeling it “pure religion before God,” it stands to reason this is not something one has to question or probe for the meaning. Pray about *what* to do? Sure. But, should we pray about caring for orphans? No.

Our journey, like many real journeys, had detours, potholes, unbelievable vistas to marvel at, shortcuts, exit signs, and rest stops. But in the end, looking back on the process, each of the bumps in the road was for a reason. We do not claim to be experts on adoption. We do not claim special insight. However, we do have the experience of multiple international adoptions—all from China.

From a church leadership retreat in October 2011 was birthed our first adoption—Yana. She was 6 ½ years old, abandoned at birth in a city of 12 million. Her pictures were “perfect”: smiles (deep dimples included), laughter, and a little mischievousness (another story for another day). We found that Asian females in general, Chinese in particular, have a tough life in the “adoption world.” At age 14, children “age out,” meaning they are put out of the Chinese welfare system and on to the streets. What is an abandoned child, girl no less, going to do in a city of 12 million with no family and so support system? We shuddered to think of her future; so, we adopted. What she has brought into our lives is nothing short of profound—a deep sense of our own “abandonment” (called “sin”), and our own “disabilities” (called “sin”). Yana knew no English—nothing American—no educa-

tion, no “nothing.” We put her in piano and violin lessons. Today, three years later, she plays the piano, is in the violin section of the Chattanooga Symphony Youth Orchestra (with our 12-year-old biological daughter, Abby). She is doing early fifth-grade math and is as precocious as ever.

Fast forward to May 2014. Through a series of nothing short of miraculous events, an email found its way into Terrie’s inbox. It was a random email sent from an adoption worker out of Washington, D.C. with whom we had no previous contact. The email went to a group of couples who have adopted from the same orphanage in Nanjing, China. A message read: “Does anyone know who adopted Yan Yan Rong (Yana)?” Her orphanage best buddy (Ling Shan) was trying to locate her in America, as she was adopted two years earlier. What are the chances of a random adoption worker going to the same orphanage in China, meeting Yana’s BBF and posting an email? Think of 1.5 billion people in China and 300 million in the USA. What are the “chances” of Ling Shan ever finding Yan Rong? But that’s exactly what happened.

Terrie responded to the worker, Pam, saying that we are the adoptive parents of Yan Rong (Yana) and would be back in touch later. In June, we contacted Pam and arranged to send a box of “goodies” to Ling Shan. Pam asked would we consider adopting (refer back to the first two paragraphs). We had not considered another at that time. We told her we’d pray about it. September rolled around, and we agreed to begin another process of adopting Ling Shan (aged 12) who

would become Kathryn. Kathryn has scoliosis, a mild form of Spinal Bifida, epileptic seizures, and mild Cerebral Palsy in her right arm. But, the condition(s) were treatable with proper medical care. In looking back at Yana's preadoption videos to spot Ling Shan, we happened upon another little girl we had considered in Yana's adoption process. Her name was Ya Meng. So, we decided "while we're at it, let's adopt two." Her name is Emily. Emily had a hearing problem and mild CP also. Once we got her back to the USA, we discover she is profoundly deaf. She is now scheduled for the Cochlear implant at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in April 2016. While not a "silver bullet," it will at least give her sound differentiation. Neither of these two new girls had any education and very little medical care.

You ask, "Isn't this expensive?" The answer may surprise you. On paper, "yes." Yana "cost" us \$27,000.00. We ended up paying about \$6,000 for Yana out-of-pocket—thanks to grants and gifts. Kathryn and Emily, on paper, "cost" \$42,000.00. Yet when the dust settled, when grants and gift monies were totaled, and our adoption tax credit applied to our 2015 Tax Filing, we owed a grand total of \$0.00. That's right: nothing. God is faithful, and God is good.


There are an estimated 150 million orphans in the world. Each country represents different challenges. Is it easy? Not always. Are there days of frustration? Absolutely! But in the end, we learn life is not about "me"; it is about doing what is right in the eyes of God. It is about "pure religion." Who's knocking at your door? ■


Strengthen your ministry

... with courses in Biblical,
Doctrinal, and Pastoral
Studies.



 [FACEBOOK.COM/COGDOE](https://www.facebook.com/COGDOE)

 [@COGDOE](https://twitter.com/COGDOE)

 [INSTAGRAM.COM/COGDOE](https://www.instagram.com/COGDOE)



Develop a Social Media Policy

SOcial MEDIA is a very big topic for churches at this time, and it has numerous facets. Each of these facets might merit a separate article, but in this article, I will discuss developing a Social Media policy for your church.

