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A Journal for Church of God Ministries

engage

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Ministry in the Digital Age

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14 Predictions for American Churches in 2014

I Am a Preacher

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Generations Working Together to LEAD

THIS YEAR, the Church of God International General Assembly (GA2014) will feature a pre-Assembly conference called LEAD. One of the speakers at the July 28 afternoon event will be Haydn Shaw, author of the book *Sticking Points*. To not spoil it for anyone who wants to read it, I will simply give the subtitle and you will get a pretty good idea of what the book is about: *How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart*.

The continual evolution of the Church of God—and all denominations for that matter—hinges largely on getting the generations to come together. Unlike any other time in history, the ages are meshing, particularly in the workplace and in ministry. Although hierarchy still exists, the lines are less pronounced as the Baby Boomers are working longer and the Millennial Generation has its arms and heads wrapped around the latest in technology...technology which is more and more an integral part of everyday life.

In many ways, GA2014 will be a demonstration of Shaw's concepts as technology, social media, and the latest in video imagery will be on display, and it will be run by people of all ages and backgrounds. It will be a time when the generations of the Church of God will unite together to proclaim the gospel and continue to move the denomina-

tion forward. I am looking forward to it, and I hope you are, too.

If you have not yet registered for GA2014 in Orlando, visit www.churchofgod.org and click on the Assembly graphic. Registered delegates receive complimentary admission to the LEAD conference! ■

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

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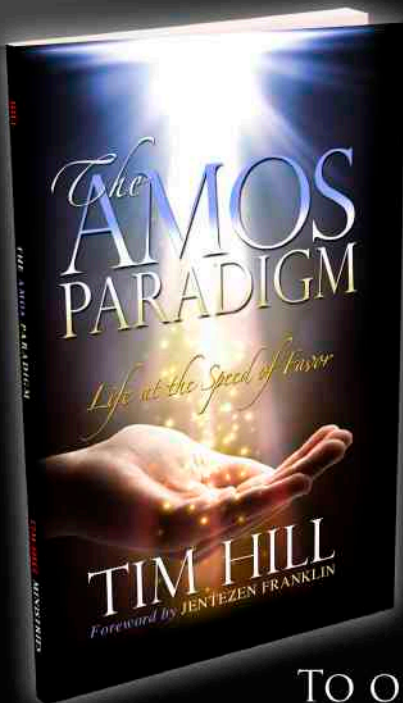
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75th International GENERAL ASSEMBLY Will Feature New Events

EVENTS surrounding the business sessions of the 75th Church of God International General Assembly will include a number of exciting activities sponsored by various ministries. GA2014 will be held July 29–August 1, 2014, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla.

The business sessions, scheduled to begin on Tuesday, July 29, are a dominant feature of the Assembly. These sessions will be held Tuesday through Friday, with the concluding session of the International General Assembly scheduled for 2:00 p.m. Friday, August 1. Any registered delegate age 16 and older will be eligible to vote at the International General Assembly.

Worship services will feature an opening service on Wednesday with General Overseer Mark Williams. The Thursday night missions service will feature Joycelyn Barnett, followed by the Friday closing message given by Samuel Rodriguez.

Surrounding these primary events, there are a number of pre-Assembly gatherings, as well as activities taking place once GA2014 gets underway.

A new feature being offered this year is the LEAD conference, which will take place on Monday afternoon, 12:30–4:30. Speakers include author and missiologist Ed Stetzer, as well as Haydn Shaw, author of *Sticking Points: 4 Generations Working Together*. For the latest

SPEAKERS and SPECIAL GUESTS



Mark Williams



Joycelyn Barnett



Samuel Rodriguez



Deven Wallace



Ed Stetzer



Haydn Shaw

information, visit www.churchofgod.org and click on the GA2014 tab.

Free for all who register for GA2014, Church of God Women's Discipleship will sponsor a special service for women to be held on Tuesday, July 29 at 7:00 p.m. The location will be the Hyatt Regency's Plaza International Ballroom. The service will feature Scripture reading in multiple languages and a Caribbean choir. Keynote speaker will be Deven Wallace, copastor of Redemption Point Church in Ooltewah, Tenn.

In order to attend the women's service, delegates must indicate their desire to do so during the International General Assembly registration. Only those who have signed up in advance will be permitted to attend, since only the first 1,950 registrants can be accommodated. For more information, contact Women's Discipleship at 855.624.4523, or visit www.womenofpowercog.org.

Two pre-Assembly conferences have become traditions through the years. World Missions will hold a conference on Monday, while the Chaplains Commission will host

vocational chaplains from around the world. Anyone interested in participating is invited to visit World Missions at www.cogwm.org or email the Chaplains Commission at chapcm@cogchaplains.com.

As has been the case in past Assemblies, prayer will be an all-week focus. Led by the prayer initiative coordinator, Doug Small, the highlight of the week will be a Monday morning prayer event which begins at 8:30 a.m. and will feature former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Housing and online registration to attend GA2014 is quick and easy and available on the Church of God website at www.churchofgod.org. When GA2014 begins, the website will transform into a place where "all things General Assembly" will be available, such as live streams of business sessions, downloads of documents, viewing of videos and photos and perusing of the latest news and information. GA2014 will also have a strong social media presence, including tweets from the floor of the International General Council sessions and frequent posts on the Church of God Facebook page. ■





by ANTHONY W. ADAMS

Overcoming CHURN

PASTORING AND growing a church in the twenty-first century is a very difficult proposition. Although there are a number of reasons that could be offered, one major factor is the Supermarket Mentality of many who attend our churches. Philip Huan said, “A supermarket church where I pick and choose what meets my needs. We have so many choices of food in the supermarket that we bring this mentality into the church: I prefer *this* type of preaching, *that* type of music, the *other* type of pastor” (2011, p. 113). Those who embrace this disposition hold that if the church fails to provide these things, or if this person becomes dissatisfied in any way, they just *take their business somewhere else*. In this day and age, people do not have the same commitment to their church as they once

did; and consequently, it is much easier for them to pick up and move. Growing a church is dependent on: (1) enlarging the congregant base—the number of people who attend the church, (2) increasing the revenues of the church, and (3) keeping existing members from switching to other churches. The latter in secular business is known as the customer churn rate, and it is also an issue for the church.

DEFINING THE CHURN RATE

In sales-driven companies, the customer churn rate is, “The percentage of subscribers to a service that discontinue their subscription to that service in a given time period” (Investopedia, par. 1). An example of this can be seen in the cellular phone industry. A customer signs a contract with a phone company, but

after a few months, without seeing any differences between the product or service offerings, will follow their feelings and switch companies for a *better deal*. In the church realm, some examples of this are when members choose to switch to another church because of a particular program being offered, a conflict or dissatisfaction within their home church, or because of social pressures. Congregational churn weakens a church, making it much more difficult to maintain stability, and nearly impossible to grow.

Sometimes in our attempt to slow down or stop congregational churn, we actually exacerbate the problem. Brownhill (2007) gave an example of how some insurance agencies *actually promoted customer churn*. These companies were so focused on advertising and chasing new customers, that they neglected their existing customers. The same

could be said of some of our churches. These churches focus primarily on evangelism and membership campaigns to the detriment of their existing members. Because existing members feel neglected and/or ignored, they are enticed to leave.

To overcome the phenomenon of churn, a church must continue to either find new members at an ever-increasing rate, or find ways to keep the people they already have. The best solutions will involve both.

OVERCOMING CHURN THROUGH RETENTION

Many pastors fail to understand that congregational churn is directly related to how committed the member is to their church, the programs, and the services that are offered. In secular sales-driven companies, “Customers with higher numbers of products and services are less likely to leave” (Dalton, 2005, p. 2). In the church realm, this deals with how involved a person is in the various ministries and programs of the church. When a person has buy-in and a sense of ownership, this leads to retention and commitment. People are not looking for a show; they desire a place where they can get involved.

Relationship strategies are also a key component in overcoming churn. Pastors must be intentional, not only in *their personal follow-up programs* for new visitors and members, but in *motivating the church as a whole* to obtain, maintain, and retain relationships. Most people do not feel comfortable in a setting where they do not know someone. This is probably why 70 percent of visitors come to church—*because of a personal invitation*. And of that 70 percent, on average, only 12 percent of first-time visitors will return



“To overcome CHURN, a church must continue to either find new members at an ever-increasing rate, or find ways to keep the people they already have. The best solutions will involve BOTH.”

the following week and eventually become members (Miller, 1997). Therefore, when a visitor comes through the doors of the church, this is a huge step for them, and an extremely important opportunity for the church. The sooner the congregation can develop a relationship with these visitors, that is more than cursory, the more at ease the visitor will feel, and the more likely it will be that they will return. Herb Miller (1997) gives the following statistics concerning the importance of following up:

- If visited within 36 hours, 85 percent of guests return.
- If visited within 72 hours, 60 percent of guests return.
- If visited within seven days, 15 percent of guests return.

Establishing a relationship with visitors is vital to increasing church membership. Relationships are also essential as it relates to overcoming churn. When a person becomes emotionally and relationally vested, this accomplishes two things: (1) it increases the percentage of visitors becoming committed to being members of your church from 12 percent to 25 percent or higher (Miller, 1997) and, (2) this produces more retention and commitment to the church or organization which slows down the rate of congregational churn.

Finally, the care and concern that we give to our congregations will retard congregational churn. Relationships with our members are a true differentiator. Leonard Ravenhill declared, *"The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of that opportunity."* There are significant moments in a person's life when a church and pastor must be conspicuously present: the sickness

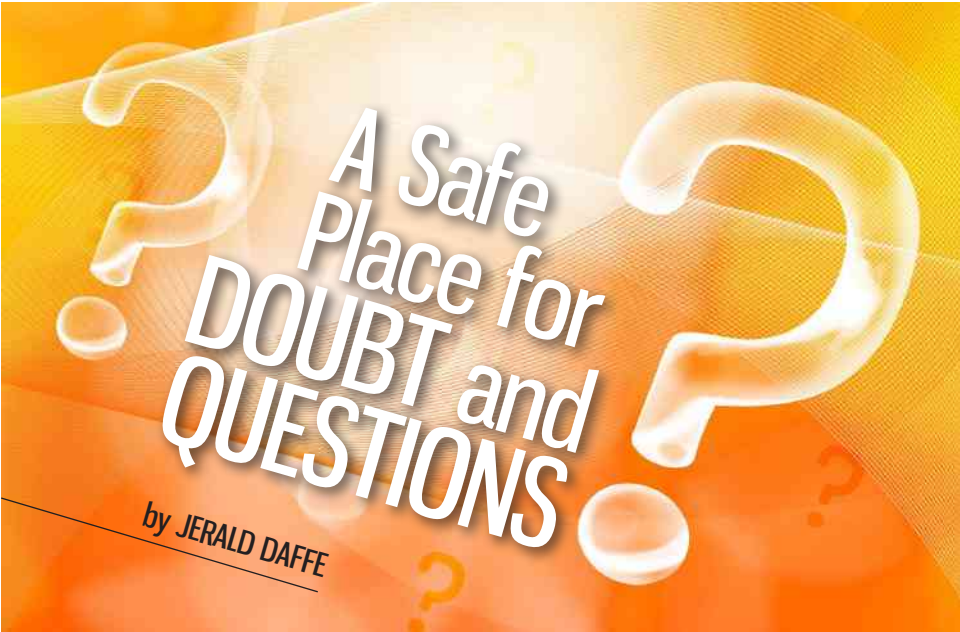
or death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a child moving out, the loss of a job, etc. By creating high standards of congregational care, a church makes it more difficult for the competition to step in with a better offer.

