

SPRING/  
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2017



# engage

A Journal for  
Church of God  
MINISTRIES

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# Praying for Our Leaders - II

**I**N THE LAST ISSUE of *Engage*, which was released less than two months after the July 2016 International General Assembly, this column pleaded for prayers for our newly elected general overseer and the Executive Committee. It was a simple, straightforward request for the next four years of their leadership.

The weekly bulletin at my local church lists prayer requests, and in that section, there is a request to pray for our government leaders. The first one on that list, every week for the last eight years, has been President Obama.

Regardless of your opinion of him, his beliefs, or his political party, Barack Obama has been the president. Now, we head into a different era, but with perhaps the same type of moral dilemma with our new president, Donald Trump. The same can—and must—be said about him. First and foremost, he is the president, and we are biblically instructed to keep him in our prayers.

Art Rhodes addresses this topic in a terrific article in this issue. His experience in the political realm is extensive and qualitative.

Just like we laid hands on our new general overseer last July in Nashville, let's symbolically do the same for our new president and other government leaders. ■

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

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# FOCUSING ON THE JEREMIAH GENERATION

**I**N AN INTENTIONAL effort to spotlight the next generation of Church of God leaders, General Overseer Tim Hill has announced a new initiative which will equip and empower them, as well as showcase their life-giving sermons.

Hill formally launched “The Jeremiah Project” during an announcement he made to a packed Thompson-Boling Arena on the campus of the University of Tennessee Knoxville. The occasion was the 35<sup>th</sup> gathering of Smoky Mountain Winterfest, perhaps the most successful youth outreach of the Church of God.

“I was recently inspired by the passage found in Jeremiah 1:5, where God told Jeremiah, ‘Before you were born I knew who you were and I knew who you were going to be,’” Hill stated. “God confirmed to Jeremiah that he was to be a prophet to the nations!”

In keeping with Hill’s overarching theme for the denomination, the FINISH Commitment, the Jeremiah Project encases four of the six initiatives of the acronym FINISH, including FIND (finding and pursuing the Jeremiah generation),

NETWORK (networking with the next generation through discussion groups, personal engagement, and strategic conferences), and INVEST (investing in the lives of now and next generation leaders to model, mentor, and train).

“Prophetic alignment for end-times assignment is happening,” Hill stated in referring to the Jeremiah Project. “Ultimately, the purpose of this project is to identify and *send* this amazing and resourceful army out to win the HARVEST. We have many young men and women among the Jeremiah generation in the Church of God today who must be engaged and empowered to make a difference. I want everyone to join me by intentionally and prayerfully speaking into their lives.”

During his announcement, Hill outlined a list of ten areas of focus the Jeremiah Project will be developing in the coming months:

1. Jeremiah Gatherings—intentional interaction with potential ministry students at youth camps, Winterfests, and other youth events
2. Internet Discussion Groups

3. LeaderLab Participation Scholarships
4. Partnerships with established conferences
5. A dedicated session or track at the LEAD Conference at the 2018 General Assembly
6. REAP PK (Preacher's Kid) Gatherings (REAP—Reaching, Engaging, Affirming, EmPowering)
7. “This Is Our Time” Visits
8. Educational Scholarship Opportunities

9. Media Connectivity
10. Regional Young Leaders LIFT Conferences—Linking, Investing, Focusing, Training

Several of the focus areas are already being implemented, such as a dedicated Web presence that spotlights snippets of sermons from the Jeremiah Generation (primarily those under the age of 40). These “Voices of the Jeremiah Generation” videos are located on the Church of God website, [www.churchofgod.org](http://www.churchofgod.org). ■



by SILAS SHAM



# WASHING FEET: Called to Cleanse

**W**EIRD! STRANGE! BIZARRE! These were some of the thoughts that flooded through my head the first time I worshiped with Pentecostals who practiced footwashing regularly. As a Pentecostal who was practically born at the altar, talk of footwashing had never been foreign to me. However, until a few years ago, that was all footwashing was to me—idealized and nonessential talk.

“Surely it can’t be bad to participate in practices that cause us to replicate the

humility of Christ, but is it really necessary? In a perfect world, I’d be open to it, but no one actually does that anymore. We’re in a different culture—a different time. Footwashing as a memorial just doesn’t seem practical for contemporary Christians.”

Consider the worship song, “Marvelous Light” by Charlie Hall. For many of us, I think our congregations view footwashing much like the bridge section in this song. “Lift my hands and spin around/See the light that I have found/Marvelous light,

Marvelous light!" Whenever we sing this song, how many people within our congregations actually spin around? At our church, we'll have many people lift their hands, but spin around? No, not quite. Everyone is always more than happy to sing about running out of darkness, and out of shame into marvelous light; but in that freedom, it doesn't mean that we actualize every word that is sung in the bridge. We say to ourselves, *Surely Charlie Hall doesn't mean for us to actually "spin," right?* This is how many of us think about footwashing. We'll talk about it, but it doesn't really have a place within the practical life of the church. It is a nice thing to do in theory, but in practice it just doesn't seem tenable, or necessary. Indeed, I think most would argue that everything we might "get" from footwashing seems to be equally attainable through other tidier, less awkward means.

But is this understanding of footwashing faithful? Does footwashing have any place within our churches today? Before this question can be addressed accurately, perhaps a preliminary discussion of sacraments in our churches is in order.

What is a sacrament, and how do *sacraments* differ from *ordinances*? From a technical standpoint, this question is challenging on several fronts. First, as Daniel Tomberlin notes, "[i]t is impossible to speak of *the* Pentecostal perspective on sacraments. The singular distinctive of Pentecostalism is that the Holy Spirit moves. Likewise, Pentecostal theology is dynamic rather than static...

[It] is developing; it is being formed, and will continue to be formed" (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 66). Further, in his work on the Lord's Supper, Chris Green reveals how the terms "sacrament" or "ordinance" have been used synonymously by some, and distinctly by others since the early days of Pentecostalism (*Towards a Pentecostal Theology*, 4-73). Indeed, Green is spot on when he notes that those who posit different theological and practical positions concerning the nature and practice of the sacraments all "appeal to Scripture for support of their positions ... In short, differences in theological method seem to determine the differences in opinion among Pentecostals on the purpose and meaning of the sacraments" (*Towards a Pentecostal Theology*, 72-73). In light of these challenges, I recognize that some of the readership of this article may hold comparable understandings of sacraments or ordinances to that which will be defined within this article, while other readers may believe that the proposed definitions are less than helpful. Through our reading and discussion of sacramentality in general, and footwashing in particular, may we practice charitable listening that strives to ask, "How is this right?" rather than our more culturally conditioned typical posture of "How is this wrong?" and in so doing, endeavor to hear what God might be saying to us through each other.

Generally speaking, a sacrament is a sign that does what it says. This sign is empowered by the Word and gives us grace through

and with the sign. In this way, sacraments serve as means of grace. Borrowing from Robert Jenson, Green describes a sacrament as “a ritual gesture that serves as a ‘sign’ that somehow actually affects what it signifies, a ‘visible word’ that does what it says or ‘gives what it talks about ...’” (*Towards a Pentecostal Theology*, 77). Contrastingly, an ordinance is something that is done because Jesus has commanded or ordained us to do it. An ordinance is not unique, and it has no inherent power. It is a reminder, or symbol of what God has done.

To illustrate the difference between a sacrament and an ordinance, consider how stop signs work. If someone is approaching an intersection and they see a red octagon with the word, “STOP” on it, the city planner who designed it to be in that place is giving the driver a command to follow. Now drivers do not need to follow the command. Indeed, anytime drivers see a stop sign, they only know to stop because they are remembering what has previously been learned when a vehicle approaches a red octagon with the word “STOP” on it. In this way, stop signs are ordinances that we generally obey, but in their essence, stop signs do not impart any power to make us stop by grace. Through the stop sign, we do not encounter the city planner, nor is there any real presence in the ordinance to stop. This stop sign does not affect what it signifies. Contrastingly, a sacramental stop sign might visually look identical to an ordinantal stop sign, but if someone

were approaching a sacramental stop sign, that stop sign would actually stop us. This does not mean that we’d instantaneously and magically be frozen in time. Rather, a sacramental stop sign might impart to us the power to stop our car even though we might want to run through the intersection. In this act of stopping, we’d encounter the real presence of the one who initially planned and gave the sign, and furthermore be called into participating in the practice of stopping with God.

While all analogies will indubitably break down, notice how in the example above the sacraments are not merely depicted as symbolic, illustrative memorials of a previous act that has been commanded. Instead, a sacrament through the power of the Holy Spirit invites us into participation with the Triune God to encounter, know, and reveal the image of the invisible God. In their presentations which highlight the sacramental parallels between signs, the fivefold gospel, and the *via salutis*, both John Christopher Thomas, and Kenneth Archer speak to this directly (*Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century; Nourishment for our Journey*). As Christians who proclaim that Christ is our Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit-Baptizer, Healer, and soon-coming King, we may in good faith also claim that just as we are justified and regenerated in water baptism, we are sanctified in footwashing, we are Spirit baptized with speaking in tongues as an initial physical evidence, we are healed with the laying on of hands and anointing with oil,



and we participate in Christ's glorification in the Lord's Supper.