I will include a link at the end of this article which contains a suggested Social Media policy for a local church. This sample policy deals basically with the necessity of a local church to have a clear understanding and agreement with all of its employees, and which provides guidance for them in the use of social media. Keep in mind that every church needs a specific point person in whom responsibility is placed to oversee the social media outlets of the church.

A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

It is a good idea to set out guidelines for church staff in a written Social Media policy. The policy can set out the general purpose of using social media to advance the ministry of the church and then can provide standards which staff can follow in using social media. Some of the most salient points that would need to be covered in a Social Media policy would include the following:

- A warning that all social media communications by staff members (*at all times whether on the job or not*) must be made with care and will be judged accordingly, and also are a reflection on the employee and the church.

- All social media communications should be in line with the Holy Scriptures, and especially with Ephesians 4:29: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."*

- No staff member should speak on behalf of the church and should specifically point out that "Any opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of my employer."

- All social media posts and accounts created by a staff member on behalf of the church are property of the church, and will continue to be so.

- Staff members must be aware that they should be careful at all times not to allow themselves to be photographed or otherwise recorded in compromising situations.

- Staff members should not make negative comments about the church or any member or any staff member of the church.

**“A WRITTEN SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
CAN SET OUT THE GENERAL PURPOSE
OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADVANCE
THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH AND
THEN CAN PROVIDE STANDARDS
WHICH STAFF CAN FOLLOW IN
USING SOCIAL MEDIA.”**

They should not discuss any member or confidential matters relating to any member or prospective member/person connected with the church. Staff members should not take sides in any disputes involving church members or personnel, especially online.

- Staff members should not post any person's picture or any other copyrighted

material on social media without proper permission.

There are numerous other general guidelines that should be followed and which should be included in a Social Media policy for a local church. Once again, see the link added to this article.

CONCLUSION

All church staff members should keep in mind that social media is an extremely powerful tool which can be used beneficially for a church, but which if used improperly can be very problematic for a church. Great care should be taken to maximize the effectiveness of and to minimize the dangers of social media in our modern age! ■

Click [HERE](#) to view and download a suggested social media policy for the local church.

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.





New Challenge to Constitutionality of Housing Allowance

IN AN EXPECTED but unfortunate development, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) filed a new lawsuit on April 6, 2016, challenging the constitutionality of the ministerial housing allowance and the parsonage exclusion under section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code. This lawsuit follows a similar lawsuit, filed in the same federal court in the Western District of Wisconsin, where the judge ruled that the housing allowance (not the parsonage provision) was unconstitutional. Fortunately, the earlier decision was overturned by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in November 2014 on a technicality.

As a part of the Seventh Circuit's 2014 opinion, reversing the lower court's decision on a technicality, the court went on for multiple pages telling the FFRF how they could refile their case and the steps they would need to take to keep from having their case dismissed in the future. Without question, it seems as though the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and their officers, took that advice to heart and have followed exactly

what the court suggested they would need to do to have a viable case.

In the earlier case, the Seventh Circuit found that the plaintiffs from the Freedom From Religion Foundation did not have legal "standing" to bring the lawsuit regarding the housing allowance. Since the plaintiffs had never requested a housing allowance, the Court noted that they could not claim that they had ever been denied the provisions of the housing allowance and had no right to claim it was unconstitutional.

However, in the latest case, three specific officers of the Freedom From Religion Foundation sought to claim the housing allowance and the Internal Revenue Service denied their request, noting that they were not ministers of the gospel. The new lawsuit claims that the IRS's actions violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution because it provides preferential and discriminatory tax benefits to ministers of the gospel, and further violates the equal protection component of the Due Process Clause of the Constitution.

In an interesting twist of facts, one of the plaintiffs, all of which are now avowed atheists, formerly received a housing allowance when he held ministerial credentials with a major church denomination.

While the previous case held only that the ministerial housing allowance was unconstitutional and the parsonage “allowance” was dismissed from consideration early in the case, the new lawsuit is requesting that both the housing allowance and the tax-free use of parsonages be declared unconstitutional. Further, based upon the new filing and the court’s previous decision, the Freedom From Religion Foundation is also requesting immediate injunctive relief, as well as a declaratory judgment that the housing and parsonage provisions, found in Section 107 of the Tax Code, are unconstitutional on their face.