SUMMARY THOUGHTS

The harvest field that we have been called to minister in has changed, and yet God's expectations have not. Jesus said, *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples"* (John 15:8 KJV, emphasis mine). In order for us to accomplish all that God has called us to do, we must not only open the front doors wide, but also we must learn how to close the backdoor of our ministries. Congregational churn is a reality of our times, and yet by getting people involved and vested in the ministry of the church, relationship building, and genuine expressions of compassion and care, churn can be overcome. ■

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A Safe Place for DOUBT and QUESTIONS

by JERALD DAFTE

THE CONCEPT OF SAFETY surrounds us. In some instances it is forced upon us even when it seems unnecessary at the moment. There are required seat belts, speed limits, child safety carriers, and padded car dashes. Not to be forgotten are those child-proof medicine bottles, emergency off switches on lawn mowers, and protective shields on power equipment.

When tornadoes devastate a community, the rebuilding plans usually include safe rooms for the new homes and business. Those not in the immediate destruction area may begin to think about purchasing a small underground safe room when it is displayed in their locale.

Needing to safeguard children from being illegally taken from the nursery or Sunday school classes, some churches have fingerprint systems to limit who can take them from the premises. Armed, private security guards patrol

the parking lots and hallways of some churches. Tables with rounded corners or no corners at all become standard in children's classrooms to avoid major injuries and possible lawsuits.

There is an ongoing desire for the safety of family, friends, and neighbors. But, have you ever thought that our churches may not be a safe place for many people, especially those between 18 and 35. It is a contributing factor to their absences in our churches. The September 2013 issue of *Christianity Today* included an article titled, "Prodigal." One of the many distinct concepts/facts shared comes from a 2011 study in the *Journal of Religion and Society*, which indicated one-third of Americans will leave Christianity during their lifetime. Leaving the church has occurred in previous generations. The point for alarm is their failure to return in any significant numbers. If the estimated 4 percent return becomes a

reality, it will spell disaster for churches. In future decades, many church structures could become like the lifeless cathedral monuments of Europe.

Initially, this may seem unrealistic and hard to fathom. Churches are known to be sanctuaries of comfort, encouragement, and escape from difficult circumstances. Advice columnists regularly encourage inquirers to contact a pastor for guidance as they work through difficult personal situations. However, the generation which has left the church during the past several decades does not see this as true when it comes to expressing their questions and doubts. Instead of a safe place to work through these dilemmas, they frequently find rejection and ridicule. This opinion isn't just among young unbelievers; it is an expression of younger believers as well. In his book, *You Lost Me*, David Kinnaman makes the following statement: "A generation of young Christians believes that the churches in which they were raised are not safe and hospitable places to express doubt."



Consider this paragraph taken from my latest book titled, *Crosses, Coffee, Couches, and Community*.

Doubts and questions about sexual preference, sexual activity, and basic church doctrines are common in this generation. But if they are raised, it frequently results in condemnation or isolation. Instead of being embraced and assured of love and care during this struggle, the individual is left on their own. So, rather than raise the questions and doubts, they are silently harbored without having the guidance of spiritual believers who may have personally dealt with those issues in their own lives.

More than likely, some of my fellow clergy will protest that this isn't true of themselves, their local church, or parachurch ministry. They may be right, but it is also wise to check the truth of the statement to guard against complacency or overconfidence. One of the challenges of ministering in our current culture is that of being staunchly opposed to sin without appearing biased or prejudiced against the person who is involved or contemplating being partisan to a particular position or lifestyle.

Perception often becomes a person's reality even though it may not be true. The "unattached," those who have never been part of a church, form opinions from the extremes which are highlighted in the media. They witness the harsh condemnation of the few and assume that all ministries and churches are exactly like that. The "detached," those who have been raised in the church and have left, or those who are thinking of leaving, regretfully have experienced the "fiery breath" of disdain and separation personally or addressed against family and friends.

Our lost generation (18–35-year-olds) is actively asking questions and sharing doubts which we must be prepared to patiently answer without the slightest hint of astonishment or condemnation. In many cases, it becomes imperative to demonstrate unwavering love for them even though they continue to doubt or question, in spite of one's best efforts to help. Love continues to be the universal solvent and bond in relationships.

So, we return to the main issue—a safe place. How is it possible to provide such an atmosphere when doubt and concepts plague people and appear to be drawing them away from God and the church? Consider the following suggestions.

1. Assume that the doubts, questions, and temptations are present among those who attend your church services and activities even though they have not revealed them. They are being bombarded by the patterns of a secular society and are targets of Satan's activities.

2. Preach and teach biblically and intellectually on the subjects which are part of current society. This demands careful preparation, reflecting true spiritual concern and applicable current information.

3. Set up opportunities for dialogue on the potential questions and doubts. It may be a discussion on what has been preached or taught. Or, provide a question box where questions can be inserted anonymously and then answered in an informal setting.

4. Bring in a qualified outside resource person who could hold small group dialogues in a safe setting—which may mean members of the ministry team not being in attendance.

5. Provide opportunities for members of the congregation to share their personal journey of how they were able to overcome

doubts, questions, and fears which are being faced by individuals of all ages. Testimony continues to be one of the most effective ways to inform and to convince, especially to a generation who values narrative.

6. Allow considerable input from the younger generation as to the content and environment for the sharing. They respond far better when given the opportunity to participate in shared planning and leadership.

7. Develop an information table with books and articles on contemporary issues. Or, provide a website with links, videos, and online chat rooms. Keep in consideration that the mind and heart work together in formulating decisions while walking the road of indecision.

8. Invite individuals to share with you the websites, articles, and books which are impacting their thinking. Read them, and then discuss them with the individual or group in an informal setting. Yes, it's time consuming, but it reflects your true interest in ministering to the doubts and questions.

This need for a safe place to find answers isn't limited to just the selected 18–35-year-olds; it spans other age groups as well. Vocation and gender do not create immunity. Even ministers are subject to temptations and doctrinal doubts. Often, fear of what others will think creates further turmoil and pushes them into a darkness of silence because they cannot find or recognize a safe place. (However, that's a subject for another consideration).

For now, we have a wonderful opportunity to minister to a generation who is looking for answers. The scenario we face is one of taking the time to spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually meet their needs and win them to Christ and the church. ■

Ministry in the DIGITAL AGE

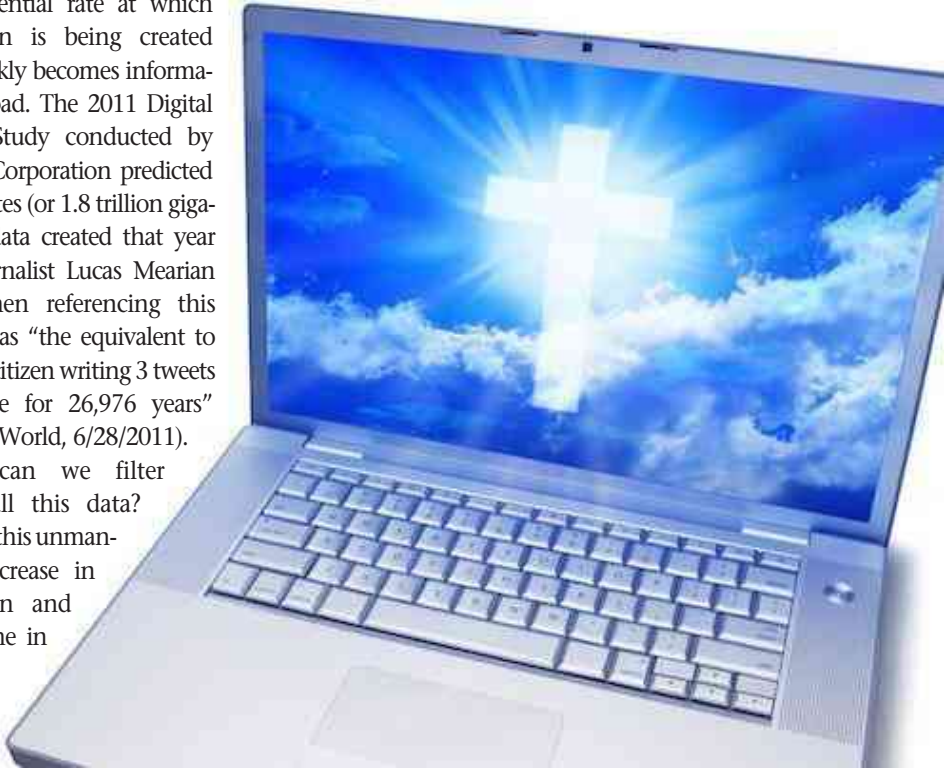
A BRAHAM LINCOLN said, “You cannot believe everything you read on the Internet.” Surely this is true because it was posted on Facebook. We often enjoy the humor of these easy-to-spot parodies. While we know this quote couldn’t be Lincoln’s, it is true we often unknowingly share incorrect information, whether on social media or in ministry.

Information seems to be everywhere as the “Digital Revolution” has ushered us into the Information Age. Once accessible only in study spaces with librarians and scholars as gatekeepers, information now is available at our fingertips on a variety of devices. Add to this the exponential rate at which information is being created and it quickly becomes information overload. The 2011 Digital Universe Study conducted by the EMC Corporation predicted 1.8 zettabytes (or 1.8 trillion gigabytes) of data created that year alone. Journalist Lucas Mearian noted, when referencing this study, it was “the equivalent to every U.S. citizen writing 3 tweets per minute for 26,976 years” (ComputerWorld, 6/28/2011).

How can we filter through all this data? Because of this unmanageable increase in information and limited time in

our schedules, we often type a few words into a search engine and use the first results generated. Consequently, instead of being more informed, we become contributors to a vast collection of misinformation by sharing information with little-to-no additional research to discern the accuracy and credibility of a source or its author/creator.

Many of us are guilty of this practice when incorporating statistics or contemporary concepts into sermons. We decide on a topic and then try to find sources to validate our perception, rather than seeking to discover what the current trends and statistics reveal about the topic. While our personal bias may sound good



when shared from the Sunday morning pulpit within our given context, incorrect data tends to diminish our credibility in society, especially to the people we are called to impact.