With this framework in mind, let us now turn our attention to the topic at hand: Footwashing. In Christian circles, there is near universal agreement that (at a minimum) participating in footwashing reinforces the humility of service that Christ embodied when He washed His disciples' feet in John 13. However, while this is certainly acknowledged as an element of footwashing within sacramental understandings of footwashing, servitude and the practicing of humility are only elements of this sacrament.

Within the Johannine community, John Christopher Thomas has convincingly and authoritatively shown how there is overwhelming scriptural, textual, theological, and historical evidence to recognize footwashing as a sacrament that is meant to serve as a participatory act for post-baptismal sins (*Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*). In both the humbling of the one who is stooping to wash, and the vulnerability of the one who is allowing the washing to happen, the washing that Christ instituted for His disciples to continue requires us to take seriously the words of Christ in verses 7, 8, and 10: "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand; Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me; Whoever has already bathed needs only to wash his feet, and he will be completely clean" (NIV).

In these words, notice the twofold motif of washing. On the one hand Christ describes one who has already bathed. Throughout Christian tradition, this has been seen by most to connect to baptism as a sacrament that launders us from the grime of sin to reveal the imprint of God made known to creation as God's image is actualized in our lives—even though there is no explicit baptismal narrative in John. Despite the overt (and most probably intentional) omission, as we move from the air into the water, and back up again, the cleansing flood sacramentally does what it says—it cleanses us.

On the other hand, as we travel along the road of life, post-baptismal sins inevitably soil us. And yet, the same water that we've already been cleansed with in baptism, like baptism does what it says—it cleanses us.

This cleansing is not merely physical. Both baptism and footwashing are not symbolic memorials that have no relevance in our culture and time. It is true that transportation and hospitality in our contemporary world differ from the epoch of Christ. And yet, the cleansing that we receive through our participation in footwashing is not a washing that just sanitizes our bodies from the dirt of the world. Indeed, as mingled blood and water flowed down from Jesus' side on the cross (John 19:34), *water*—the very instrument of cleansing that we were baptized in and that our feet were washed in—has been fundamentally altered and purified by the blood. The agent of cleansing has itself been purified so that now when we wash, we are

made new. Now when we wash, we are justified, regenerated, and repeatedly sanctified. Now when we wash the feet of someone who has wronged us, we are able to offer the forgiveness that is offered to us in the blood. Now when our feet are washed, we are able to receive the forgiveness that is received through us in the blood. This is an act of humility. It is also an act of servitude. It is an act that imparts both the power and grace to wash, and be washed—to forgive, and be forgiven. In our participation in this sacrament, we are repeatedly graced with power to overcome sin in our lives, and in turn, live sanctified and sanctifying lives. This is the sacrament of footwashing.

Weird! Strange! Bizarre! These are *still* the same thoughts that flood through my head every Sunday as I worship with Pentecostals who practice footwashing regularly. While as a church we only have full-scale footwashing services a couple times a year, every week there are water basins, towels, and people who are ready and willing to participate with anyone who feels led by the Spirit to practice the sacrament of footwashing. In this way, every week at New Covenant Church of God we go rejoicing and in anticipation that Christ who is our Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit-baptizer, Healer, and Soon coming king is willing, and able to be tangibly met through the sacraments of God's Church. ■



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# WHY CHURCH SERVICES SHOULD BE LIVESTREAMED

There's a persistent myth about church livestreaming that needs to be put to rest: The idea that once you go live online, your members will stop coming to the services. Nothing could be further from the truth. I don't have statistics; I can only give you my experience with the hundreds of churches we've worked with around the world.

by PHIL COOKE





**O**VER AND OVER, as we help churches livestream their services, the actual Sunday attendance in the building goes up. In other words, if you put your services out there online for others to see, it actually draws more to the Sunday service.

There are plenty of amazing livestream stories. I was speaking at a pastor's conference in Oklahoma this year and met one pastor who preaches to 700 people in his congregation. But his livestream is viewed by an average of 10,000 people each week.

We worked with a large church in the Southeast who actually gets as much as one-third of its total income from the livestream audience. In fact, one Sunday, the pastor called me, excited to share that on the previous Sunday, the church received more donations online than the congregation gave in the offering plate. That's unusual, but it does happen.

Think for a minute about former members of your church who have moved, but would

like to stay in touch. Students who have left for college, business people in the congregation who travel, and missionaries you support. I can tell you that whenever my wife and I are on the road on a Sunday morning, she always opens up the laptop and watches the livestreamed service from our church.

The bottom line: There are millions of people outside the walls of your church who need to hear your message. Certainly you won't reach all of them with your online service, but the fact is, if you're holding back from doing a livestream, you won't reach anyone beyond those walls.

If you're a pastor or church leader interested in livestreaming, ask any questions in the comment box, or contact our team. We want to see your message reach as many people as possible, and a livestream is a relatively inexpensive and effective way to make that happen. ■

*Phil Cooke has produced media programming in nearly 50 countries around the world. (Source: [ministrytodaymag.com](http://ministrytodaymag.com))*





by TONY RICHIE

# Religion-Related Violence: Cause and Cure

ONE OF THE MOST urgent needs facing Christians today involves effectively dealing with unprecedented, confrontational encounters between diverse faith groups and their devotees. Religion-related violence is destructive for everyone. American pastor, theologian, ethicist, and political commentator, Reinhold Niebuhr, observed that “religious diversity remains potentially the most basic source of conflict.” The September 11, 2001, attack by Islamist terrorists on the United States supports Niebuhr’s comment. Scholars from diverse denominations and disciplines

agree. Lutheran Martin Marty, specialist in religion in the public square, suggests interreligious rivalry threatens the security and stability, even the very survival, of contemporary society. Catholic theologian and ecumenist Hans Küng insists that ongoing interreligious violence is a chief obstacle to peace among the nations. Arguably, violence among the religions is among the most pressing problems facing us today.

According to sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer, religion-related violence is particularly disturbing and prevalent in contemporary society. Historically, faith has

been used by extremists and radicals to provide moral justification for violence in all major religions—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist. Yet religion-related violence is rising dramatically, probably in resistance to challenges of modern globalization. Those who resort to religious violence (aka religious terrorists) attempt to defend or promote a narrow worldview perceived to be under threat in today's world. Therefore, religious contributions to contemporary global violence, and their underlying interreligious nature, must be addressed. Perhaps surprisingly, Juergensmeyer argues that the deepest and best resources of religion itself are the greatest instruments for overcoming interfaith conflict. In short, religion can be either “a cause” or “a cure” for violent conflict.

Accordingly, Christians have a moral and spiritual obligation to help resolve current religion-related conflicts. A key biblical text for Pentecostals, probably due to deep roots in the Holiness Movement, has been Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (NKJV). Church of God Bible scholar and theologian Donald Bowdle explains this as a general charge to peace, in a context of religious persecution, without compromise of Christian holiness. He connects Hebrews 12:14 to Jesus’

teaching in Matthew 5:8 on “blessed are the peacemakers.” The biblical text utilizes “all” (πάντων/*panton*), which denotes “each, every, any, all, whole, every kind.” The pursuit of holy peace literally means with everyone. It includes Christians pursuing peace among the religions.

Of course, there are biblical, practical, and reasonable considerations and limitations (see Matthew 7:6). Not everyone is responsive to peaceful overtures. For example, violent terrorists who have been radicalized do not typically embrace others. Our national security, family safety, and self-preservation require wisdom. Yet authentic partners for peace should be sought out and brought together wherever available and whenever feasible. Here, an inherent Pentecostal value—pursuing peace as part of holy living—provides a solid basis for responding to the current crisis of interfaith conflict in a positive and proactive manner. Sociologically speaking, religion can be either cause or cure for religion-related violence. Biblically speaking, faith in God’s redemption in Christ and the Holy Spirit’s power enables one to confront and overcome all sin—including the sin of killing in God’s name. (For more in-depth treatment of this topic, see Tony Richie, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Religions: Encountering Cornelius Today*, published by CPT Press). ■

# COMPENSATION SURVEY WILL HELP CHURCHES SET FAIR PAY

**F**INDINGS FROM a national survey on church compensation will be used to create one of the best-known resources for church compensation reports—the *Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*. This resource is published by the Church Law & Tax Team of *Christianity Today* and helps church leaders determine a fair wage for pastors around the country.

Church employees are encouraged to take this anonymous survey to help the Church Law & Tax Team receive an accurate representation of church compensation nationwide.



This resource provides compensation profiles classified by part- and full-time positions, church size, church budget, and geographical setting. Each position's compensation levels are presented based on several personnel characteristics, including years employed, denomination, region, gender, and educational training.

The data gathered from survey results will shape the *2018 Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*. It will also build the foundation needed for the upcoming online compensation tool the Church Law & Tax Team is creating.