Under the law, the government (in this case, the Internal Revenue Service) is responsible for fighting for the legitimacy of the Tax Code when such is challenged. In the earlier lawsuit filed in this same trial court, the Federal District Court Judge, while considering the government’s motion to dismiss, acted on her own authority and granted a declaratory judgment in favor of the plaintiffs—even though they had not formally requested such action.

Because of the request for injunctive and declaratory relief, and because of the Court’s action on its own motion in the previous

case, a decision could come very soon in this new case at the District Court level. As of the date of this article, a schedule for when briefs are due and an anticipated trial schedule have not been set by the court. However, as this matter moves through the legal process, the Church of God Benefits Board will keep you advised of any major developments.

Any adverse decision in this case would impact both active and retired ministers. Because of the severe tax consequences that a negative decision would have on all ministers, the Benefits Board has already started working with other denominations and church retirement plans to seek a favorable outcome that would uphold the legitimacy of the parsonage/housing allowance section of the Tax Code.

The lawsuit, known as *Gaylor, et al vs. Lew, et al*, was filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin and has been assigned Case No. 16-CV-215. ■

Art Rhodes is president and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. You may contact the Benefits Board at (423) 478-7131; toll free at (877) 478-7190; or by email at info@benefitsboard.com. 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. If such advice is desired or required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.



FAMILY FOCUS

Drs. H. Lynn and Mary Ruth Stone

Marriage Created With Equality

UNLIKE MOST ancient religious and secular literature, the Bible strongly emphasizes the equality of the husband and the wife. Men and women are depicted as being different with differing roles and responsibilities. But they are shown to be egalitarian in personhood.

CREATION ESTABLISHED THE EQUALITY OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

Three principles of equality flow out of the creation story of man as male and female: (1) Biblical marriage reflects the image of God in a ***relationship of equals***; (2) The husband and wife reflect the image of God in an ***equal manner***; and, (3) Both the husband and the wife were commissioned to have dominion with ***equal authority***.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created

them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28 NKJV).

Biblical marriage reflects the image of God in a *relationship of equals*.

The contrast between the singular and plural nouns and pronouns in Genesis 1:26-28 is remarkable. God showed the oneness of His nature by using singular words—man, image, likeness, and him. He showed the plurality of personhood by using plural pronouns—us, our, and them—as well as the dual description of man as “male and female.”

This wording was deliberate. The structure reveals the nature of the Creator and His creation. In his personal individuality, man reveals the oneness nature of God. In the plurality of relationships, male and female reveal the relational nature of the Godhead.

Marriage especially reflects this plural-yet-one image of God. The marital union of oneness is a relationship of equals—even as the

triune Godhead is an eternal relationship of equal persons. To say that God's creation of husband and wife was not a creation of equals would imply that the divine nature of Father, Son, and Spirit is nonegalitarian.

In marriage, the husband and the wife reflect the image of God in an equal manner.

Genesis 1:27 reveals in a general manner that God created man as both male and female. But the following chapter gives a more detailed description. In Genesis 2:18, God says: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." This verse reveals that the creation of the human family actually took place in two distinct steps.

In the first step, God made the human as one lone person. This state of aloneness was a temporary stage. The words, "It is not good," are not intended to show some inherent "defect" in God's creation. Rather, they note that at the first stage, the process was still incomplete. God's answer to this incompleteness was in the second stage—"I will make an help meet for him."

From the beginning, God showed that the "human alone" is not good. Such a state does not fully reflect the relational image of God. Only when the human is in relationship does he/she reflect the dynamic nature of the one God who eternally exists in three persons. Other human relationships also reflect the image and likeness of God. But only the marriage relationship of the hus-

band and wife goes back to the beginning of Creation.

Both the husband and wife were commissioned to have dominion with equal authority.

Where could a companion be found that would meet the need of the "alone human?" Since none of God's other creatures was a worthy "help" to "meet" the man face-to-face, God initiated the second step in the process of the human Creation.

The second stage of Creation presents the husband and wife as equals. This equality is demonstrated in God's coequal commission to both: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (1:28).

Neither the male nor the female can accomplish the Edenic commission alone. Within his or her own state of aloneness, neither male nor female can "be fruitful" nor "multiply." Only as the male and female bond together in the intimacy and equality of the sexual relationship, can these commands be fulfilled.

Furthermore, the command to "have dominion over" the rest of the creation is given equally to both the male and the female. As coequal partners, they are to rule the world in the same manner as coequal partners are to "be fruitful" and "multiply."