So how do ministry leaders sift through the information to find sources that are credible and reliable? Here are a few helpful suggestions when conducting research:

1. Understand your focus. Few individuals are trying to write a scholarly thesis when searching for data. Rather, most are locating statistics, theological explanations, or contemporary trends in ministry and/or society to incorporate into sermons or training materials. Although scholarly sources are quite helpful, struggling through detailed academic rhetoric isn't required to find good information—but understanding your focus and audience are vital.

- Some respected online sources for statistical data are *Barna Research*, the *Hartford Institute for Religion Research* of studies on culture and religion, and the *Religion section of Pew Forum*.

- Good information about contemporary trends can be found at *LifeWay Research*, *ChurchLeaders.com*, the *Global Leadership Summit*, and the *Catalyst Conference*, which have proven over time to provide reliable information from some of the leading experts in their respective disciplines and ministry contexts. Most important, however, seek the insights from authors who have earned credibility because of their long-term commitment to study, practical application, submission to Scripture, and accountability to seasoned mentors.

2. Consider your personal bias. Don't be afraid of opposing viewpoints. Just as we have personal bias, so do others whose work

we read. Good researchers (and good students) seek to remove their personal bias from what they share in order to provide a balanced approach. Preaching from conviction is important, but we risk credibility by manipulating information simply to agree with our perspective. Ultimately, Scripture must be the basis for our convictions. Presenting opposing perspectives and then reframing them within a scriptural context can better equip us and others, rather than simply seeking to reaffirm our own position. Too, we should diversify our library. Instead of focusing only on favorite authors or sources, be intentional to seek out a variety of sources to engage with information and topics at a deeper level. This will enhance a balanced perspective and limit personal bias.

3. Take time to research the research.

Don't assume information is reliable, but take time to research who is providing it. What qualifies the author to write about this topic? Is his or her approach biased or balanced? Does the author have a reputation of being biblically and theologically sound? Is the material still current and relevant, or is it outdated? Diligence in getting to know sources better can help maintain one's own credibility when sharing information.

The calling to minister to others is a gift and tremendous opportunity. With it comes the responsibility to study and earn credibility. While information is easy to access, we should be intentional about its reliability and accuracy to represent more effectively the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

Louis F. Morgan, Ph.D., serves as an associate professor and the assistant director of library services at Lee University.


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14 PREDICTIONS for American Churches in 2014

by THOM RAINER



(Editor's Note: The following article is adapted from a two-part blog posted by Thom Rainer at the beginning of 2014. www.thomrainer.com).

PREDICTING IS AS MUCH of an art as it is a science. And if any prognosticator is honest, he or she will tell you that they don't always get it right. I know. I certainly don't always get it right.

But I don't pull my predictions out of thin air. To the contrary, each of them has a reasonable explanation. I gleaned these fourteen predictions from several sources:

- Data-based research, particularly LifeWay Research.
- Trends that are already underway and gaining momentum.
- Conversations with hundreds of church leaders.
- My own experiences based on 25 years of consulting and research of American congregations.

This year I am adding a new feature—a confidence factor. For example, if I said I had 100 percent confidence that a prediction would become reality, it would mean that I have absolutely no doubt about it; however,

none of these predictions have a 100 percent confidence factor. But none of them falls below 70 percent either. That means I have a fairly high level of certainty about each of these trends.

The order of the trends is random. They are not ranked in any particular priority:

1. Increased church acquisitions.

Smaller churches will seek to be acquired by larger churches in increasing numbers. One of the big factors is simply personnel cost. Many smaller churches can no longer afford to pay a pastor a salary and benefits, particularly health care benefits (75% confidence factor).

2. Downsizing of denominational structures.

Many denominational structures are becoming smaller because their churches are declining. Others are feeling economic pinches. This trend of smaller and more efficient denominational structures at all levels will only become more pervasive in 2014 (90%).

3. Decline in conversion growth.

American churches that grow are more likely

to get their growth at the expense of other churches. Evangelism is waning in many churches, and fewer nonbelievers are becoming Christians. The negative reaction to programmatic evangelistic methods has evolved into an overreaction. Too few churches emphasize personal and church-based evangelism (75%).

4. More megachurches. The data are clear that there are more megachurches (average worship attendance of 2,000 or more) today than a year ago. There is also little doubt the trend will continue. The only uncertainty is whether or not the rate of growth of megachurches will continue to climb (85%).

5. Greater number of churches moving to a unified worship style. For years a noticeable trend was churches offering different worship styles. The most common was the offering of two services: traditional and contemporary, though the definitions of each were elusive. In the next year, we will see a reversal of that trend, as many of those same churches decide to move to one common worship style (70%).

6. Increased emphasis on high-expectation church membership. For decades American congregations as a whole lowered their expectations of church membership. One could be on a church roll in many churches and not even attend worship services for years. We will see a gradual reversal of that trend in 2014 as more churches move to higher-expectation membership (70%).

7. Increased challenges for congregations to build and acquire land due to restrictive governmental policies. American churches will experience more frustration with governmental authorities as they seek to expand, build, and acquire land. Part of the reason will be due to the authorities'

concern about traffic and congestion. Another part is the underlying concern of losing a property tax base to a nonprofit organization. In a few cases, there will be outright animosity and prejudice against Christians and churches (80%).

8. More large churches will function like mini-denominations. These churches will have multiple locations. They will have one senior or lead pastor, and several other campus pastors. They are more likely to fund their own missions priorities, even if they are also contributing to a denominational missions fund. Many of them will write their own small group literature. Some will have their own church planting strategies (70% confidence factor).

9. New worship centers will be built smaller. There will be a greater emphasis on smaller gatherings more frequently. This trend is being affected significantly by the preferences of the Millennial generation (born 1980 to 2000). A related trend is that many congregations will find ways to downsize their existing worship centers (70%).

10. Increased emphasis on small groups. In 2014, we will see a decided shift from nearly two decades of the "worship revolution" to the "small group revolution." Church leaders are rapidly discovering that members who connect to groups are the most faithful members in the church by a myriad of metrics. That is not to suggest that worship will become unimportant; it is to suggest that small groups will have a greater emphasis than the previous quarter century (75%).

11. Longer pastoral tenure. There will be incremental but steady growth in the length of tenure of pastors at a given church. Part of the reason is the influence of the Millennials who do not view larger churches as their next

step in ministry. Part of the reason is economic; moving in today's economy is not nearly as easy in prerecession days. Hopefully, the main reason is a sense of God's call to stay rather than move (75%).

12. Local churches increasing their roles as ministry training leaders. The role of ministry training in the past decades fell largely upon Bible colleges and seminaries. More churches in 2014 will partner with those colleges and seminaries to provide contextual training at a local church (90%).

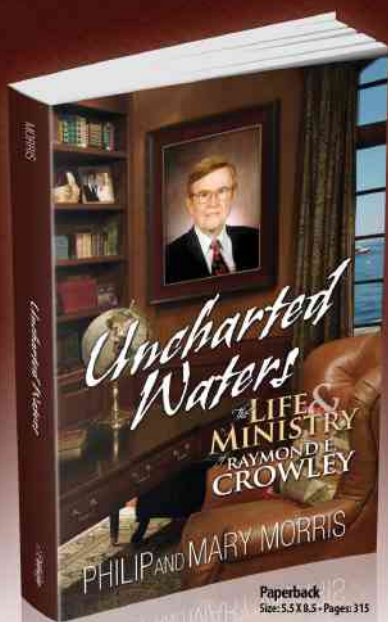
13. Church movement to the community. The posture of many American churches in the most recent decades has been to find ways to get people in the community to come to the church. That is shifting, perhaps dramatically. In more churches, the congregation will move to the community. Instead of a philosophy of "y'all come," the dominant theme will be "we'll go." The congregants will be a more powerful presence in

the community they serve, thus ministering to, influencing, and reaching more people with the gospel (80%).

14. More multiple teaching/preaching pastors. In larger churches, there has been a decided trend toward having more than one teaching and preaching pastor. Now the trend is taking place in smaller churches. We will see more churches with attendance under 200, even some under 100, with more than one teaching/preaching pastor. Of course, not all of them will be full-time vocationally at the church, so there will be more bivocational pastors whose role is to be a second or even third pastor in these smaller churches (85%).

These fourteen predictions are not infallible. But, there does seem to be growing evidence that most, if not all of them, will become a reality in 2014. ■

Thom S. Rainer is the president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. www.thomrainer.com.



RAYMOND E. CROWLEY

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Uncharted Waters
The Life and Ministry of
Raymond E. Crowley

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Being a Disciple Who DELIGHTS IN GOD

by CRAIG MOSGROVE

MANY PEOPLE SAY, “I do not have personal time with God on a daily basis, yet things seem to be going well in my life. I know Christ and follow Him. I am forgiven, and I do well in school.” That may be true, but consider these questions: What will happen to you that is not happening now if you start having personal private time with the Lord? What could you be missing out on? We know that a disciple is one who delights himself/herself in the Lord.

Allow David to answer that question today. David was a man who was busier than all of us. He was the one who was governing the most powerful nation in the world; he knew what it was like to be slammed 24/7. Yet, he always took time for worship and prayer. In Psalm 37, he shows us why spending time with God in personal, private worship and prayer must be a priority in our lives.

God promises four things to those who take time for private worship and prayer:

1. Spending time with God causes me to reflect God’s character.

Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart” (NKJV). It is obvious that people can’t delight themselves in someone or something they do not know. *To delight* means “to take pleasure in.” God doesn’t say delight yourself in marriage, in your spouse, in your school, in your money, in your house, or even in your family. He says to “delight *yourself* in the Lord.” There is no more important relationship in life than your relationship with God. Nothing should take priority over that. Here is why. The better relationship you have with God, the better relationships you will have with others. It is true that the more time you spend with someone, the more you become like that person. The more time you spend with God, the

more you become like God. You begin to take on His character and start thinking like He thinks. Then, the more like God you become, the more favorably people will respond to the God who lives in you. This is why it is so vitally important to spend time with God.

The more time I spend with God, the more God changes me. The more God changes me for the better, the better chance I have to change others for the better. Merv Griffin had a popular talk show, and one day he invited Charlton Heston, the man who played Moses in the Ten Commandments, onto his show. He asked him the question, “Charlton, you’ve played lots of religious characters in your lifetime of filming. What character did you play that really changed your spiritual outlook?”

He replied, “Definitely Moses.”

Griffin asked, “Why did Moses so radically change your spiritual outlook?”

Heston responded, “You can’t walk barefoot up Mount Sinai, spend 40 days alone with God, and be the same person when you go back down.”

He is right. You can’t take time out of your daily schedule, spend time alone with God, do it day by day and week by week, and then be the same person. You begin to reflect His character. This is why a disciple looks like his/her master.

2. Spending time with God allows me to receive God’s blessing.

It is very important to note in Psalm 37:4 that delight comes before the desire! That verse does not mean that we go to the Lord with a smile and tell Him, “I delight in You, now give me this.” Here is the key: When you delight yourself in the Lord, your desire will be His desire; and when your desire is His desire, He will give you your desire because

it’s really His desire. I have learned that when you put God first, you really put yourself first because you are created for your life to revolve around Him.