The \$750,000 grant awarded to Church Law & Tax (CLT) by Lilly Endowment Inc. focuses on the *National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders*, and the first step in this project is to gather research from pastors and church staff with this survey, the 2017 National Church Compensation Survey.

To learn more about the tools the Church Law & Tax Team currently offers to help pastors and church staff with compensation, visit [ChurchLawAndTax.com](http://ChurchLawAndTax.com). (Source: *Christianity Today*) ■



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# IS THE ALTAR CALL STILL RELEVANT?

by RANDALL O. EUBANKS



**R**ECENTLY, AS I SAT in a large Charismatic/Pentecostal church, the pastor said, “I don’t give altar invitations; I don’t even think they are biblical.” As he spoke these words, it caused me to question a practice that every church I have ever attended did, and as a pastor, I had practiced for more than forty years. It was an invitation to a little cedar-knot altar that caused me to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. So, is this practice still relevant?

First, what is the historical context of the altar call? Many contend that there was no reference to altar calls for eighteen hundred years. It is the claim of these antagonists of altar calls that the altar call was begun

by the eighteen-century evangelist, Charles Finney. However, some Anglo-American ministers used such altar calls at the end of the 1700s, but only during the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening in America did they flourish. Altar calls were the norm of the Second Great Awakening in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1800 to 1810. No, it was not called an altar call; it was called the mourner’s bench. Those who were convicted of their sinfulness would come forward and kneel at a wooden altar and there receive counsel and prayer that would lead the individual to an experience of repentance and regeneration. Finney began his evangelistic efforts in the 1830s. Altar calls and mourner’s benches contin-

ued to be part of the Evangelical Movement until our own times.

The altar call has not continued without its critics. These have been summed up by Pastor Ryan Kelly (Desert Springs Church):

1. The altar call is historically absent until the 19th century, and its use at that time (via Charles Finney) was directly based upon bad theology and a man-centered, manipulative methodology;

2. The altar call very easily confuses the physical act of “coming forward” with the spiritual act of “coming to Christ.” These two can happen simultaneously, but too often people believe that coming to Christ is going forward (and vice-versa);

3. The altar call can easily deceive people about the reality of their spiritual state and the biblical basis for assurance. The Bible never offers us assurance on the ground that we “went forward;”

4. The altar call partially replaces baptism as the means of public profession of faith; and

5. The altar call is simply and completely absent from the pages of the New Testament.

Each of these statements can be answered, but the priority must be if the altar call is biblical: Is the altar call absent from the Bible, which is our sole authority of ministry and our Pentecostal tradition? In answer to this most critical claim, one must look at the New Testament as our guide. When we consider the Gospels, one must see the numbers of times that it is recorded that either Christ called individuals to come

to Him or the number of times individuals came to Him. Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” is a clear example. These references indicate some action on the part of the individual. Though this does not mean a literal coming, it does no injustice to the Scripture to ask for a movement to a place of seeking God.

Is there further evidence of an altar response and an altar service? Yes, in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he comes closest to how a church service should be conducted. This is done when he is making sure that the Corinthian church’s worship has proper order. First Corinthians 14:24-25 says: “But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Several items need to be noted in these verses. Paul is addressing divine speech. He is stating the importance of divine utterance in services. He is putting forth that tongues and interpretation or prophesying should bring about a response in the hearer. If the unbeliever or inquirer comes into a service where this divine speech is occurring, it will produce a response. First, conviction falls on the sinner and he/she comes under judgment. The Spirit will expose the condition of the heart—primarily the lost condition of the heart. Then, there is a physical response. The inquirer will fall down and exclaim

(shout), "God is really among you!" That sounds like a Pentecostal service to me.

It has been contended by Pentecostal preachers that when they preach under the anointing of the Holy Spirit they are prophesying. If this is true, then we should expect the biblical response to a biblical declaration of God's Word. Believers and unbelievers should fall down and declare that God is among us.

I do not know the motives of those who wish to discontinue altar calls and altar services, but when one considers the successful results of altar calls within the last one hundred years, can we afford to stop such an effective method of evangelism? Can we discount the following: the more than 200 million souls that have responded to Billy Graham; the one hundred million documented converts that Reinhart Bonnke has had in Africa by which that continent has

become Christian; and the countless numbers who have responded in our churches all across America?

When the Church of God began, the initial leadership had a common vision that the church was to be a restorationist movement whereby the New Testament church would be revived. If altar calls were not noted in the 1800 years prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is only part of our vision to restore a forgotten and an abandoned practice to the modern church to repeat the last-days harvest. If we are to respond to the general overseer's call to FINISH the last-days harvest, we must use every biblical means possible and not forsake what has produced such a marvelous harvest for us and for God's church. ■

***Bishop Randall O. Eubanks** is senior pastor of The Church at the Brook in Millbrook, Alabama.*



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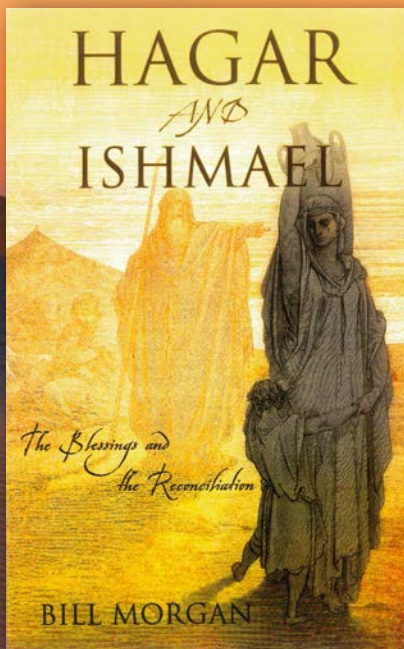




## **Xulon Introduces Fascinating Book That Shares the Little-Known Story of Abraham's First Son**

**Morgan recounts the story of Hagar and Ishmael, and how readers can relate.**

Most readers of Genesis generally focus on the separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and their descendants. However, Bill Morgan draws the reader's attention to the biblical evidence of God's promised blessings to Ishmael's descendants. Within Bill Morgan's book, *Hagar and Ishmael – The Blessings and the Reconciliation*, (\$6.99, paperback; \$4.99, e-book) readers will witness how eventually the two brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, were united. "Those who claim Abraham as the Father of their faith can live in unity."



When asked about his credentials in authoring *Hagar and Ishmael*, Bill Morgan shared, "I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Because of His death and resurrection from the grave, and accepting JESUS as my Lord and Savior, in 1972. And according to Scripture, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, I inherited eternal life." Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.

Bill Morgan has been a member of the Humberlea Church of God in Toronto, since 1971. "I pray readers will understand that a person thinking they are an outcast of Society, will learn from Scripture how they can receive their inheritance of Eternal Life," states the author. "And live a life pleasing to the GOD of Abraham, Issac and Jacob, by accepting JESUS CHRIST as their LORD and Savior. They are special in the eyes of GOD." And JESUS THE GREAT SHEPHERD, will even call you by your name. John 10:3.

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Media Contact: Bill or Grace Morgan

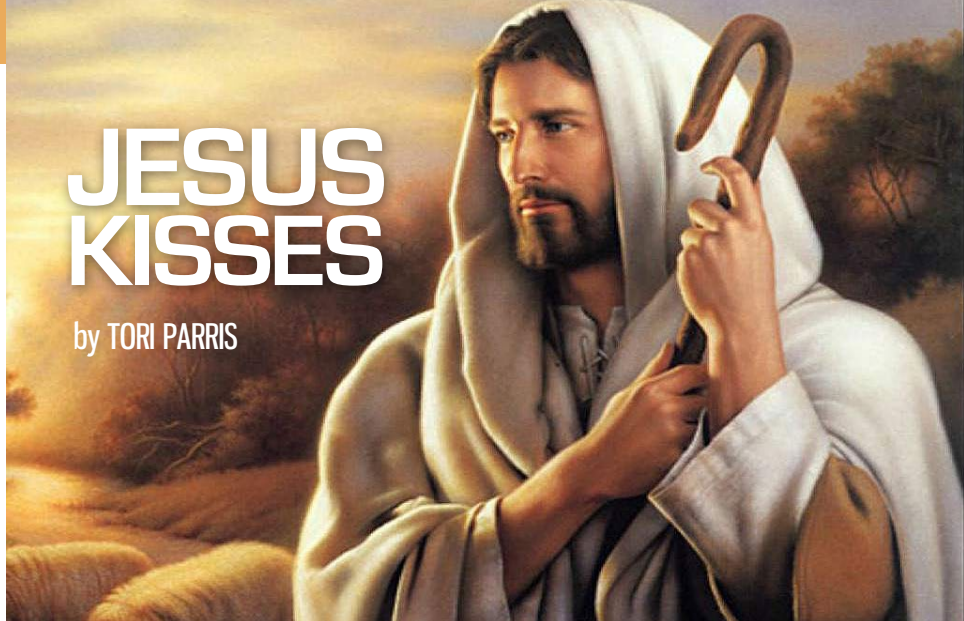
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# JESUS KISSES

by TORI PARRIS



**T**O ME, THE BIBLE is an intriguingly beautiful love story. It's the story of the God of all creation, trying to romance His bride back into love with Him. Through His words and His constant presence, I believe Jesus is tenderly asking us each and every day to fall in love with Him. You might ask, "How exactly does God *romance* us? That seems like an awfully strong word to use." Well, let me take you back to Song of Solomon 2:10 that reads, "My beloved spoke and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me'" (NIV). In this very moment, we see the bridegroom is asking the bride to steal away with him, just as Christ asks us to block out the rest of the world to pray and seek His face.