Having been *created* as equals to reflect the equal personhood of the Triune Godhead,

the husband and wife were commissioned as equals to reign over the earth in an egalitarian rule of shared dominion. Creation established the equality of husband and wife.

BIBLICAL HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION SUPPORT THE EQUALITY OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

The apostle Paul explained how biblical headship and submission are equal responsibilities of both the husband and the wife.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body (Ephesians 5:21-30 NIV).

The primary directive in this passage is to *submit to one another*. The wife fulfills submission by submitting to the leadership of her own husband in the same way she submits to the leadership of the Lord. The husband fulfills submission by submitting

to a leadership of love for his own wife that is patterned after the love of Christ for the church.

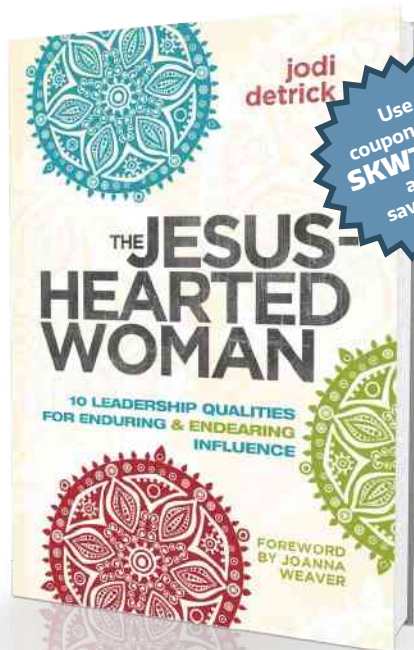
This is the biblical model of headship and submission that demonstrates the true equality of the husband and wife. The headship of the husband is a submission of Christlike love. The submission of the wife is a leadership of reverent submission. The mutual submission is summed up in the concluding verse: “Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (v. 33 KJV).

Jesus wonderfully models this equality in His submission to the Father and His headship of the Church. In submission, Christ gave Himself for the Church. In exaltation, He now serves as its head. Jesus is the perfect model of both submission and headship in the Christian home.

As Jesus is in submission to the Father, so the wife is in submission to the husband. As Jesus is the Head of the Church, so the husband is to have the same type of loving headship—he seeks to perfect his wife and present her to the world as one who is “perfect and spotless.”

Biblical headship and submission do not destroy the equality of the husband and the wife which God established at Creation. Marital equality enhances and transforms the meaning of both headship and submission as they were created in the beginning, when God made man in His image, as male and female, and said, “Let them have dominion.” ■

WHICH FIVE CHRISTIAN BOOKS HAVE HAD THE GREATEST IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE?



Use
coupon code
SKWTOPS
and
save 15%!

When we interviewed **Sandra Kay Williams**, Church of God International Women's Director, *The Jesus-Hearted Woman* by Jodi Detrick was near the top of her must-read list:

"I wish so badly I'd had this book 30 years ago. I've read it at least four times. A pastor's wife for many years, Jodi offers a lot of life experience. I've had her speak to my leaders (Women's Ministry Directors, Overseer's wives, etc.) and I utilized her book in teaching my mentoring class of upper level female Lee University students."

To see the rest of Sandra Kay's top 5 highly recommended books—including **the book that is number 1 on her list**—go to TrustPathway.com today!



Our goal is to always provide Resources You Can Trust!™ That means that we carefully select the books we feature by interviewing spiritual leaders and mentors all over the globe. Andrew Carnegie once said, "Man's reading program should be as carefully planned as his daily diet—for that is food without which he cannot grow mentally." We couldn't agree more. So no matter what else you choose to read this year, we have a list of books to choose from that are worthwhile investments, books you will treasure for years to come. To add one to the top of your reading list, call or stop by today, or visit us online:





POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF

Joshua Rice

Thriving as an Associate Pastor

IN 2011, I LEFT a short-term, senior pastor position in Macon, Georgia, to come back home and serve in an associate role at Mount Paran North in Marietta, Georgia. This congregation is home, because I have deep roots here, having attended in my elementary and middle school years. I came to fulfill a unique preaching role that would assist in the launch of a new Mount Paran North campus in Canton, Georgia. In many ways, I was hesitant about the transition. How would I navigate a larger, more complex environment in which I would have to figure out how to lead from the middle of the pack? Fortunately, the journey has been an exhilarating experience, for which I am truly grateful. It has also taught me a good deal about how to, and how not to, thrive in an associate role, resulting in a few helpful principles. I hope they are helpful to you as well!