Three types of desires can be identified:

(1) *Selfish desires*—those things that we want when we want them. We often get them, and it doesn’t work out; so then, we blame God.

(2) *Satanic desires*—temptations in our lives.

(3) *Sanctified desires*—God will not listen to selfish desires and satanic desires, but He will listen to sanctified desires. God says, “When your number one desire is my number one desire, then I will give it to you.”

Every day you should go to the Lord and say, “Lord what is the desire of Your heart for my heart? What is it that You want me to want?”

When you want what God wants, God will always give you more than you want. In 1 Kings 3, God did something unique in Solomon’s life that He had never done before. God approached Solomon in a dream and told him to ask anything that he wanted and God would give it to him. Now, in our modern context, the majority of us would ask for fame, power, or influence. But Solomon didn’t ask for any of those things. He asked for wisdom, and God said that he had asked well. In other words, Solomon asked for the very thing that God would have given him if he had asked first. And then what else did Solomon receive later? He received wealth, fame, power, and fortune. When you come to the point where you say, “God, I no longer want what I want. I want what You want,” then God says, “I will give you more than you want.” God does not want just what is good for you; God wants what is best for you! So when I spend time with God, I put myself in a position to receive God’s blessings.

It would be infinitely unwise and unsafe for Him to give you your desires if you do not delight in Him. The reason so many of our prayers do not prevail is because we have so much dissatisfaction in God. Those who delight in Him have no will of their own. One who delights in God will postpone everything else that prevents them from open-faced communion with God.

3. Spending time with God moves me to rely on God's power.

"Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5 NKJV). The word *commit* means "to roll over; to take the burden you can't carry and roll it over to someone else." If you commit your way to the Lord (every part of your life, your job, finances, emotions, relationships, etc.), He will take care of it. What is "it"? He will do whatever is best for you. Here is the question: In every part of your life, do you want your way, or do you want God's way?

God is not concerned about what you can bring to pass in your life. What God cares about is what He can bring to pass in your life. Here is the principle: the things that God wants you to do for Him are the things that only He can do through you!

The boiling point of water is 212 degrees Fahrenheit. However, 211 degrees Fahrenheit is just hot water. Just one degree more can make the difference between very hot water and a bubbling cauldron of tremendous power. One degree can create enough power to fuel steam engines hundreds of miles at 70 mph. That is the result of one tiny degree. We must understand that without God and prayer, we will always be a degree short of accomplishing what He could have accomplished in our lives!

The greatest thing you can do with your plans, job, school, hopes, and life is to commit them to the Lord; roll it all over to Him and walk away from it. Doing so will take things up the one magical degree! The central problem of our generation is that the world looks upon us and sees that we are trying to do the Lord's work in the power of the flesh. We must be wholly dependent upon Him and His Spirit.

4. Spending time with God teaches me to rest in God's will.

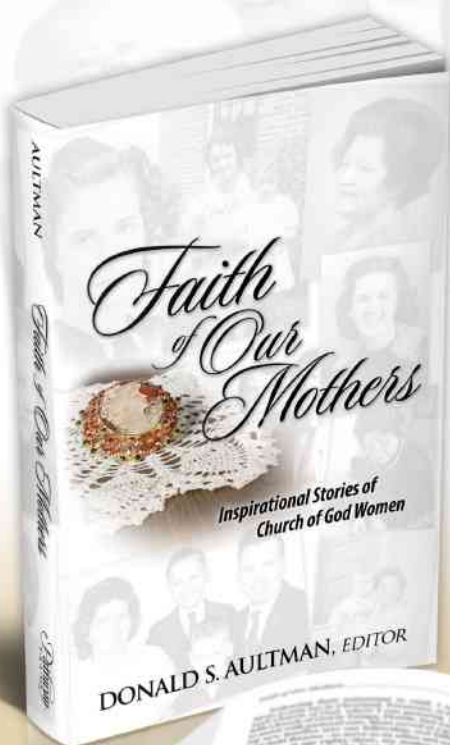
In the first eight verses of Psalm 37, the phrase "do not fret" appears three times. The Hebrew word for *fret* means "to burn." In other words, do not allow things in your life to get you all hot and bothered. If you want to lower your stress level, spend time with Him. Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders. One of the most powerful benefits of prayer is that prayer teaches you to replace worry in what you cannot handle with the One who can handle anything you are worried about. We fret and worry and are hot and bothered because we do not spend time with Him.

We are all busy, yet nothing can take priority over our relationship with Him. Our desire to be with Him must take supremacy over every other desire. When we make excuses for not communing with Him, we have lost our delight in Him. Corrie ten Boom once said, "When Christians have meetings, the devil smiles. When Christians make great plans, the devil laughs. When Christians pray, the devil trembles." ■

Craig Mosgrove is pastor of high school, college, and young adults at the North Cleveland Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.

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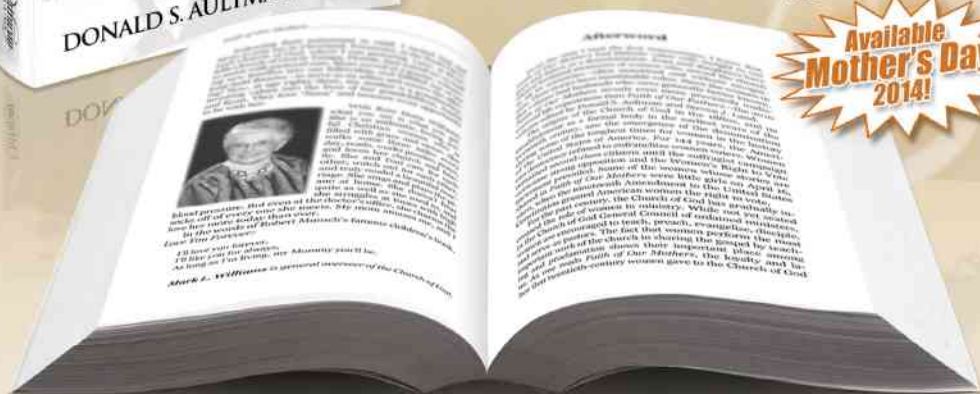
—Mark L. Williams,
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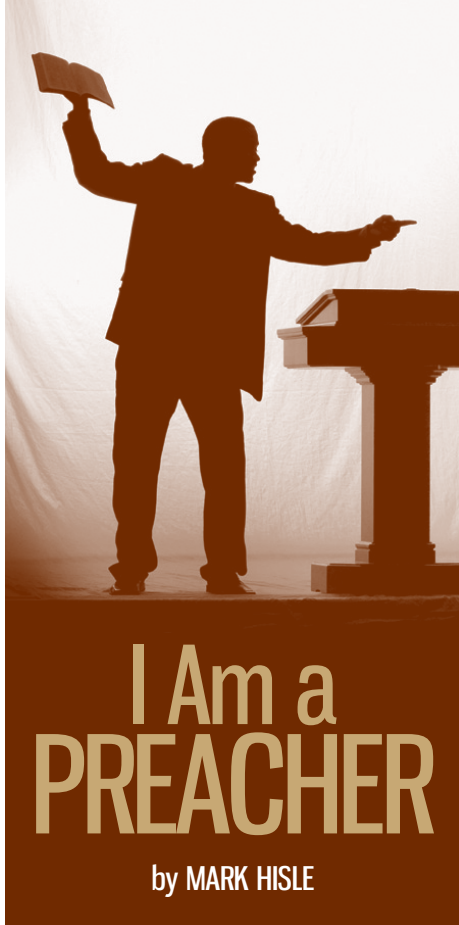


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The writer of Ecclesiastes readily identified himself in this way. He opens by saying, “The words of the Preacher...” (Ecclesiastes 1:1). The Hebrew word is *qoheleth*, with its Greek form being *ecclesiastes*. So, this is literally the “book of the preacher.” The word is in the feminine form, which suggests that it refers not just to a person, but to an office. It means “one who assembles or gathers people together,” and it also suggests a preaching or even pastoral role. If Solomon was indeed the author, he was functioning in his shepherding role as one who gathered the people together in the presence of God.

It is interesting that the preacher’s first word is “vanity,” or in Hebrew, *hebel* (Ecclesiastes 1:2). In fact, he is emphatic about it, “vanity of vanities.” The word suggests something which may appear substantive at first, but proves to be worthless and insignificant in the end. From the beginning of his book, it is as though he issues a resounding “no.” There are some things in life that a preacher just has to say “no” to.

And all of that brings me back to understanding what it means to be a preacher. It reminds me of who I am, and that the latest is not always the greatest. Every trend is not always positive. Some things I must say “no” to. My sense of who I am and what God has called me to do must be firmly rooted in Scripture.

First and foremost, I am a preacher. I am not a business executive; I am not a counselor; I am not a leadership or church growth expert. It is not that those things are necessarily bad or that I don’t even function in those roles at times, but it is not fundamentally who God has called me to be. When I stand in the pulpit, I can expect that a fair number of people will at

HAVING GROWN up in rural areas, I am very familiar with the designation “preacher.” Where we lived, it was often the preferred title people used for their pastor. I heard people call out, “Hey, Preacher,” on a regular basis. As a teenager, I knew that that was what I was called to be, not just a teacher—though I must be ambidextrous and do both—but a preacher. While we Pentecostals have often reduced the distinction to merely speed and volume, preaching biblically contains many elements of teaching, but also carries the idea of proclamation.

least roughly accept my words as being from God. It is something more than the latest pop psychology or self-help advice. Paul said that I am a “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). I must not settle for anything less than that.

It has been in only about the last 100 years or so that pastors have sought to redefine who they are. Historically, men like Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, and Robert Murray McCheyne understood that the primary task of a pastor was the curing of men’s souls, first his own, and then the souls of others. McCheyne said, “Your own soul is your first and greatest care.” For centuries ministers were in fair agreement that their primary task was to prepare men and women for a good death. That has changed of late.

This is seen clearly in the language we often use. Though some regard it as only a matter of semantics, language can be important. My dad spent 35 years as a pastor. It dawned on me the other day that while I always talk about having an office, he primarily spoke of having a study. There is a huge difference. In a study, I come to learn, to quiet myself in God’s presence, and to receive life from Him. In an office, I come to run the church. The call of God I responded to was for something far deeper and more meaningful than simply running the church.

Not only must I know who I am, but I also need to distinguish what I am supposed to do. If I regard the model of the preacher of Ecclesiastes, part of my job description becomes naysayer. It is true that we preach a positive gospel. It is also true that to the twenty-first-century ear, the message of Ecclesiastes may sometimes sound a little dismal. Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Jesus were

preachers who said “no” once in a while, particularly when the world tried to define them in terms different from God’s calling. Some preachers today only want to declare a positive message of favor and blessing. And there is truth there. But it is only half a gospel. The message also involves sin, righteousness, and judgment. In order for my car to go, it has to be hooked up to both the positive and the negative battery terminals.