I'd like to introduce you to what I like to call *Jesus Kisses*. These are simply the moments where Abba Father surprises you in the most delightful and precious ways. Maybe it is someone giving you a beautiful bouquet of flowers when you're having a terrible day, watching an elderly couple hold hands as they

walk through the park, or catching an elevator right before the door closes.

*Jesus Kisses* are the little ways in which God is trying to get our attention as He is revealing a new aspect of His love and His personality to you. However, we often take these moments for granted. For example, the Gospels are full of insights as to who Jesus is! But, so often we skim over the passages. Simply reading the Gospels without the personality of Jesus in view doesn't allow us to see the full picture. Without the inflections in His voice, the sound of His laughter, the intensity of His gaze, the playfulness of a wink, or the feeling of His arm around your shoulders, we lose so much meaning.

When you read through the Gospels, what context do you imagine? I used to paint my depiction of Jesus with a beautiful backdrop of quaint little cottages, campfire songs, fun family dinners, and angels hovering close by. Yet, as I have studied God's Word more and more, my happy picturesque bubble has popped. Yet, it has been replaced with the most colorful and vibrant reality possible.

You see, during His three years of ministry, Jesus traveled roughly **3,125 miles** throughout Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Israel, and Lebanon. He constantly moved from one place to another and never stayed in one place for too long, because He was operating right in the middle of enemy territory. Often, we picture Jesus in a religious fog, imagining that any time He walks into a city, people are fighting over who will get to entertain Him overnight. Yet, Jesus was a hunted man, shielded by 30 years of obscurity!

And, this is what makes Jesus so intriguing. We focus so much on His display of deity in roughly three years of His ministry that we neglect the thirty years prior that displayed His beautifully raw humanity. However, did you know that of all the times Jesus is mentioned in Scripture, He is most often referred to as the Son of Man? It would have been so easy for Him to announce that He was the Son of the Living God! The world would have immediately fallen to the ground and bowed at His feet!

But, no. Jesus was very intentional to call Himself the Son of Man! He was subtle. He was quiet. He wouldn't even tell those closest to Him, His true identity. Yes, He was fully God. But, most precious of all, He was fully human. He walked through or witnessed every human condition firsthand, as most His time was spent with those deemed social outcasts — lepers, thieves, murderers, adulterers, liars, prostitutes, pimps, extortionists, and criminals. That's what makes the Bible so uniquely wonderful! It's a love story of God pursuing a relationship with His creation—with us!

In studying His Word, you will come to the realization He truly understands you. He has seen the heartache of a widow, firsthand. He has felt the unspeakable pain that comes with

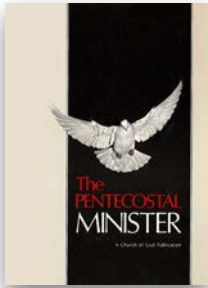
the loss of a loved one. He has endured loneliness and isolation. He has known the burden of being misunderstood. He knows what it's like to feel unappreciated. He was cursed, beaten, spit on, lied about, mocked, and crucified, all in an attempt to romance you.

For some reason, in our churches today, we emphasize the birth and death of Christ more than any other part of the Gospels. And, although those passages are essential to our foundational beliefs, whatever happened to connecting with, marveling at, and learning from the life of Jesus? John 21:25 tells us Jesus did so many other things that "If every one of them were written down ... the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (NIV). So, imagine if our churches were overflowing with the abundance of joy, love, excitement, and wonderment found in the personality of Christ! How many more people could we reach?

I believe it is our responsibility to introduce the world to the true Jesus, because, once they encounter Him, they will never be the same. I challenge leaders to run to His Word with a teachable spirit so that God can enlighten your hearts to read with fresh perspective. Wipe away every preconceived notion and religious stereotype you have, and dive into the Scriptures and encounter the Author of love Himself. In His Word, God gives us the sweetest promise! He says that when we seek Him, we will find Him! When we knock, He opens the door! When we ask for Him to change our lives, that is exactly what He does! ■

***Tori Parris** is a conference speaker, missionary, and worship leader. Her book, *Jesus Kisses* can be ordered through Pathway Press or online at [www.toriparris.com](http://www.toriparris.com).*





*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**

## CARELESSNESS in SPIRITUAL MATTERS

By David Walter Barwick • Summer 1988

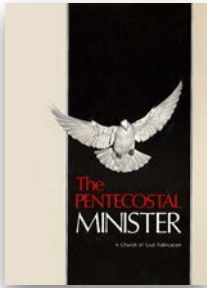
**I**T IS POSSIBLE for a minister to lead choruses, say prayers, and even read the Scripture without his heart being in those sacred functions. However, the ministry is a serious, spiritual work, and its responsibilities should never be carried out in a frivolous or unconcerned manner.

In his book, *Heralds of God*, James S. Stewart quotes the late Bernard Manning of Cambridge as follows:

Some people imagine that informality in the pulpit in itself induces a belief in their sincerity or genius. It induces only a belief in their bad taste and makes us want to get under the seats. Do not behave with a triviality, a casualness, a haphazardness, as if not merely God were absent, but as if all decent people were absent too.

One way to guard against such triviality with sacred things, especially in worship services, is to be completely immersed in an atmosphere of worship. A minister should not be priggish, assuming an air of superior virtue and wisdom, but he should strive for commitment and praise in worship. That is a strong deterrent to becoming careless about spiritual matters. William Cowper pilloried some of the preachers of his day with the following:





The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,  
And then skip down again; pronounce a text;  
Cry—hem! And reading what they never wrote,  
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,  
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene!

God receives no glory and the church is not edified with “pulpit gymnastics,” which is what we commonly call the scene Cowper describes.

Dr. Ray H. Hughes, Sr. referred to lightness in *Pentecostal Preaching*.

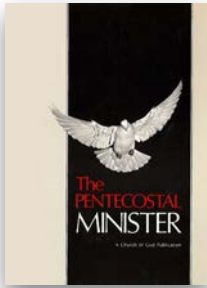
There is not anything wrong with preachers laughing. Humor is an excellent catharsis for the heart . . . but the call of God and the challenge of saving souls is not a frivolous matter . . . for the most part, frivolity among preachers is manifested through exaggeration or through lightness in the pulpit . . . and even to recount true spiritual experiences with an emphasis on man rather than on the God of all miracles.

In light of the soberness of preaching, one wonders about such sermon topics as “Seven Ducks in a Muddy River” and “The Pig Got a Permanent Wave.”

In *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, a series of lectures given to students at Yale Divinity School, J.H. Howett examines “The Perils of the Preacher.” Using 1 Corinthians 9:27, he warns ministers about “becoming a counterfeit coin in the sacred currency, a spurious dealer in sublime realities, a worthless guide to ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ.’” He adds, “Perils are ever the attendants of privilege, and they are thickest round about the most exalted stations.”

Jowett names the following perils: deadening familiarity with the sublime; deadening familiarity with the commonplace; the possible perversion of our emotional life: the perilous gravitation of the world. These and others, Jowett declares, “have this common and fatal tendency to snare you away from God.”

One of the first signs of this digression from high regard for sacred things shows up in the loss of true spirituality. According



to Jowett, we are charged by God to bring a “vitalizing breath, a restoring climate for faint and weary souls!” Charles Wesley’s hymn reminds us:

A charge to keep I have, /A God to glorify;  
A never-dying soul to save, /And fit it for the sky.  
To serve the present age, /My calling to fulfill;  
O may it all my pow’rs engage, /To do my Master’s will!  
Arm me with jealous care, /As in Thy sight to live,  
And O, Thy servant, Lord, prepare, /A strict account to give!  
Help me to watch and pray, /And on Thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray, /I shall forever die.

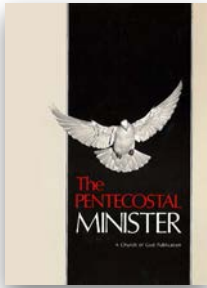
Wesley is poetically resounding the words of the Wise Man: “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Proverbs 4:23).

When we ministers become careless, we are likely to fill the void with “busyness.” We may think we are busily pursuing the spiritual duties of our ministry when we are only having activity. While most of us are constantly on the run, we may do so and yet go nowhere in the things that matter most.

C.B. Shaal writing in *The Challenge of Ministry*, Robert E. Fisher, editor, states:

To be an effective minister of God, one must consistently foster a reverent attitude toward God...In vision [Isaiah] saw the Lord’s eternal throne . . . The attitude of the minister is revealed in this passage of scripture. Each of the seraphim had six wings. That two wings were used to cover the face is indicative of reverence. If the seraphim were reverent before God, should not the minister be reverent as he comes before God in worship?