“OVER-LISTEN”

I am a loudmouth. I tend to speak my mind to a fault. One of the earliest Bible verses that I recall my mom teaching me was James 1:19: “Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (NIV).

For whatever reason, that verse still struggles to stick!

The biggest mistakes that I have made during the past five years in an associate role are all related to a common thread—the failure to listen. Through my failure, I have awakened to the fact that listening is not passive; listening is active! It takes work. An excellent resource on this work is John G. Miller’s little book, *The Question Behind the Question*. Its essence is a challenge to “make better choices in the moment by asking better questions.” This is of paramount importance in an associate role, because learning an organization’s culture takes time.

I have often thought that if I could do anything differently, I would have been virtually silent for the first three months of my tenure as an associate. Fresh vision simply cannot be cast from the middle of an organization until a sustained period of listening has taken place.

ADOPT THE VISION STATEMENT AND PROCESS

Vision statements are a dime a dozen in churches and companies. Take this example with the name of the company left blank:

_____ Incorporated provides its customers with quality products and the expertise required for making informed buying decisions. We provide our products and services with a dedication to the highest degree of integrity and quality of customer satisfaction, developing long-term professional relationships with employees that develop pride, creating a stable working environment and company spirit.

Sounds pretty straightforward, right? I was fooled too. This is the vision statement of Dunder Mifflin, the fictional paper company in the television comedy series, *The Office*.

I'm convinced that churches also tend to have bland, generic vision statements. As an associate, I'm also convinced that pastoral associates and staff are always called to adopt the statement wholeheartedly. They are to use it from the platform, in letters, in leadership training, and on the website. Even if you are a creative person who likes to craft language, adopt the statement as your own and stick to it. Then, be a champion of the process for getting the vision done. This will engender unity among your entire team.

CRAFT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE LIKE A BONSAI TREE

I rarely read books in one sitting, but I will never forget sitting on my porch and opening Craig Kotter's, *Leading Change*. I simply could not put it down. In just a few hours, all my attempts at change that failed were carefully explained with such precision

that I was enlightened, educated, and distressed. Just like building a widget, effective change follows a predictable process. I had simply never known it!

Kotter, a professor at Harvard Business School, walks through eight stages of change in this famous book. Some of the stages are straightforward and expected—developing a vision and strategy, communicating the vision, creating urgency, etc. The final step, though, is the one I realized that I had ignored to my own peril: “Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture.” Kotter argues that this is not only the toughest step, but it is also the usual reason why change initiatives fail! He goes so far as to offer this rule of thumb: “Whenever you hear of a major restructuring, reengineering, or strategic redirection in which Step 1 is ‘changing the culture,’ you should be concerned that it might be going down the wrong path.”

Like the vice president, the associate role has little real power. This means that change must be crafted like a bonsai tree—inch-by-inch and limb-by-limb. We must recognize that culture is typically undefined and even invisible to those steeped within it. Careful questioning, prodding, and convincing are all part of effective change. I once heard Bill Hybels say: “People don’t need their opinion implemented, but they do need for it to be heard.”

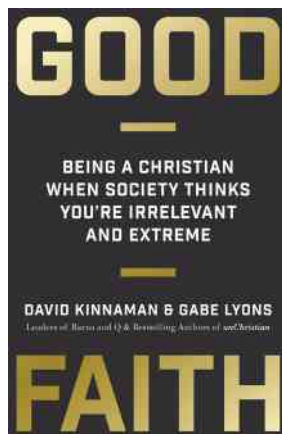
I’m convinced that the associate role, whether as a layperson or paid staff, is more important than ever in navigating the complexities of twenty-first century ministry. Lead well! ■

GOOD FAITH: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme

Kinnaman, David and Lyons, Gabe, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8010-1317- (cloth) ISBN 978-0-8010-1918-0 (paper).

HOW CAN WE live faithful to God and Church when our culture is becoming increasingly hostile? What should we be doing when people of faith are seen as extremists and religion is irrelevant? Can we hold to our convictions while respectfully treating and dialoging with those who disagree with us?

With extensive research, biblical foundations, and personal example, David



Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons tackle the provocative topics which are tearing at the fabric of our nation and bringing deep concern for our future as believers. Once again, they have com-

bined the research of their two organizations and their personal passion and ability to produce a landmark to guide us now and in future years.