We must have the courage to declare some things as vanity. The church has adopted a mindset that all we really need to succeed at church growth is to discover how to build a better mousetrap. We pastors live in an endless pursuit of the latest technique. We have reinvented everything from the parking lot to the platform. And not all of that is bad. But does it give answer to the deep calling I feel in my soul for what God desires to express in and through my life?


Some years ago, I was asked to fill out a pie chart, reflecting how I spent my time as a pastor. As I went down the list of pastoral activities, I realized that prayer didn’t even make their list. I had to write it in myself. I couldn’t help wondering, *Is this what we have come to?* The thing the Bible teaches is to be my central activity isn’t even on our radar screen anymore.

While I don’t believe in being 50 years behind the times, neither do I believe that a pastor’s job is to satisfy the most current consumer taste in religion. It is not my task to supply people with the flavor of the month. Scripture requires more integrity than that. Several years ago, Anne Tyler wrote a novel called, *Morgan’s Passing*. Morgan was a hardware store owner who spent his life impersonating the honored professions as the


need arose. One day at a picnic, a couple began screaming frantically for a doctor to deliver the wife's baby. Morgan went forward. The couple could not locate him afterward to thank him, but later ran into him on the street. He sheepishly admitted that he had been doing those things all his life. It was just a matter of finding out what people expected and fitting into it.

It is possible to impersonate a pastor, but not really be one. And many people may never know the difference. Besides, you wrestle with the fear that if you don't give them what they want, they will just go across town to a pastor who does. This is the reason that it becomes an integrity issue. At ordination, I took a vow, not merely to run a church, but to be a man of God, even if that is not what parishioners are expecting.

It is true; I am a preacher. And because of that, these issues turn over and over in my mind. I have always prided myself on being open to the new things of God. As I get older, I wrestle with some questions, though. In today's church, we often define success in the same terms the world does—numbers, money, buildings, acclaim—rather than faithfulness. It is so easy to forget that I am responsible for quality; God is responsible for quantity. In recent months, I have felt so compelled to get back to the basics in ministry and to trust God's sovereignty for the rest. It seems to be working. God is blessing, and I am at peace—both things which He desires. I want to be effective. I want to walk with God. After all, I am a preacher. ■



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So You Are an INTERIM PASTOR

*One way or another, every church will eventually lose its pastor or minister, yet few congregations prepare for this dramatic event. The pastor's departure evokes a range of reactions and problems—sorrow and grief, uncertainty, loss of mission and momentum, power struggles—yet no one wants to talk about this elephant in the boardroom (from *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken about Pastoral Transitions* by Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree).*

REASONS FOR PASTORS leaving the churches they serve are as many as they are varied. Retirement vacates many pulpits. A prolonged or catastrophic illness of the minister does, too. Some vacancies occur when the church and pastor are incompatible. Sometimes, the blame is put on the pastor, sometimes on the church. In many cases, it's simply a matter of the church and the minister being mismatched.

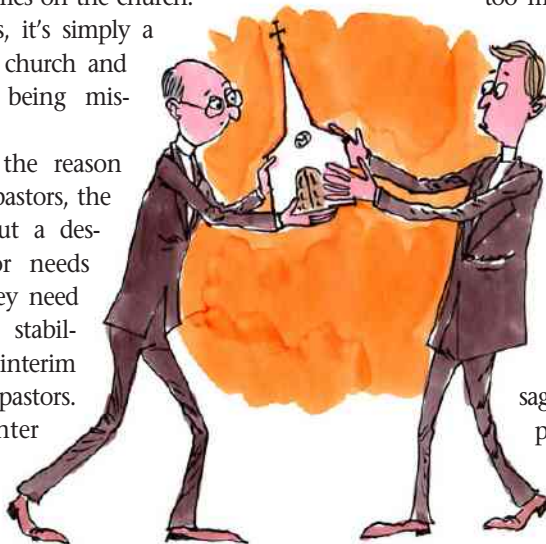
Whatever the reason for changing pastors, the church without a designated pastor needs assistance. They need direction and stability during the interim time between pastors. Churches enter the time after their pastor has gone

with uncertainty, confusion, and even fear. Instead of an unsettled future, the church needs to continue in its ministry without the uncertainties that usually accompany such a time. Pastoral change can be a time of evaluation, refocusing, and planning for future ministry.

When a pastor leaves, some churches transition smoothly. The effective ministry of the former pastor plays a key role. Yet, too often pastoral change is confusing to the congregation, especially if change is sudden and/or unexpected. Individual parishioners often feel disillusioned, betrayed, let down. Such feelings result in blame, hurt feelings, people taking sides, clandestine meetings, and a host of other congregational reactions.

During a time of transition, the tendency of too many churches is to move

too quickly. The sooner we get a new pastor, the better. The church should not panic, however. The Head of the church promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18), and He did not leave with the previous pastor. The passage of leadership from one pastor to another can be a time of growth and rejuvenation for the local church.



THE INTERIM PASTOR

Each church is unique in its circumstances and particular needs. An interim pastor is a minister who works with a congregation during a transition—after one pastor leaves and before a new pastor is called. The interim pastor is often a local retired minister. He fills the pulpit in the absence of a regular pastor. He is given a temporary appointment while the administrative bishop seeks God's will for the right pastor for the church.

Transition time is when the church should clarify its purpose and vision by identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The interim pastor can be very helpful in this task. A few cautions need to be raised, however. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses, be cautious about making changes. Resist the temptation to lead the church to a new leadership structure. Instead, expand the church's own vision; don't introduce a new one. Don't feel you have to implement every change people—even the “power structure”—asks you to make.

It is vital for the interim pastor to help the congregation in transition remain positive and constructive. The church can even gain momentum and productivity in the process of changes. Hurt people hurt others. Hurt people need healing. That healing may be physical, spiritual, social, or psychological. Jesus performs healings through the work of the Holy Spirit. The interim pastor strives to follow the leading of the Spirit, as God demonstrates His mighty power and Jesus' victory at the cross.

Some of the duties of the interim pastor are to . . .

- Prepare the congregation to accept a new pastor.

- Provide pastoral leadership to the church during the interim period.

- Plan to preach each week at the morning and/or evening services. Secure a qualified speaker for any Sunday you are not available.

- Perform regular pastoral duties such as leading worship, counseling, visiting the sick, conducting funerals, weddings, etc., as agreed upon with the church and administrative bishop.

- Proceed to meet regularly with the church staff and/or Council as an advisor.

- Push to develop confidence and congregational trust in the church leadership during the interim period.

- Pursue emergency conflict resolution as the need arises.

A NEEDED AND NOBLE JOB

The call for a competent interim minister does not come that often, but when it does, the need is critical. Thank God there are usually capable and qualified ministers available to fill this role. It is a fulfilling and rewarding task that calls for the best of one's skill and experience.

As interim pastor you will hear from the **critics**. They are highly critical of pastors generally, and you will probably hear of every mistake the former minister ever made. Critics are usually the most vocal people in the church.

You will also hear from the **self-serving**. They are concerned about the church meeting their own personal needs and preferences. They will fight for a preferred worship style, but won't fully participate in congregational activities.

The **apathetic** are concerned, but are unwilling to speak up. They wait to see what

other people like, and then go along with the crowd. **The silent majority** is concerned, but they are willing to sit on the sidelines and let a small minority lead them anywhere.

But build unity. Heal hurts. Promote fellowship. Focus on the mission of the church. Help the church deal with grief over the loss of a helpful and trusted pastor. Help the people overcome the overwhelming fear of change that accompanies the uncertainties of pastoral change. Help develop trust in the new pastor, whose personality and style may be different from the former pastor's.

Some people in the community don't *necessarily* hold the pastor in high esteem today. Further, many people in the *congregation* don't esteem the pastor as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. You can help improve respect for the ministry. Today's

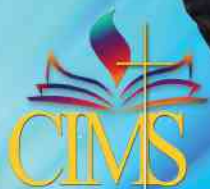
churches require better leadership skills and, more importantly, better interpersonal skills.

Social media and the Internet have made pastoring much more challenging than it was years ago. Today's information explosion boggles the mind. People used to brag about being computer illiterate. Now, if you say you don't know how to turn on a computer, people no longer nod and smile. They look at you with pity. So, stay up with the times. Knowledge multiplies. New knowledge breeds new knowledge.

The elephant in the boardroom is a mirage that you can make disappear. The period of in-between-pastors doesn't have to be a time to hold things together or to keep things going. It doesn't have to be a wait-and-see period. It can be a fruitful, productive time—for both the church and the interim pastor. ■

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LEADERSHIP JOURNAL Picks 2013's Best Books for Church Leaders

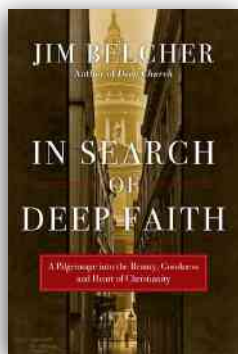
LEADERSHIP JOURNAL, a ministry of Christianity Today, recently announced its annual book awards—the editors' picks of the best books for pastors and church leaders from the last year.

Each year *Leadership Journal*, “the pastor’s magazine,” helps busy church leaders by recommending the books that are most worthy of their time. The book awards are chosen by a group of the publication’s editors in two categories: The Leader’s Inner Life, those books that encourage and nurture the leader’s soul, and The Leader’s Outer Life, books that engage and equip leaders practically for ministry.

The full list of other highly recommended books is printed in the winter 2014 print issue of *Leadership Journal*.