A minister should truly share in the act of worship, not just lead others. He should not occupy the time of choir- or chorus-singing by fidgeting with the Bible or a notebook, talking to others sitting with him, or scanning the congregation for visitors and absentees. It is unnatural to lead people to lift up their hearts and voices to the Lord and then fail to join with them in praise. The minister must be real in worship! A pure regard for sacred things will keep the minister from moving restlessly about in the pulpit



and on the rostrum when leading the worship service. When ministers truly worship, the church services are worshipful, not lighthearted gatherings.

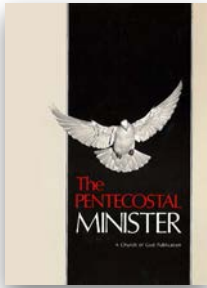
Again quoting Shaal:

The preacher's conduct is under scrutiny at all times. His action at any moment may cast reflection upon himself, on his ministry, or on his church. If the minister slumps or seems bored during the singing, for instance, he likely will find his congregation assuming a similar posture and mood for the ministry of the Word. The minister's attitude in the pulpit, in fact, may be even more important than his homiletics or her hermeneutics.

I am reminded of one of the many stories from the life of Saint Francis. A young novice accompanied him on a preaching tour of the town. The two passed from street to street throughout the town, finally returning to where they had started, and they had not spoken one word! Puzzled, the probationer remarked that he thought that they were going to preach. Francis replied to him that they had preached: "We were observed as we walked. They marked us as we went. It was thus we preached."

The preacher should be mentally and spiritually prepared when he goes into the pulpit. A minister who will, without much pre-preparation or study, come to the pulpit, take a text, and begin "skinning" the flock of God, preaching more "holiness" than he or she or anyone else can live, has little permanent good effect. Good preaching takes much prayer and study. Some things said from the pulpit have actually frustrated the cause of Christ. The thoughtless and oft-repeated use of such phrases as "Bless God!" by the preacher who needs to fill up the allotted sermon time with something, seems very close to taking the Lord's name in vain.

An experienced preacher may occasionally stand up and preach on the spur of the moment without preparation, but that is the exception, not the rule. Those who make a practice of non-preparation are rebuked by the apostle Paul: "Ministers are workmen, and workmen that are unskilled, unfaithful, or lazy have need to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15; *Matthew Henry*). C.H.



Spurgeon simply stated: "The man who will not read will never be read. He will not use the thoughts of dead men's brains, proves he has no brains of his own."

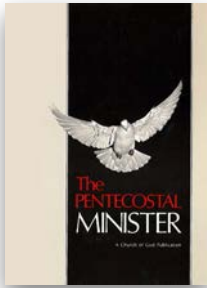
A minister should beware of carelessness when he moves to a new church. How often have we heard the new minister rave about the way his family has been received by his new congregation! "I know that God has definitely ordained that I should be here!" "I am in the perfect will of God!" "I have found my place in God's church. I am going to stay here until Jesus comes!" Such statements may be all right if one is dead sure that he is in the perfect will of God. But to continue to expound on one's "perfect" appointment while he is trying to effect a change is downright criminal.

A man, newly appointed to a church which had gone through eight preachers in seven years, was boasting of his reception. Since everyone knew the history of the church was one of "getting-rid-of-the-preacher-pronto," they were amused at the statement that he was going to stay until Jesus came. Sure enough, he moved in seven months.

On the subject of "God told me" propounded from the sacred desk, there are preachers who have become so careless that they seem to think more highly of themselves than they ought. They are egocentric, always emphasizing "I." Apparently, some may look down on their flock, separating themselves, to appear as spiritual giants. They profess to have great revelations about what is hindering the spiritual progress of some people and about what wonderful things are about to take place. These "spiritual giants" should heed the warning in Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure":

"O, it is excellent  
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous  
To use it like a giant."

A minister should guard against claiming "revelations" unless that claim is verified by God's moving and performing His mighty works among His people. When the minister is careful in spiritual matters and is submissive to the Holy Spirit, the power of God is present to save, heal, deliver, and encourage His



people. Congregations are tired of artificiality, whether it is in the preacher's elocution or personal spirituality. It does not take congregations long to discover simulated "holiness."

One of the gravest perils which besets some ministers is a restless scattering of one's energies over a multiplicity of interests, which leaves little or no time for communion with God. It is sheer carelessness to neglect our quiet and secluded hours with God. Little wonder some vocabularies are filled with catchy sayings and euphemisms, even to the point of making jokes about sacred things. A minister of the gospel should leave that to the comedians and world of entertainment.

Finally, in reference to the last of respect of sacred things in worship (or, as Jowett called it, "the deadening familiarity with the sublime"), some are deeply concerned with the unpreparedness and indifference with which the Lord's Supper is observed by some ministers. For instance, one young pastor, either by ignorance or forgetfulness, served the cup first. Another pastor, who was set on emphasizing the commonness of the bread and wine, became innovative and served cookies and Kool-Aid. On the morning before he was to have a Communion service, another pastor, realizing that he had forgotten to have the bread baked and the juice prepared, gave his son money with instructions to run across the street to the store and get some saltine crackers and grape juice.

While it is not the focus of this article to give instructions on the methods or elements used in Communion, it is suggested that a minister familiarize himself with the Passover and subsequent Lord's Supper, especially its proper administration, in order that its spiritual significance may be realized in the service. Surely, carefulness in this spiritual matter is of the utmost importance.

Carelessness in spiritual matters will soon leave a minister with no spark, no enthusiasm, no inner "well of water springing up." We ministers must continuously be careful in the work of Christ, "keeping our heart with all diligence." ■

*At the time of this publication in 1988, David Walter Barwick was pastoring in Erwin, North Carolina.*



# Cell Phone Tower Contracts

**R**ECEIVE REGULAR requests for opinions on cell phone tower leases for our churches. I have read numerous contracts of these kinds, and I see some recurring themes in all of them. I would like to set out my observations regarding these contracts in this article. Keep in mind that I am “all for” our churches receiving other sources of income. This is very needful. But my goal in rendering my thoughts is hopefully to point out potential pitfalls in this area.

## **OBSERVATIONS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS**

Here are my basic observations, questions, and suggestions regarding these contracts:

- Almost all these contracts are written heavily in favor of the cell tower/carrier company.

- A major feature of these contracts is that they usually are very lengthy. With extensions, some of them can cover as long as 40 years in length!

- Will the location of the cell tower prevent future development of the church’s property?

- The cell tower lease should be a lease of land, not otherwise. The IRS has been somewhat inconsistent about assessing Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT) against these kinds of earnings for churches, but if the contract is not a land lease, then your church likely will be taxed for UBIT on the income. In particular, if the agreement is for rental of the broadcast tower alone, UBIT will apply, according to IRS information.

- Be mindful of the property tax issue. When the local tax assessor sees the utility equipment or the filed lease, he/she may try to put all or part of your church property onto the property tax rolls. You might consider visiting the tax assessor before you agree to the lease and ascertain what he/she will do.

- If you incur property tax because of the lease, then require the cell company or utility to pay the additional property taxes as part of the lease payment. Do this as part of the lease negotiations.

It is always a good idea to consult with local legal counsel before entering into these contracts. Cell phone tower/utility representatives do this kind of work on a full-time basis. They usually are experts at negotiating these contracts, while you are not.

- You will need to obtain the approval of the state overseer/administrative bishop before entering into the contract. Always follow the *Minutes* in your dealings with church property.

### FINAL OBSERVATIONS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

When discussing these contracts with local church pastors, the main conclusion I try to arrive at is this: Is this a *really* good deal for your church, from a business standpoint?

What are other landowners being offered for similar leases? Remember, all the aspects of these leases are subject to negotiation.

It is always a good idea to consult with local legal counsel before entering into these contracts. Additionally, there are consultants who handle these types of negotiations, for a fee. And you should keep in mind that the cell phone tower/utility representatives do this kind of work on a full-time basis. They usually are experts at negotiating these contracts, while you are not.

### CONCLUSION

Once again, let me emphasize that I am totally in favor of our churches having the opportunity to make additional income. I just think that it is a good idea to make sure that you know what you are getting into *before* entering into such lengthy agreements! ■

*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.*





# Changes May Be Coming

**C**HURCHES and ministers may face challenges on multiple fronts over the next few years. Some of the issues that could arise will be addressed briefly here.

## TAX REFORM

President Donald Trump was elected on a platform of massive tax reform—and such was promised in short order. Much of the proposed tax reform efforts were to be paid for by savings from scrapping the Affordable Care Act. However, since Congress hit a roadblock in their efforts to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act, a good portion of the anticipated revenue for tax reform—some estimate the amount at several trillion dollars over the next ten years—is not available.

Therefore, Congress and the White House are now looking for ways to obtain revenue so as to allow a total restructuring of the tax code, with the idea of simplifying the tax laws and the different tax brackets. While most people are in favor of paying less taxes and a simplified tax code, there are concerns about deductions that might be lost to fund the new, lower taxes.