Throughout this outstanding volume, the authors emphasize how we can be “good-faith” believers who maintain our convictions while continuing honest interaction with the growing percentage of people who are going a different direction in politics, sexuality, gender, race, and religious freedom. This new moral norm provides a challenge for believers to be countercultural while not being condemning. Good-faith Christians have the opportunity to be examples which break down the stereotypes which are often placed on Christians.

The extensive research data included in this book indicates how polarized our culture has become. For example, 75 percent of U.S. adults agree that “a person can live a pretty good and decent lifestyle without being a Christian.” So, why should anyone bother to be a part of Christianity? Three out of ten Americans of no faith say a church is not a benefit to a community and another three out of ten don’t know if it is or not. Also, 69 percent of Americans believe it should be legal for doctors to end a terminally ill patient’s life if they request the assistance! The authors include more data in chart forms so the reader can see further breakdown categories.

In this challenging environment, Lyons and Kinnaman offer a pattern to be a believer of good faith—it is love, believe, and live. Succinctly stated, believers should love God and others, believe in biblical orthodoxy, and live their love and beliefs every day. This demands countercultural living without

harsh condemnation of those who disagree with them and live differently.

Having provided this framework for Christian living, they apply the principles to the areas of marriage, family, friendships, life, death, disability, race, and homosexuality. Using personal life experience from their own families, as well as interaction with the President of the United States and the leading homosexual bishop of the Episcopal Church, they demonstrate the “Good-Faith” approach.

Repeatedly the authors share insights, as well as difficulties believers face in demonstrating “good faith” in the complexities of our world. Instead of allowing feelings to be our identity, it should be found in Christ. Faithful living includes costly obedience. Our theology needs to be top priority as it is rooted in God’s Word and further bolstered by the church’s historic teachings. Engage the world around us from the basis of having been transformed by the Holy Spirit. These guiding principles are quickly compromised when “church-going Christians have embraced corrupt, me-centered theology.”

An especially insightful section is a four-page segment on the role pastors play in shaping believers of good faith. They emphasize the reality of the need to have a greater degree of “clarity, courage, and tender shepherding” from clerical leaders. A failure perceived in the American church is the elevation of the teaching gift and a deficit of spiritual fathers and mothers. However, they also see the reluctance of pas-

tors to deal with certain subjects because of negative congregational reaction.

Kinnaman and Lyons conclude the enlightening volume with a chapter titled, “Faithful Exile.” They compare our cultural setting with that of the captivity in Babylon. The young Hebrews—Daniel and the three Hebrew children—trusted God and demonstrated a respectful, firm faith in public setting. In the same way, we can be hopeful for the kingdom of God while living in countercultural community.

—Review by Jerald Daffe

FREQUENCY: Tune In, Hear God

Morris, Robert, ISBN 9780718011116, hardcover, 224 pp., \$22.99, W Publishing Group, a Thomas Nelson imprint.

HEARING GOD is not about something we do. Hearing God is about someone we are,” declares Robert Morris, author of *Frequency*, a new book release by W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson. “As believers in Jesus Christ, we naturally want to know how we can hear God’s voice. Does God speak? Is He speaking to me? The good news is, yes, He is speaking. And like a radio host broadcasting His voice into the airwaves, God speaks all the time. The question is, are we tuned to the right frequency?”

In *Frequency*, Morris reveals a groundbreaking, Bible-based teaching about hearing God’s voice. God communicates with us in multiple ways, whether through the Bible,

through circumstances, or even through a whisper. Morris demonstrates how we can mature from hearing His voice as sheep, to hearing it as His friend, and to hearing it even as a prophet. When we begin to understand the general and specific ways God speaks to us, then we can begin to cultivate a life of deeper connection with our Creator.

In the Introduction, Morris says,

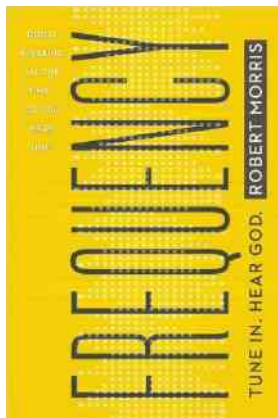
Both the Old and New Testaments clearly describe God as a speaking God. The real task—and wonderful opportunity—is for us to learn to hear His voice. That’s what I want to turn our attention toward because that’s my burden for all Christians everywhere. We need to know that God still speaks to His children today, and we need to know how to listen to Him and then respond accordingly. I want every believer to have an intimate, ongoing, and passionate relationship with Jesus Christ so that we will all love and serve and follow His voice.

“Friends, the good news is that we don’t need to go through life blindly. We don’t need to rely on our own understanding. That truth that God still speaks today offers us hope and reassurance and confidence.”