THE LEADER’S INNER LIFE

BEST OF THE BEST



In Search of Deep Faith

A Pilgrimage into the Beauty, Goodness, and Heart of Christianity

by Jim Belcher (IVP)

“*In Search of Deep Faith* creates a love for courageous Christians of histo-

ry, connects these discoveries to the challenges

of today’s world, and charts a course through the European continent that I would love to trek.”—Paul Atwater

OUR VERY SHORT LIST

One Way Love

Inexhaustible Grace for an Exhausted World

by Tullian Tchividjian (David C. Cook)

“What separates Christianity from every other religion is grace. Many leaders are far better at showing grace to others than they are to themselves. This book helps us marinate in a deep sense of God’s amazing grace.”—Kara Powell

Why No One Wants to Go to Church

Anymore:

And How 4 Acts of Love Will Make Your Church Irresistible

by Thom and Joani Schultz (Group)

“As the title of their book suggests, Thom and Joani Schultz don’t mince words about the church’s failure to connect with outsiders. But after serving the church for decades, they’ve earned the right to be heard. Their call to “bring church to the people” will resonate with leaders who sense yesteryear’s methods are no longer working”—Drew Dyck

Crazy Busy:

A (Mercifully) Short Book About a (Really) Big Problem

by Kevin DeYoung (Crossway)

“This is not a how-to book on time management. Rather, DeYoung, a pastor, writer,

and father of five, offers personal reflections to help readers strike a balance between inactivity and chaos.”—Drew Dyck

Gospel:

Recovering the Power That Made Christianity Revolutionary

by J.D. Greear (B&H)

“J.D. is clear on the gospel, humble and humorous. If you want to be missional and faithful, reaching out while holding fast, this book will encourage you.”—Mark Dever

THE LEADER’S OUTER LIFE

BEST OF THE BEST



I Am a Church Member:

Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference

by Thom S. Rainer (B&H)

“One thing all Christians can be sure of is that Jesus loved the church

and was committed to the church. Thom Rainer has given us a simple tool that has the potential to foster generations of health and productive service in churches of every size and denomination. (We are thinking about making this a gift to every new member.)”
—Paul Atwater

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OUR VERY SHORT LIST

Straining at the Oars:

Case Studies in Pastoral Leadership

by H. Dana Fearon III and Gordon S. Mikoski (Eerdmans)

“An excellent book full of practical advice for young ministers in areas of pastoral ministry that are never taught in seminary.”—Dave McDowell

Innovation's Dirty Little Secret:

Why Serial Innovators Succeed Where Others Fail

by Larry Osborne (Zondervan)

“Osborne’s insights, birthed in the living laboratory of the local church and articulated by a thoughtful practitioner, transcend the formulaic while equipping the ministry leader for increased innovation.”—Wayne Schmidt

Troubled Minds:

Mental Illness and the Church's Mission

by Amy Simpson (IVP)

“Amy Simpson gives deep insight into the pain of mental illness for those affected and those who love them. I count this a must-read for those of us in church leadership.”—Karen Miller

Disunity in Christ:

Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart

by Christena Cleveland (IVP Books)

“A well-researched and readable book on the issue of disunity that all of us pastors face but are able to do little about once the wheels are set in motion. It helped to remind me of the importance of dealing with potential problems before they blossom into something more sinister.”—Dave McDowell ■



THE KINGDOM: THE CHURCH

by TONY SCOTT

PERHAPS IT MAY come as a surprise that nowhere in the New Testament are we as believers or ministers commanded to build the church. In fact, there is a “gospel of the Kingdom” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14), but there is not a “gospel of the church.” Jesus used the word “church” only twice, but He referred to the Kingdom more than a hundred times.

Just as surprising is Jesus’ own statement, “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18 NKJV). In Acts 2:47, Luke says, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (KJV). Paul further emphasizes this principle in 1 Corinthians 3:6: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God (all the while) was making it grow and (He) gave the increase (Amp).”

While there are thousands of books, CDs, seminars, and church growth specialists proclaiming how man can build the church, God’s Word declares it is only Jesus who can accomplish the task. In the New Testament,

there are many great Kingdom growth principles. Our assignment as believers is to “preach the gospel of the Kingdom” and Jesus will build His church. Man can indeed build *a* church and many have done so. Our focus on “church growth” could be part of the reason why the church has lost its appeal to many unchurched people who refer to it as boring, irrelevant, religious, and judgmental. No such statements could ever truthfully be said about *the* Kingdom!

From the beginning, God assigned a job description for every person: We are to collectively rule over all living things on earth. Each of us is responsible for everyday life on earth.

A literal translation of Mark 1:15 says, Jesus came into Galilee announcing the good news from God. “All the preliminaries have been taken care of,” He said, “and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living, and base your life on this remarkable new opportunity.”

THE KINGDOM

Nothing is more important to your life than knowing, experiencing, and living the laws of His kingdom. The kingdom of God is the rule, the reign, and the government of God in the hearts and lives of those who are surrendered to His lordship.

Believers should know and understand six things about His kingdom:

1. You can be near the Kingdom.

Luke 10:9: “The Kingdom has come close to you” (Amp).

2. You can see the Kingdom.

John 3:3: “Unless a person is born again, he cannot ever see the kingdom of God” (Amp).

3. You can enter the Kingdom.

John 3:5: “Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Amp).

4. You can receive the Kingdom.

Luke 12:32: “Do not be seized with alarm and struck with fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Amp).

5. You can possess the Kingdom.

Matthew 11:12: “The Kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault and violent men seize it by force” (Amp).

6. You can be possessed by the Kingdom.

Luke 17:21: “The Kingdom of God is within you and among you” (Amp).

THE KINGDOM LIFE

The basic demand of His kingdom is a response of man’s will to receive it and to yield to its control. As we live by its rules, His uncreated life flows into our created life. As we draw near to see, enter, receive, possess, and

be possessed by His kingdom rule, He fills our lives with His life—His favor, His blessing, and His power—to the degree of our submission.

Man often rules and reigns in the church. Whether in a local entity or a denominational setting, men often allow their ego, flesh, and carnal spirit to influence their decisions.

In His kingdom, the Holy Spirit is the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Operating Officer. As CEO, He decides what is to be done; as COO, He carries out the mission in partnership with believers.

God created each of us to function in a conscious, intimate relationship of interactive responsibility with Him, and then He equipped us for one uniting purpose—to build His kingdom on earth. The church often separates us (divides us) along denominational lines, theologically, and by racial differences. By a process of renewal, God generously loves us and patiently leads us from our carnal, fleshly perspective into our true Kingdom identity—sons and daughters of the one true God.

Every living thing is created to live within its natural habitat. What it is dictates its world; move it out of its special, unique environment and it struggles or even dies. Fish are made to live in water—some in fresh water and some in salt water. Animals are made to live on land. If you place fish on land, they die; if you place animals under water, they die. Likewise, when believers live as merely soul/body entities instead of spirit-beings, they live outside their natural habitat. Our created design is to live as spiritual beings in His spiritual Kingdom.

THE KINGDOM MANDATE

You and I are made to live as Kingdom subjects, under Kingdom laws and authority, and in obedience to the commands of our

King. That requires us to live as unselfish, fully surrendered, spiritual beings. We are created to live as spiritual people in the spiritual environment of His kingdom laws.

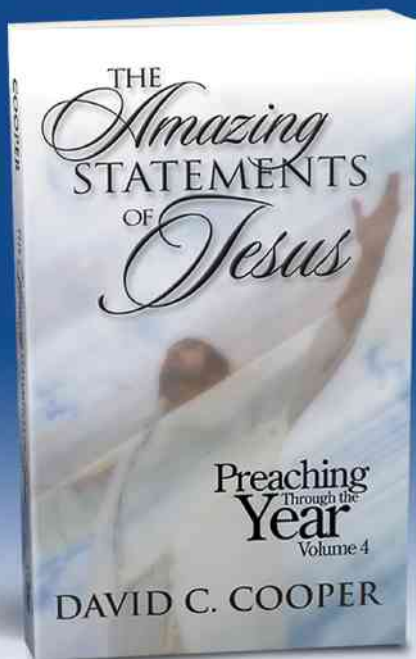
His command to us is to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33 NKJV). We are to pray, “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:10 NKJV). When we live as Kingdom subjects, speak a Kingdom message, teach Kingdom laws, and model Kingdom behavior, the world will see a difference. The gospel of the Kingdom will heal every disease, every weakness, every infirmity, and cure all kinds of diseases, bring true repentance, and bring the end of the age.

Any person, place, or thing fully surrendered to the rule of God will experience the

power of His kingdom. Jesus gave His life for His church and committed Himself to build it. Our assignment is to reveal to the world what a Kingdom life is all about. As believers and ministers, we must be about our Father’s business—the complete saturation of the earth with the good news of His kingdom. When the world sees the Kingdom manifested in our daily living, the church will experience the multiplication seen in the Book of Acts as the agency of the Kingdom.

Matthew 24:14 says, “And this good news of the Kingdom (the gospel) will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then will come the end” (Amp).

The Kingdom is greater than the church. ■



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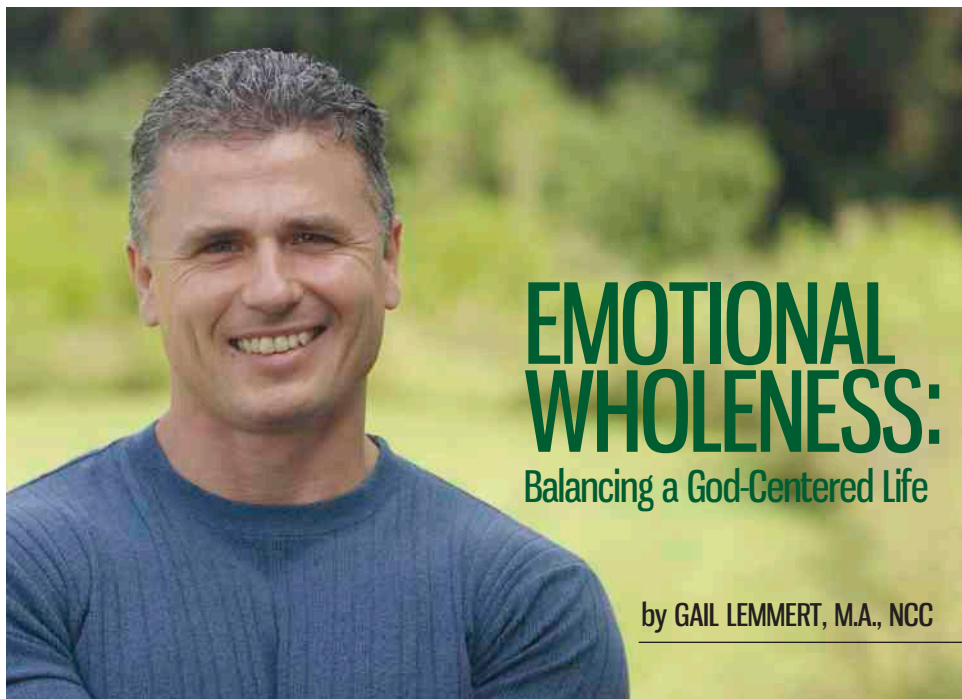
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EMOTIONAL WHOLENESS:

Balancing a God-Centered Life

by GAIL LEMMERT, M.A., NCC

DEFINING FEELINGS

Emotions, emotional wellness—what does all this mean? The dictionary says that *emotions* are “a heightened feeling, a strong feeling about somebody or something.” Further, it says, “something experienced physically or mentally, a perceived physical or mental sensation, something felt emotionally, or a perceived emotion.”

It’s been said that women are emotional creatures that they tend to “feel” more than men do. It’s been said that women “live by their emotions,” even wear their emotions on their sleeves. Or, maybe it’s just that women are able to express their emotions more easily than men.

In 1998, a book by Daniel Goleman titled, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, states that

emotional intelligence refers to “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”

He also describes emotional abilities being distinct from, but complementary to, academic intelligence—the purely cognitive capacities measured by IQ. People can be book smart, but lack emotional intelligence. He suggests that these two different kinds of intelligence—intellectual and emotional—express the activity of different parts of the brain. Some of this research came from a Harvard psychologist, Howard Gardner, who in 1983 proposed a widely regarded model of “multiple intelligence.” His list of seven kinds of intelligence included not just the familiar verbal and math

abilities, but also two “personal” varieties: knowing one’s inner world and also a social adeptness.