According to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the elimination of five specific deductions or exclusions could raise substantial dollars over the next ten years for major tax reform:

- Taxing employer-provided group health insurance—\$2.74 trillion
- Taxing all contributions made to pension/retirement plans—\$1.54 trillion
- Elimination of the home mortgage interest deduction—\$948 billion
- Elimination of the state and local tax deduction—\$693 billion
- Elimination of the deduction for most charitable contributions—\$601 billion

Changing the tax laws regarding any of these five deductions or exclusions would greatly impact ministers and churches.

There has been much discussion about whether Congress would actually tackle some of these tax provisions that seem sacrosanct. However, in recent weeks more and more discussion coming out of Washington seems to suggest that all these provisions may be under consideration for elimination.

Staff members from the Church of God Benefits Board have participated in more than a dozen meetings with members of Congress this year to discuss these issues. Specifically, there seems to be a major effort underway to require all retirement accounts going forward to be Roth-type accounts, meaning the participant would pay taxes up front and then would not have to pay taxes on the earnings at retirement. While such a plan increases tax revenue



immediately, it effectively does away with the ministerial housing allowance for retired ministers since all contributions would be taxed going into the retirement plan.

## HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Besides being under attack in the tax reform efforts, the ministerial housing allowance provision for both active and retired ministers is under attack in the federal court system. A case filed in April 2016 in Federal District Court in Wisconsin is nearing a decision, possibly within the next few weeks.

The lawsuit, filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, alleged that the ministerial housing allowance and the tax-free use of a parsonage are unconstitutional, based upon the “separation clause” of the First Amendment. Similar lawsuits have been filed in recent years and were dismissed because the court did not believe the people bringing the lawsuit had authority under the Constitution to challenge the provisions because they had not been harmed. In the current case, the plaintiffs have gotten past that hurdle on the “cash” housing allowance, but not on the tax-free parsonage provision. So the case against the “cash” housing allowance is going forward—and a decision could be entered any day—while the case against the parsonage provision has been dismissed.

Based upon previous comments and decisions, it seems most likely that the trial judge will rule that the “cash” ministerial housing allowance is unconstitutional. That ruling is expected by late spring or early summer of this year. The case will most likely then move to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals where it is expected that the court will also find the housing allowance unconstitutional.

That ruling could come by mid to late 2018. The final hearing would be before the U.S. Supreme Court, most likely in the fall term of 2019. Since a matter of this nature has not yet come before the newly reconstructed Supreme Court, it is hard to predict how the Supreme Court might rule on this matter.

## ChurchEXCEL

As a bit of good news, I would like to make sure ministers and churches are aware of the new—and FREE—resource website from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). The site, entitled ChurchEXCEL, can be accessed at [www.ecfa.church](http://www.ecfa.church). After registering, you will have free access to a library of documents for use by ministers and churches, webinars, tax guides, podcasts, eBooks, and a lot more. Our friends at ECFA do everything with excellence, and we highly recommend this site to all Church of God ministers and churches.

## CONCLUSION

While most of the information discussed above is concerning, it is critically important that our ministers and churches are aware of matters that could adversely impact them. As one of your advocates, the Church of God Benefits Board will continue to monitor these matters, will continue to submit briefs and position papers on these issues, and will work with policymakers in hopes of reaching a preferred outcome. ■

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



## FAMILY FOCUS

Drs. H. Lynn and Mary Ruth Stone

# Marriage Requires Healthy Cleaving

**R**EFERRING TO Genesis 2:24, Jesus said: “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave (*kollao*) to his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Matthew 19:5).

A common error exists in describing marriage. It identifies “cleaving” as being synonymous with “one flesh.” At other times, some people see cleaving as simply one step to be taken in order to become one flesh.

But a close examination of Scripture reveals that “cleaving” and “one flesh” are not the same. In fact, neither one is absolutely necessary in order for the other to be obtained—but both are essential in a biblical covenant marriage.

### THE TERM “CLEAVE” IN MARRIAGE IS DISTINCT FROM “ONE FLESH.”

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians contains one of the most helpful passages of Scripture concerning the marriage relationship. He answered their specific questions regarding marriage in the Christian home. The entire passage is 1 Corinthians 6:15–7:16. But the introductory verses in Chapter 6 are very helpful for the present discussion about healthy cleaving.

Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know you not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, he says, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

Three important truths about human nature emerge from this passage. First, a distinction between the visible outer body and the invisible inner spirit of man is revealed. Second, it reveals that two humans can be united in “oneness of flesh” (sexually) without being united in “oneness of spirit” (cleaving). Third, a union which encompasses a oneness in flesh without a corresponding oneness in spirit is similar to the sexual relationship of a man and a prostitute.

Note the following examples in the New Testament which clearly show that “joining” or “cleaving” (both words are used to translate *kollao*) is not the same as a sexual relationship.

- The Prodigal Son “*joined* himself (*kollao*) to a citizen of that country” (Luke 15:15).
- The Spirit told Philip, “Go near, and *join* yourself (*kollao*)” to the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29).
- When the newly converted Paul came to Jerusalem, he attempted to “*join* himself (*kollao*) to the disciples” (Acts 9:26).

The Hebrew word for *cleave* in Genesis 2:24 is *dabag*. It is used in a similar manner throughout the Old Testament. Consider these examples:

- The children of Israel were commanded, “to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to *cleave* (*dabag*) unto him” (Deuteronomy 11:22).
- When Naomi left Moab, “Ruth *clave* (*dabag*) unto her,” and vowed never to leave her (Ruth 1:14).
- When the men of Israel forsook David and followed after Sheba, “the men of Judah *clave* (*dabag*) unto their king” (2 Samuel 20:2).

From these and other verses in both the Old and New Testaments, it is clear that the word “cleave” does not indicate a sexual relationship between two persons.

Therefore, marriage is more than either *cleaving* or *sex* alone. Cleaving alone is mere friendship. Sex alone is mere fornication.

The requirement to have God’s seal upon a relationship such as a marriage covenant, which yokes a man and a woman together

for life, is twofold. **Both** the **inner invisible cleaving of the soul and spirit and** the **outer visible sexual oneness of the flesh** must be present. Otherwise, it cannot be referred to as a biblical covenant marriage.

In order to understand healthy cleaving, one must remember a very important word in relation to a healthy marriage—differentiation. *Differentiation* has been defined as “the ability to retain a sense of one’s own self and personhood while in relationship with another person.” Therefore, healthy cleaving in marriage is the ability of each spouse to be joined to the other while at the same time remaining confident in his and her own sense of self-identity.

## PROVERBS 31 PRESENTS A BIBLICAL MODEL OF HEALTHY CLEAVING

Perhaps the greatest model of marital differentiation and healthy cleaving in the Scriptures is Proverbs 31:10-31.

This chapter must not be viewed as an example of the “normal working day” of this biblical “woman of virtue.” These verses are descriptive cameo statements of the entire married life of a couple.

This woman had at least two children—perhaps many more. She was pregnant for at least eighteen months of her life. If she had twenty children, she was pregnant one hundred and eighty months of her life.

Regardless of the number of children or months of pregnancy, nothing in this chapter indicates that this “woman of noble character” had any negative feelings concerning the time

required for bearing, birthing, and raising her children. She was indeed a “mother at home” and enjoyed her home life.

She worked faithfully to provide for her household and supervise the activities of the family. In today’s common vernacular, she was the ideal model for the “Christian housewife and mother.”

This couple lived together and cleaved one to another in a manner whereby the husband fully trusted the wife. She, in turn, lovingly endeavored to ensure that “only good” would come to her husband.

She worked eagerly and diligently with her own hands to make sure that her children, husband, and servants were properly fed and clothed. Her instruction to her children was wise. Her life at home was loving and effective. Her husband considered her to be better than all the other wives and mothers of the community.

While this differentiated “woman of virtue” cleaved to her husband at home, she did not hesitate to go outside the house when the need and/or opportunity arose. Neither the husband nor the children resented these excursions which often took her into the social life of the community and the entrepreneurial life of the business world.

At different times in her life, of her own choice and free will, this “woman of noble character” purchased real estate, planted a vineyard, made and sold clothing, and bought the raw materials necessary for these endeavors.

She made trips to distant ports in order to purchase the materials and sell the products at the best prices. Her life at home and work outside the house were of such integrity and

fortitude that she was highly respected by the elders of the community.

Meanwhile, the husband—who loved his wife dearly—spent his own days in a diligent and responsible manner according to the customs of that time. He was the owner of the land as the son who inherited the property from his father. He was a leader in the community.

By the time they came to their “senior years,” he was highly respected by the “elders” as a leader in the town. He was often called to “sit as judge” at the gates of the city, somewhat like today’s “courthouse square.”

All of this was done in a manner that both the husband and wife continued to feel free to “come and go” as they cleaved together in a healthy sense of differentiation of self.

The text implies that the woman was very beautiful—especially in her younger years. This beauty may have been a factor in bringing the couple together in the beginning of their relationship.