You can learn to hear God!

The book will hold your attention from beginning to end. It is sprinkled with relevant Scripture references, interesting illustrations, and practical applications that will benefit both lay readers and ministers. Preachers will find much that can be adapted to their teaching and preaching.

In *Frequency*, readers will gain a better understanding of how to recognize God’s voice, value the voice of God, discern the



general voice of God from the specific voice of God, grow in their relationship with the Lord by spending consistent time with Him in His Word, and enjoy drawing closer to their

Creator. *Frequency* will demystify the process of hearing God and take readers to new levels of faith.

ROBERT MORRIS is the founding senior pastor of Gateway Church, a multicampus church in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Since it began in 2000, the church has grown to more than thirty-six thousand active members. Morris is featured on the weekly television program *The Blessed Life* and serves as chairman of the board of The King’s University. He is the bestselling author of twelve books, including *The Blessed Life*, *From Dreams to Destiny*, *The Power of Your Words*, *The God I Never Knew*, and *Truly Free*. Robert and his wife, Debbie, have been married thirty-six years and have one married daughter, two married sons, and six grandchildren.

—Review by Tom George

CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

News happening between January 15 and May 15, 2016

Lee University Receives Major Recognition from NCAA

Lee University received one of the NCAA's most prestigious awards during the organization's annual convention held in San Antonio, Texas, in late January.

Lee President Dr. Paul Conn was on center stage to receive the 2016 Award of Excellence. Twenty-one other NCAA Division II schools and three conferences were named as finalists two weeks earlier.

Lee University athletics are competing in their first official year of membership in NCAA Division II and the Gulf South Conference after going through a three-year transition period.

All the programs entering the competition held activities exemplifying the six Division II attributes: learning, balance, resourcefulness, sportsmanship, passion, and service.

"We are thrilled to win this award!" stated Lee president Dr. Paul Conn. "I (was) so proud to be in San Antonio to accept it personally, on behalf of all the people back home who work so hard to make Lee University a place where *excellence* and *service* go together. Our thanks go to the NCAA Division II for recognizing us in such a significant way."

The centerpiece of Lee's nomination was the women's volleyball team and its annual Volley-for-a-Cure event. The program has grown larger and has become more than a college volleyball match between college teams. The entire community is deeply involved. Starting in the fall of 2008, the first VFAC event

raised \$15,000 and has given over \$130,000 since its inception.

Leaders Pay Tribute to T.L. Lowery

Cleveland, TN—One of the Church of God's most iconic leaders, Dr. T.L. Lowery, was memorialized by family and church leaders on Thursday, March 3, in the second of two Remembrance of Life services following his death on February 21.

Hundreds gathered at the North Cleveland Church of God, a church which Lowery served as senior pastor from 1969 to 1974. During his tenure there, he grew and built the church into one of the most dynamic congregations of its time.

A first service was held earlier that week on Monday, February 29 at the National Church of God in Ft. Washington, MD. Like North Cleveland, National was a church Lowery served as senior pastor (1981–1996), growing and building it into an influential and powerful ministry.

The two services mirrored one another with many of the speakers traveling to both locations to speak on behalf of a portion of Dr. Lowery's life. The church choirs performed at both locations, as did spiritual daughter Judy Jacobs Tuttle. Rev. Steve Brock also sang songs of worship and celebration at both locations. George





T.L. Lowery rose to notoriety from his dynamic tent revivals of the 1950s and 1960s.

Henderson, a representative from the National Church Pastor's Council, greeted both services. The three grandchildren—Aimee, Stephanie and John—spoke on behalf of the family, while two former Church of God general overseers—Dennis McGuire and Lamar Vest—also spoke to the gathering.

Several well-known ministers felt compelled to attend the funeral of the “apostolic statesman.” They included Evangelist Kenneth Copeland, Randy White, pastor of Without Walls International, Evangelist Perry Stone, and Bishop T.D. Jakes, pastor of Potter's House in Dallas, Texas (by video).

Current General Overseer Mark L. Williams addressed the gathering at both Washington National and North Cleveland on behalf of the Church of God.

Rev. Stephen Lowery, the only child of T.L. and Mildred Lowery, concluded the services at both locations with testimonies

about a lifetime of influences from his father.

Dr. Lowery was laid to rest next to his beloved Mildred in a private family ceremony. Mildred Lowery passed away nearly one year ago on March 8, 2015.