Brainstorming would probably produce the following list of emotions:

Love, hate, peace, eager, amused, wishful, contented, tender, great, depressed, angry, apprehensive, resentful, bitterness, hurt, lonely, critical, cynical, scared, terrified, bored, doubtful, unsure, self-conscious, shameful, arrogant, upset, guilty, unworthy, sinful, ashamed, remorseful, forgiven, etc.

This emotional list is long, but not exhaustive. As human beings, we experience many, many emotions; both negative and positive.

Most emotions can fall into three categories: happy, sad, and mad. Different degrees of intensity exist for all the emotions that we’ve named. There are strong, intense emotions, mild and moderate emotional feelings, and just a “feeling” about something. Our emotions are God given; He created us with emotions. We are emotional creatures, so He knows our feelings.

In **Hebrews 4:15**, the Scripture indicates that our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is touched by our feelings and our weaknesses, because as a man, He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (NKJV). Jesus came as a human being, to know our struggles and to know how our emotions affect us. Jesus experienced emotions. The Scriptures are very descriptive of Christ showing and demonstrating emotion.

Here are some examples of emotions Jesus felt:

• **Luke 2:49:** Jesus was *frustrated* with His parents when they did not understand why He had stayed behind in the Temple at age 12, saying to them, “Why were you looking

for me? Didn’t you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?” (The Message).

• **John 2:15** speaks of Jesus making a whip of small cords and driving the money changers out of the Temple. This seems to indicate that He was *angry*.

• **Matthew 26:37-38:** Jesus took His disciples with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. The Scripture says that He was *sorrowful* (extremely sad) and very *heavy* of heart (troubled, burdened), even to the point of **death**. How intense is that emotion?

Then, the Scripture describes how He fell on the ground and prayed asking the Father to take away His “cup of suffering” (see v. 39). He felt *alone, abandoned, forsaken*, and in intense emotional *pain*. Then, He was *betrayed* by one of His own—*betrayed*. Have you known that feeling?

• **John 11:35** says, “Jesus *wept*.” Upon learning of the death of His friend, Lazarus, Jesus, in front of the Jews, His disciples, and Mary, “groaned, was troubled, and He wept” (v. 38). The Jews said, “Behold how He *loved* him!” (v. 36).

• **John 3:16**...you know it: “For God so **LOVED**”—the most powerful emotion of all. While we were yet sinners, He loved us. He loves us . . . because He loves us . . . because He loves us. And now we love Him, because He first loved us. Can we grasp that TRUTH?

DISCOVERING FALLACIES

Because we are born into a sin-cursed world, we experience damage to our emotions. I believe in my heart, it is Satan’s tool of destruction. The Scripture says our Enemy comes to rob, steal, kill, and destroy.

Most people experience abuse, hurt, misuse, injury, and insult—whether it is physical,

emotional, mental, or spiritual—during their lifetime. This damage comes about from broken relationships of divorce, abandonment, false accusations, rejection, lack of protection, abuse of power, ridicule by peers, hurtful actions, and being robbed of sexual innocence.

In my 25 plus years of counseling, sexual abuse tends to be the most destructive, for it damages the *core* of our being. It robs us of trust, it violates boundaries, it brings guilt and self-blame, and it can literally destroy us emotionally.

Statistics say that one *out of three* women is sexually abused by the time she is 18 years old. In a room of women, one of three has experienced sexual abuse. Thirty women out of 90 have been sexually abused—I am one of those. Such scars have been concealed behind a mask, buried in deep pain, and they continue to cause much hurt, anger, rage, and devastation in the individual's thinking, feelings, and relationships.

This world is a scary place. How prevalent is guilt, fear, depression, and anger in the Christian community? Maybe more prevalent than we want to believe! We put on a brave face, or our mask, attempting to hide, yet allowing the damaged emotions to destroy our happiness and peace, to impair our usefulness, and to damage our ability to cope with life. But, beloved, there is *hope*.

DELIVERING FAITHFULNESS/ OUR REDEEMER

Christ is our Faithful Deliverer and our Kinsmen Redeemer. God is in the business of changing people who come to Him in repentance and in faith. I have heard it said that the Greek word for *salvation* literally means “heal-

ing.” So, salvation offers healing—body, mind, and spirit—to each of us.

The Word of God in **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “Therefore if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature (new creation): old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” (NKJV). When we accept Christ as Savior, we are a new creature—a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Yet, may I suggest that a baby is a new creation, but that baby doesn't run the Boston Marathon the day she is born. She learns to sit alone, to crawl, walk, fall down, and bump her head sometimes. She does learn to run eventually, and if she practices many hours each day, she may someday run the Boston Marathon. So, as Christians, we often think that accepting Christ is going to instantly heal our emotions, but most often it is a matter of beginning to change our thinking, and the healing is a process that we walk through.

Gaining freedom from emotional bondage or damage is not easy. It will bring to the surface feelings that have been “stuffed” for many years, rather than knowing what to do with them, we stuff them.

But, certain areas of our lives need special healing by the Holy Spirit—an unlearning of past programming, and a relearning and reprogramming transformation by the renewing of our minds. **Romans 12:2** says, “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye *transformed* (to undergo total, dramatic, change) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (KJV).

The good news of the gospel must penetrate into the damaged inner self, and most often, that is a process of healing, not instantaneous deliverance that we as Pentecostals

sometimes want most everything to be. As my pastor says, "Just a thought."

Many books have been written about emotional healing; Joyce Meyer has written, *Beauty for Ashes*, David Seamands has written, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, and the list goes on.

If Christ himself felt and displayed feelings and emotions, I strongly suggest to you right now that . . .

All feelings are ok; it's what we do with them that counts.

I repeat:

All feelings are ok; it's what we do with them that counts.

What exactly does that statement mean? Does it mean good feelings like love, confidence, trust, hope, and thoughtfulness are OK? Right. And, does it mean that not so good feelings like fear, guilt, anger, depression, and frustration are OK? Right!

I'm suggesting YES that all these feelings are ok! But, it's what we DO with a feeling that is so important. We can have very intense feelings about many things, but we do not have to live by our feelings. We have choices about how we will respond to those feelings. We are to live by what we KNOW, not what we feel.

If I am really angry about something, such as an untruth told about me, I can feel the anger or even rage about that injustice. But, I cannot take a ball bat and go down the street bopping everyone I meet on the head. I will be arrested. But I can channel that anger into something positive. I can write it out, talk it out with someone I trust, I can clean my cupboards, or go exercise and work it out. I can choose healthy actions rather than unhealthy actions.

If I feel depressed, I can choose to stay in bed all day, wallow in my self-pity, not eat,

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and watch TV all day; but then, I'm going to be more depressed if I do that. Or I can choose to crawl out of bed, grab my warm robe, put the coffee on, get in the shower, and do what I need to do. I do have some choices to make.

Now, I'm not saying if you are clinically depressed, you can pull yourself up by the hair of your head. You may need some other professional help in getting out of the depression if it lasts more than two weeks. Help can be in the form of a doctor, a counselor, a good friend you trust, prayer, or the Word. Help is available!

Dr. Seamands suggests in his book that a great crisis experience with Jesus Christ, as important and eternally valuable as it is, is not a shortcut to emotional health. It is not a quickie cure for personality problems from the curse of sin on our world. It is necessary that we understand this, first of all, so that we can compassionately live with ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit to work with special healing in our own hurts and confusions. We also need to understand this in order to not judge other people too harshly, but to have patience with

their confusing and contradictory behavior. We are not fakes, phonies, or hypocrites; we are people with hurts, scars, and wrong programming that interfere with our present emotional status and behavior. If we were to trace all human damages and hurts, we would probably find that they are the result of someone's sin—ours, others, or perhaps even from generations back.

Now, please do not think that I am denying or lowering the standards of what Christ does at regeneration, but what I am saying is that certain areas of our lives need special healing by the Holy Spirit that may be a *process* over time.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, notice I said the CHURCH, he mentions every imaginable kind of human problem, some of which are almost unimaginable. He talks about quarrels, party splits, court cases, property disputes, and various kinds of sexual sin—from incest to prostitution. He talks about premarital relations, marital relations, and divorce. He writes about widowhood, getting drunk at the Communion table, death, funerals, offerings, and speaking in tongues! The good news of the gospel must be practical and must get right down to where we live. It must offer help and healing for all of these things that Paul addressed, if not, maybe we need to be quiet about the “good news” and quit playing church. Just a thought!

KEYS TO EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

1. Realize that you are in charge of your own feelings...NO ONE can make you feel any particular way, unless YOU allow it.

2. Know that with the power of His Spirit you have the power to change

your feelings. Maybe not immediately, but through changing your thoughts and behavior that is within your control, your feelings will change.

3. Discard excess emotional baggage.

Forgive yourself; forgive others; let go of your need to punish them. It only hurts you, not them.

4. Choose a positive attitude.

Philippians 4:8 is a verse to live by . . . “Whatever things are true . . . pure . . . noble . . . trustworthy . . . of good report, *THINK* on these things.”

One of my favorite scriptures is **Ephesians 2:10**: “You are God’s workmanship (masterpiece), created to do good works.” A part of the Master craftsman is exhibited in us; therefore, a part of Him in us gives us great value, and we have gifts and talents we are to share with others.

And, I close with my most favorite verse, **Philippians 1:6**: “Being confident of this . . . that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (NKJV). He is at work on us, and He is at work in us. We are all in process, and He is not finished with us yet.

Let us come boldly to Him, not hiding behind the mask of Sunday morning, but allowing Him to see and to touch the sore and painful parts of our hearts. Allow Him to continue to heal the damaged emotions, to bring healing and abundant life as He promises to give us. We aren’t to seek healing, but to seek the Healer. As we seek Him, He offers physical healing. As we seek Him, He offers emotional healing, and He is at work bringing that to completion.

All Feelings Are OK. It’s what we do with them that counts. ■

I DIED for Those Too

BY HIS STRIPES we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5 NKJV). Words that would seem so easy to believe, except we've seen some who weren't healed—at least not the way we picture healing.

Our view of healing often includes life continuing here on this planet, in our town, in our neighborhood, in our home, as it was before the illness or disease. A friend recently shared that healing is not for here, it is for heaven. Restoration is the best we get here. Still, even restoration is sometimes difficult to imagine when we see lives surrender to cancer, heart disease, stroke, other diseases, and some even by accident or murder.

Even if the individual continues to breathe and go through the motions of life, not all are living—they may only be existing. That's not what He promised. The promise was for

abundant life. What is abundant life anyway? Is it a house with a picket fence, two cars in the garage, a boat at the lake, a safe 401K, the retirement home in the mountains, the two-income family with two children and a prepaid college education? Often the view of abundant life appears to have been designed by the world—the stuff that appears to give value to life, however, is just that . . . stuff.

How many times have we heard of couples who were looking forward to retirement to be able to travel and "live," when shortly into that life, one is diagnosed with a health crisis and that one is fearful of even leaving town for an overnight trip? Or, one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's and soon can't even remember the love of his or her life while the spouse watches the gradual loss, and they live through "until death [they] do part."