But it was not the beauty of her body which became the most dominant characteristic of her life. Neither was her beauty the obsession of her husband.

Both came to understand in their differentiated relationship that the beauty of the flesh is something that is “fleeting.” Their relationship was based on their personal relationship with God and on their cleaving relationship with each other—not on the temporary attraction of the flesh.

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate” (Proverbs 31:30, 31 NIV). ■



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## POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF

Phillip Looney

# Being INTERGENERATIONAL Will Make a Difference!

**C**HRISTIAN COMMUNITIES across the United States are rediscovering the importance of intergenerational faith and relationship-building, and they are making it a defining characteristic of their community life. Today, many churches are questioning their overreliance on age-specific programming to the detriment of intergenerational relationships and experiences in the church. Westmore Church of God has been blessed and today enjoys the benefits of embracing the intergenerational relationships we have.

John Roberto writes in his article, “The Future Is Intergenerational,” that most congregations are multigenerational by membership, some, however, are intentionally intergenerational. The intentional congregations make their intergenerational character a defining feature of their church. These churches make it a priority to foster intergenerational relationships by sharing day-to-day life events, incorporating all

generations in worship, and engaging all generations in learning together. I believe that Westmore COG is one of these intentionally intergenerational church families. This part of our existence is our way of life; it is part of our DNA.

We also see that when we embrace being intergenerational, we all benefit. It’s so simple—you obey God—you prosper!

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.



Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:1-9 NASB).

Research has shown (Roberto) that in bringing generations together within the church provides benefits and blessings on a variety of levels. Insights from research and pastoral observations reveal that being intentionally intergenerational . . .

- Provides role models for children and youth, and teaches us to value older adults.
- Allows us to pass on the traditions of family and faith.
- Encourages greater faith in all generations—adults show interest in the young, which causes the young to feel welcomed and valued.
- Creates special relationships between adults and youth.
- Fosters leadership regardless of age or stature.
- Utilizes the strengths (the wisdom, experience, and knowledge) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation.

In the book, *Sticky Faith*, the authors examine the factors that make for “sticky faith” in the college years. They discovered that involvement in all-church (intergenerational) worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation.

In her article, “Breaking Down the Age Barriers,” Amy Hanson’s research shows that various growing, healthy churches are intentionally intergenerational! She said they were . . .

- Creating natural ways for the generations to serve together.
- Honoring older adults by asking them to tell their stories.
- Educating the church body on the value of intergenerational ministry.
- Finding ways to make the worship service multigenerational.
- Encouraging like-minded groups, rather than age groups to connect.
- Hosting strategic intergenerational events.
- Matching young people with older adults in mentoring relationships.

For years, Westmore COG has video recorded members sharing “their story” as a way of teaching and sharing that with God all things are possible. The recorded testimonies have been a way to mentor both young and old alike.

Just this year, Westmore began a program called, “Adopt a College Student.” Having Lee University in our town has made this

program become both natural and intentional, and it is flourishing for both the “adoptive” parents, as well as the college student. It gives the student and parent the opportunity to establish a reciprocal relationship as we intentionally fit the two together realizing their personalities, interests, etc.

Our music ministry gives our Youth and Children’s Ministries the opportunity to minister in various services throughout the year. We have a Heritage Sunday each year as we celebrate our heritage through music. We utilize the music reflective of the generations as we sing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in our worship on a weekly basis.

Lastly, as the intergenerational pastor at Westmore Church of God, my job is constantly changing to the many needs we have. Whether it’s serving as the liaison to our Millennial Marriage (Young Marrieds) or serving as the minister of the 55+ age group, singing in the choir or soloist, and serving as the pastoral care minister—it’s intergenerational, fulfilling, and personally a blessing. Your ministry too, will bring blessings as you become intergenerational. ■

**Phillip Looney** is *Intergenerational Pastor at the Westmore Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.*



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## BOOK REVIEWS

Tom George

# BATTLEGROUND Tells of One Family's Journey to Forgiveness

**W**HAT DO YOU DO when you are a pastor's wife and your world comes crashing down around you because of the sins of one of your children? That is the question Rita Boatwright and her husband had to answer after their oldest daughter and their daughter's husband were arrested on several counts of sexual abuse of minors. Rita writes, "My world felt as though it literally fell out from under me."

*Battleground: The Aftermath* is the story of falling into the depths of despair and then climbing back up again with God's help. More than anything else, this book is about victory despite the most contrary circumstances. The devastating results of her daughter's sin will tear at your heart, but you will also sense the encouraging presence of God as He leads this family along the road to reconciliation and forgiveness.

Rita's book was born out of her devastating experience with her daughter. She was

encouraged by family and friends to write about healing and restoration to help others who find themselves in similar situations. Rita speaks candidly about her struggles to deal with the humiliation and disappointment she faced. Her desire is that by sharing her experience, she can bring hope and encouragement to others who are going through battles with their own children. Rita's main goal through this book is to help parents heal and find the tools necessary to help restore their children to God and their family.

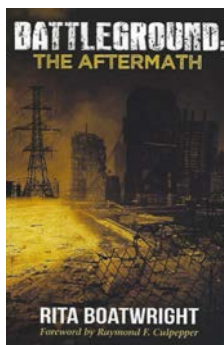
Rita begins each chapter with a short vignette about her family titled, *Precious Memories*, in which she recalls happy memories of her children's childhood.

In his foreword to the book, Dr. Raymond F. Culpepper writes:

In *Battleground*, Rita Boatwright carries the reader along on her family's journey through anguish, despair, and a sense of helplessness to their realization that they serve a God of forgiveness, restoration, and ultimate victory . . . This is the true story of a family's battle with the humiliation of sin, their journey to forgiveness, and their realization of the comforting promise of Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (NKJV).

Rita Boatwright is married to Pastor Billy Boatwright. They currently serve at Clanton Church of God in Clanton, Alabama. Rita has been a pastor's wife for nearly 40 years.

*Battleground: The Aftermath*, 100 pages; ISBN 9781596849242; size: 5.5"x 8.5"; paperback; \$10.00; is available from Pathway Bookstore.



# PERSON-TO-PERSON SOULWINNING Is a Practical Guide for Reaching the Harvest

**B**ISHOP G. J. CHANDLER has written a book that serves as a guide for anyone who wants to reach lost people on a person-to-person basis. *Person-to-Person Soulwinning* is subtitled: *A Bible study course to prepare individuals to win the lost and influence people to accept the Lord*. The content of the book certainly fulfills the promise of the title and subtitle. In the first four chapters, Bishop Chandler lays the groundwork for the necessity of soulwinning and gives practical guidance for the soulwinner. The remaining chapters detail how to effectively witness to people of various personalities and persuasions.

Designed to be useful for both individual and group study, the lessons are lucid and easily grasped. The book gives suggested Bible verses to be memorized for use by the soulwinner. A brief review helps to drive home the points outlined in the chapters. The spiral binding allows the book to open flat for easy access on desk or pulpit.

Bishop Chandler leaves no doubt about his passion for teaching the church the importance of personal soulwinning. In the opening chapter, he writes:

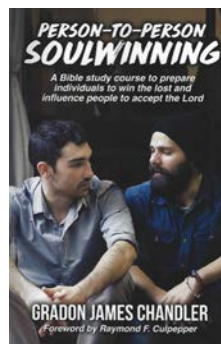
The Word of God likens the church to “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), that which makes life palatable. The church is also said to be the “light of

the world” (Matthew 5:14), that which penetrates the darkness. In His teaching, Christ likened His church to a “woman, seeking for a lost coin”; a “shepherd, seeking the straying sheep”; and “the father on constant watch for the wayward son” (Luke 15). These represent the lost, the straying, and the indifferent. The church whose members are not interested in nor are they putting forth personal effort on behalf of a lost world has in truth forfeited its credentials and its right to exist.

Bishop Chandler held pastorates for more than 40 years in Michigan, where he put into practice the information in this book, starting and growing healthy congregations. Following his pastoral ministry, Bishop Chandler served as state overseer in Southern New England (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) and in New York.

In his foreword to the book, Dr. Raymond F. Culpepper states: “Brother Chandler is highly qualified to write this book. During more than six decades of ministry, he has led thousands of people to the Lord. Hence, this book is more than head knowledge; it comes from practical experience in witnessing to and leading people to the Lord.”

Printed by Derek Press, *Person-to-Person Soulwinning*, 126 pages, spiral-bound, 6" x 9", ISBN 978-1-59684-938-9, is available from G.J. Chandler, PO Box 578, Cullman, AL 35056, \$15.00 postpaid. ■





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# CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*Church of God news and events between January 15 and May 15, 2017*

## Pentecost Sunday Resources Page Launched

Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill has called for a denomination-wide emphasis on the celebration of its Pentecostal heritage with a month-long "Preparing for Pentecost" focus toward this year's Pentecost Sunday on June 4, 2017.