T.L. Lowery was born on January 12, 1929, and spent over 70 of his 87 years ministering the gospel throughout the world. By the time he was 25 years old, he had pastored four congregations; but in 1954, he launched into full-time evangelistic work, where for the next 15 years he crisscrossed the United States proclaiming the gospel to thousands, preaching from a tent that held up to 10,000 people. Following his pastorate at North Cleveland, he was elected to the Church of God Executive Committee where he served for the next eight years as an assistant general overseer.

In 1981, following a 40-day fast, Lowery accepted the pastorate of the National Church of God and, like North Cleveland, grew and built

the church into a congregation of thousands. He was elected for a second stint on the Executive Committee in 1996 and he served until 2004, rising to first assistant general overseer. The final 12 years of his earthly ministry were spent mentoring the next generation of ministers as he conducted crusades and hosted events through the establishment of the T.L. Lowery Global Foundation.

Church of God Pastor Assassinated in Guatemala

The Church of God field director over Latin America, David Ramírez, received a report from Dr. Otoniel Collins, superintendent for the Church of God over Central America regarding the tragic death of a prominent pastor in Guatemala.

According to Collins, Pastor Juan Saturnino Guachiac was assassinated on March 16 in the southwest region of Guatemala. He pastored a church, and was planting two new churches. He was also the overseer of the 26 churches and many missions of the Quiché Region. Collins called him, "the most prominent leader of the Quiché Region. He loved his people and dreamed of furthering their development."

Saturnino was also leading a project in education in the region.

"He was an outstanding leader," Collins stated. "We were supporting him for even a greater leadership, but violence took him away from us. We feel helpless and vulnerable in the face of the unstoppable violence that has taken hold of our country. The preparation of a leader like Saturnino takes at least ten years; but coward assassins ended his life . . . we hope this crime won't go unpunished."

Ecuador Seminary Launches D.Min. Program

SEMISUD, a Church of God South American ministerial seminary, located in Quito, Ecuador, recently launched a doctoral studies program. World Missions leaders Drs. Tim Hill and John D. Childers were in Quito as part of their "World Missions Around the World in 30 Days" tour and helped celebrate the milestone event.

The Around the World tour is usually conducted via Internet technology, but on this occasion, leadership was actually in Quito to meet with Dr. David Ramírez, field director of Latin America, Central America, Mexico, and Brazil, along with other leaders for the Church of God and in Latin America.

Also on hand were Assistant General Overseer Dr. J. David Stephens and Regional Superintendent Eduardo Drachenburg. Presently, there are 33 students in partnership with the Church of God's Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Dr. Hill stated, "The life and breath of our denomination is in its future leaders who will be educated and trained at our excellent universities . . . this program will have great impact for many years to come."

International Offices Unveils Upgraded Media Capabilities

Cleveland, TN—When the Leadership and Communications Center opened in 2004, it included a state of the art recording and digital editing studio. Over the last 12 years that same equipment, software, and facilities have all been used to produce media that has gone literally around the globe. However, wear and tear on equipment and shifts and changes in ministry

focus within the Church of God brought about the need for more advanced capabilities and relocation of some facilities.

In late April, Church of God Communications unveiled a new recording studio that will offer new services and advanced technologies. Built adjacent to the current conference center, the upgraded space includes analog and digital recording equipment, as well as a full-scale recording studio with one of the largest tracking rooms anywhere. The main tracking room can hold a choir and/or orchestra of over 100 members. Studio personnel will have the capability to record, mix, and master any type of music project and to mix in 5.1 surround sound for film or music.

The new facilities will also be used to enhance the postproduction of Church of God videos with connectivity to a new AVID video editing suite with 4K video work flow. The new

suite is also adjacent to the conference center, but in a newly-constructed space on the north-west side of the first floor. Among other projects, the AVID suite can be used to remaster and restore old Church of God music projects, ministers' tape series, and highlight reels from past General Assembly events. The studio will also be open for rental for those looking for a place to record, as the purpose is for it to be a place where church or ministries of all sizes and budgets can produce music and video projects.

The changes come on the heels of some long overdue technology upgrades since the International Offices campus was expanded in 2002–2005. During that period, two new two-story buildings were constructed on the Keith and 25th Street property and the original four-story office building, constructed in 1966–1968, was gutted and modernized. The new campus was dedicated in September 2005.



*Communications team member
Brandon Guyton works in the
newly upgraded studio*

changing the face of ministry



**ministry
source**

ministrysource.com

videos • training • sermons • documents • inspiration