In an effort to equip pastors and churches, Church of God Communications launched a website and link on [churchofgod.org](http://churchofgod.org) which contains a number of resources designed to assist in promoting Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

"As a historically Pentecostal Movement, it should be second nature that everything we do in the ministry includes an element of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost," Hill stated. "As we approach Pentecost Sunday, June 4, I cannot emphasize enough our obligation to keep Pentecost uppermost in our planning and prayers."

Hill's emphasis on Pentecost was evident when the Executive Council, before going into formal session on April 25, gath-

ered at the International Prayer Center at North Cleveland Church of God with members of the Administrative Ministries Council. There, under the title of "Preparing for Pentecost," the two groups of leaders encountered the Holy Spirit, spending a time of intercession with a number of prayer warriors who prayed through the generations.

The "Preparing for Pentecost" site contains videos, sermon outlines, logos, social media shareables, and more. Each member of the Church of God Executive Committee has provided two sermon outlines. There are downloadable graphics to assist pastors and staff members with PowerPoint presentations, bulletin inserts, and social media posts. Several videos will be released over the course of the next several weeks, including one designed to be shown specifically on June 4. The site can be reached directly at [cogfinish.com/pentecost](http://cogfinish.com/pentecost) or on the home page at [churchofgod.org](http://churchofgod.org).

The resources will also be posted in Spanish, including ten sermon outlines and all graphics translated for Hispanic congregations.



"The power of the Holy Spirit must mark everything we do," Hill stated. "On June 4, we will celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. I hope pastors will take advantage of these resources by using the Sundays in May to speak on some aspect of the Holy Spirit, the baptism, or Pentecost."

## First Recipients of Church Planting Bank Grants Approved

**Cleveland, TN**—On April 25, the first recipients to be approved for grants from the recently established Church Planting Bank were introduced during the Tuesday evening session of the International Executive Council of the Church of God.

The week before the Church Planting Bank Loan Committee met for the first time—and in a historic move for the Church of God—approved the seven church planters to receive funding from the CHURCH PLANTING DESIGNATED FUND, or what is being referred to as the "Church Planting Bank." While being approved for the funds, each team will continue in the process, which includes seeking matching grant opportunities, prior to being awarded the funds.

Six of the church planting teams were represented and introduced to the Executive Council by General Overseer Tim Hill. In addition, Hill introduced Director of USA Missions Mitch Maloney, who also serves as director of the Office of Church Planting and has been involved in working with the church planters. Maloney confirmed that over 40 candidates are in the process of applying to be church planters, and that almost 100 church planters have signed up to attend a conference next month.

"From what I have seen and heard about the church planters contacting headquarters, we have some quality candidates who are ready, willing, and able to help in our FINISH Commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission," Hill stated.

Hill reminded the Council of the relationship with ARC (Association of Related Churches), Multiplication Network, and other groups that are helping the Church of God in efforts to be successful at church planting. He also thanked Maloney for his commitment to church planting and to the Church of God. "Your service as a pastor and a mentor over the years to so many is serving you well in your new responsibilities. Let's keep up the incredible work that has been started."



*Members of the International Executive Council lay hands on the first recipients named under Church Planting Designated Fund*





## Winterfest Celebrates 35 Years of Life-Changing Ministry

Church of God Winterfest, so much more than a weekend spiritual retreat for students, celebrated its 35th anniversary at the March 10–12 gathering at Thompson-Boling Arena on the campus of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Winterfest has come a long way since 279 students and five youth leaders gathered for a winter youth retreat in Gatlinburg, Tenn. Now, thousands of students around the USA and the globe worship together annually. Smoky Mountain Winterfest celebrated this momentous occasion in several ways:

### Memories

Prior to the weekend encounter, a “memories” banquet was shared by many people who have played a part in Winterfest’s success over the years. Former international directors of Youth and Discipleship were honored,

and they shared stories about how this ministry began and grew. Others, who are now in heaven, were remembered, too. A highpoint of the evening was when one of the earliest musical groups to minister at Winterfest, “Danny Murray and Harvest” sang some of the old songs that brought smiles and tears of joy to the entire room. The current international director of Church of God Youth and Discipleship, Dr. David Blair, has been involved with Winterfest since its earliest years. Blair shared, “Winterfest is a gift from God. It was only fitting that we share memories, give honor to those who have helped build this ministry, and celebrate together. Winterfest is worth celebrating!”

Student Pastor Jeremy Guyselman shared, “Winterfest honored both the past and the future with a video showing different youth directors passing a lit torch that ended up in the hands of a young man who carried it out and lit a fire in the front of the stage that would burn the rest of the weekend. This was memorable

because ministry to students was not only a priority of the past, but also it is a major priority of the future!"

## Moments

This year at Smoky Mountain Winterfest, students experienced some truly remarkable moments. On Friday evening a special offering was received specifically for families who were victims of the recent loss of life and property in the fires that raged in Gatlinburg, the birthplace of Winterfest. What a special moment when people in an arena of primarily teenagers gave an offering of \$35,000.00 for those families! Another noteworthy moment included a mass youth choir, alongside a Winterfest icon, Jason Crabb, who sang and worshiped with passion and anointing that marked the weekend. Almost three generations have experienced unforgettable moments at Winterfest.

Student pastor, Jared Waldrop said: "One thing that stands out is the way that the Winterfest weekend is a blessing to others—not just those in the arena—but to those outside the arena as well. The offering received for the victims of the Gatlinburg fire was an incredibly touching moment, as well as the call for teens to get involved in global ministry through YWEA."

## Milestones

More than music, friendship, or fun, Winterfest is about spiritual milestones. Local churches make Winterfest a priority and find, work, and pay the way for students to get to Winterfest because pastors and youth pastors know that the event is where decisions for Christ are made; where the Holy Spirit fills hungry, young hearts; and where lifelong calls to Christian ministry are answered. An arena

filled with students' voices lifted in praise is just a little taste of heaven.

Rob Bailey, international assistant director of Youth and Discipleship stated: "On the way home, a 'revival atmosphere' often begins on a bus or van and pours into parking lots and local churches. We already have reports of this exact experience from many student pastors as Winterfest sparks fires of renewal around the country!"

Happy 35th Anniversary, Winterfest! That is 35 years of memories, moments, and milestones that have changed the trajectory of thousands and thousands of young people. Heaven is fuller, the world is brighter, and the church is stronger because of the power and work of the Holy Spirit at Winterfest.



## General Overseer Announces New Structure for Women's Ministries

Church of God General Overseer Timothy M. Hill, recently announced a revised ministry structure for the delivery of women's discipleship, events, and ministries.

Hill announced in correspondence with women leaders in the denomination that the Executive Committee has asked the Women's Ministries Council to take a more active leadership role in serving the women of the Church of God.

"This will bring about many changes, primarily drawing a clear distinction between the new International Women's Ministries Department and Women's Discipleship," Hill stated. He explained that International Women's Ministries will serve the state/regional Women's Ministries

directors by providing leadership materials and missions guidance, including the Women with a Mission (WWAM) projects. In addition, to build a sense of community among Church of God women, Women's Ministries will be sponsoring several regional Faith, Fire, and Freedom Celebrations this fall.

To carry out the responsibilities of the International Women's Ministries, the team working directly with Paula Hill and the Women's Ministries Council will include Dee Raff as the administrative assistant to Sister Hill and the Women's Ministries Council, and Cheri Cummings as administrative secretary. In addition to Paula Hill, the Women's Ministries Council includes Peggy Culpepper, Joyce Stephens, Fernanda Ramírez, and Debbie Childers.

With the restructure of these ministries, Pam Brewer will be working in Adult Discipleship with her husband, Wayne, focusing on the continued development and promotion of discipleship training for women under the heading of Women's Discipleship. Women's Discipleship will focus on some of the following:

- Promote Women's Discipleship initiatives, including Kindle the Power (KTP).
- Develop a Women's Discipleship training program (i.e. LifeBuilders) with a manual on Women's Discipleship for the local church and guidelines on how to disciple women.
- Train Women's Discipleship leaders on local, state/regional, and national levels.

Tim Hill concluded: "The Executive Committee looks forward to what God has in store for the women of the Church of God through the efforts of both the International Women's Ministries Department and Women's Discipleship as we all work together towards the FINISH Commitment of the Great Commission."



## Hispanic Region Signs Pledge to Plant 100 Churches

The USA Missions Department from the Church of God East Central Hispanic Region held an annual conference called Siembra. The conference was celebrated on February 3-4, 2017, and more than 350 people gathered on Friday and Saturday at the Church of God International Worship Center in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Rev. Scott Geurink from Multiplication Network and Dr. David Munguía, East Central Region administrative bishop were the guests who challenged the audience with the need to plant new churches in the East Central Region.

The conference was a strategy event hosted by the USA Missions Regional Department. A highlight of the conference was the signing between Multiplication Network and Church of God East Central Hispanic region of a missional agreement to plant 100 new churches in the region, as part of a strategy initiative titled the 2024 Plan.

USA Missions regional director, Bishop José Raúl Febus, said: "The East Central Hispanic Region has taken an intentional step in order to fulfill the FINISH Commitment of the Church of God within the Hispanic community."