Those are all very visible needs for which we pray for healing. Yet, the unseen wounds and pains interfere with abundant life—depression, emotional pain, mental anguish. But, you say, “We are Christians, and we have power over those things.” Really? Then why don’t we say that about all the other thieves of abundant life? And that is what disease is. It is a thief, a thief that steals joy, peace, and hope, all of which are part of the abundant life.

Jesus said, “I’ve come to give abundant life” (see John 10:10). He came to bring peace and healing. I’ve heard that salvation can mean healing. While perfect healing will come when we reach heaven, He has plans for a life here. Life isn’t just getting through; He wants us to thrive. That is why He took the stripes for our healing—spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental. Today, He comes to say, “I died for those too.”

He wishes to strengthen us body, mind, and soul that we may be overcomers to testify to His healing power. He does, however, want us to come to Him with the desire to be healed. Occasionally, He may come to someone, as He did the man at the pool of Bethesda, and ask, “Do you want to be healed?” (see John 5:1-6). More often it is like passing the blind man crying out on the road. Jesus asked, “What can I do for you?” and the blind man replied, “Rabbi, I want to see” (see Mark 10:46-52).

Today, He asks, “What can I do for you?” “Do you want to be healed?” Check your heart; it’s not about what others want; it is about what you want. He died to heal that too! Whatever your “that” is, He already knows. He just wants you to tell Him, and keep on telling Him until you hear Him speak to you and speak into your need. “By His stripes, [you] are healed!” ■

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New Book Chronicles Life and Ministry of G.W. LANE

A NEW BOOK release, *My City, My People: The Life and Ministry of G. W. Lane*, chronicles the ministry of the Reverend G.W. Lane, well-known pastor, radio preacher, state overseer, and general official of the Church of God. The book was written by Dan Rundell, husband of G.W. and Nell Lane's daughter, Peggy. Many of the inci-

dents recorded in the book are drawn from Peggy's memories of life and ministry with her father and mother.

The book details the evolving early ministry of Reverend Lane, from his conversion and call to ministry under the

Reverend R.P. Johnson; his work as a young state youth director in Texas; his marriage to Nell Boman; the birth of their daughter, Peggy; his licensure with the Church of God on January 25, 1935; his pastoral ministry in Texas; his appointment as evangelist in Kentucky in 1937; the struggles of ministry during the Great Depression; and his appointment as pastor of Highland Park Church of God in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1938.

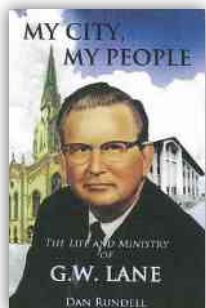
In 1941, at the age of 29, Reverend Lane was appointed overseer in the Northeastern United States, with responsibility for the states of New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and

Connecticut. This was the beginning of many administrative appointments for Reverend Lane, interspersed with two fruitful terms as pastor in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he first gained prominence as a radio preacher with his *Voice of Calvary* broadcasts on radio station WCKY.

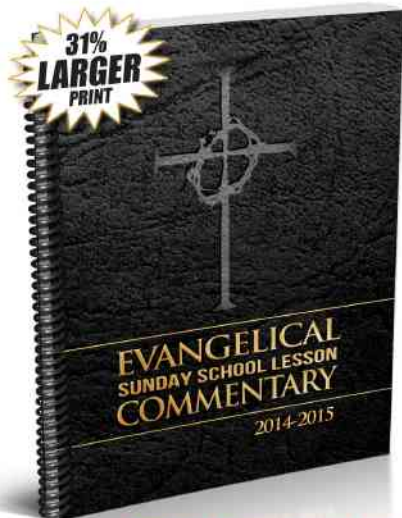
My City, My People is an inspiring account of God's providence and direction in ministry. Young ministers can learn much from the example of Reverend Lane's ministry; older ministers will reminisce living through many of the times and events chronicled in the book. As General Overseer Mark L. Williams has said:

Readers will be inspired by the Reverend G.W. Lane's personal experiences and ministry which epitomized the words of the apostle Paul to the younger minister Timothy: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved" (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV). For 47 years, G.W. Lane was a model husband, dad, pastor, leader, teacher, and a mentor to both ministers and laypersons. He indeed was "one approved" and his committed life, leadership, and ministry have left a positive influence on the Church of God.

The book is a publication of Derek Press, a division of Pathway Press. The 165-page paperback book (ISBN 978-1-59684-804-7) is available through Pathway Bookstore, 1-800-553-8506. —Tom George



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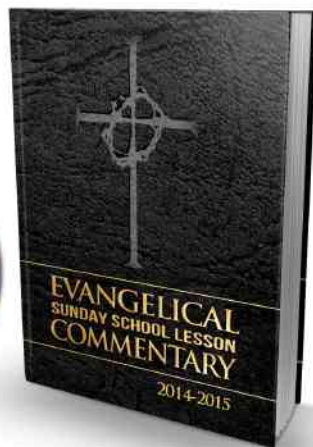
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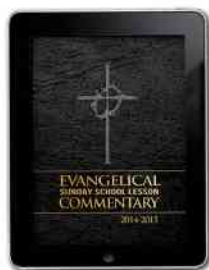
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LEGAL NOTES
Dennis W. Watkins

Have a Church Safety Committee

RECENTLY, it seems that there are more and more news reports of shootings in public places. These places include malls, theaters, and many other locations. Unfortunately, churches are not immune from this problem.

While there are different strategies of approach in dealing with this problem, one action that I think all of our churches could consider is to have a safety committee that works closely and in conjunction with the pastor. This committee could be made up of the pastor, church leaders or administrators, and persons with specific knowledge and training, such as law enforcement, military, security, and other types of professionals. These persons should meet on a regular basis and have a specific plan to accommodate security concerns, emergency issues, and especially incidents of violence within the church or on church property.

USE OF SECURITY GUARDS

Some churches deem it necessary to use armed guards or uniformed security personnel. This may in fact be necessary, given a church's location or foreseeable risks that problem incidents may occur. This, of course, would vary from church to church.

CARRYING CONCEALED WEAPONS PERMIT HOLDERS

Many churches now have members that bring weapons with them to church, and some states have enacted laws allowing members with "Carrying Concealed Weapons" permits to bring firearms to a church. This is a cause for some concern, because in many cases, these individuals have not received extensive training in responding to crises, or extensive firearms training. Using such individuals is not considered to be the best plan, in comparison with using uniformed, armed police officers; uniformed, private security guards; or retired law enforcement or military personnel.

If your church does use such individuals as a security backup, be sure to know how many of them are bringing weapons to the church, do a background check on each person, use a written application that includes a description of that person's weapons training, and periodically confirm that his/her permit is active.

COORDINATE THROUGH A COMMITTEE AND HAVE A PLAN

Once again, if possible, there should be a safety committee that works with the pastor and which coordinates the involvement of all individuals coming to the church with

weapons. Even if the local church is small and only one person is bringing a weapon to the church, that person should work in conjunction with the pastor to make sure that there is a coordinated plan for any possible eventuality.

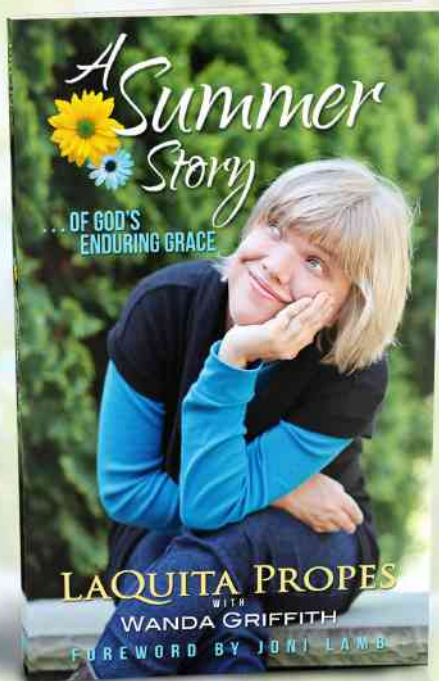
CONCLUSION

There actually is no possible way to predict when events of violence like this will occur. Research does not indicate exact patterns or indicators when a person will become violent in a church. The best response that any local church can undertake is to find individuals in the church who have the best skills and training in responding to this kind of problem.

RESOURCES

See the *Church Law & Tax Report*, Nov/Dec 2013 article entitled "Stopping a Shooter". The article gives particular attention to the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") resource titled, *Developing High Quality Emergency Operation Plans for Houses of Worship*. Also, be sure to consult with other churches in your area which may have crafted workable emergency management plans. ■

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.



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Court Holds Ministerial Housing Allowance Unconstitutional

IN A DEVASTATING, but expected ruling, Federal District Court Judge Barbara Crabb of Wisconsin recently struck down a law that allows ministers a tax-free housing allowance. In the decision issued on Thursday, November 21, 2013, Judge Crabb wrote that the housing allowance provision for ministers “provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise.”

The ministerial housing allowance provision, found in Section 107 of the Tax Code and included there since at least 1954, has been under attack as providing a special benefit to ministers that is not available to other taxpayers. Section 107 allows ministers to have a portion of their income designated as tax-free housing allowance or live in a parsonage without having to pay taxes on the fair rental value of the parsonage. Judge Crabb’s ruling does not affect parsonages, but declares the housing allowance provision unconstitutional.

Under Section 107, active credentialed ministers are able to have a portion of their

ministerial compensation designated as tax-free housing allowance. Further, retired ministers who participated in their church-sponsored pension plans, like the Church of God’s Ministers’ Retirement Plan, can have some or all of their retirement distributions designated as ministerial housing allowance as well.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit before Judge Crabb, led by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, contended that the housing allowance provision grants ministers an unfair benefit that violates the U.S. Constitution. In her ruling, Judge Crabb noted that a lot of tax revenue was at stake. The tax savings to ministers over a five-year period of time was estimated to be more than \$2.3 billion.

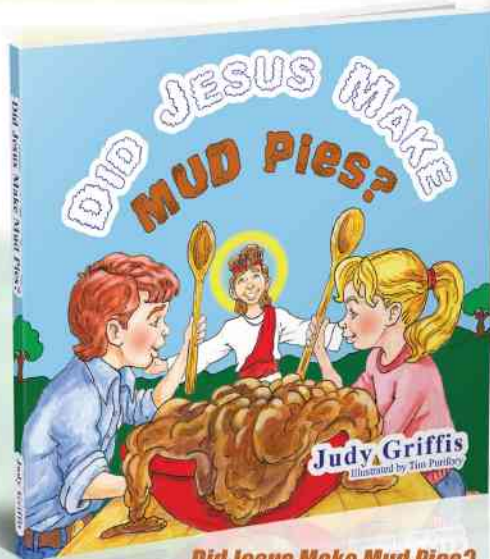
While the decision by the court was not unexpected, the timing was earlier than anticipated. For now, the Court’s decision only impacts the Western District of Wisconsin—the district in which Judge Crabb serves. However, Judge Crabb did suspend the impact of her ruling to allow for an appeal.

As expected, Judge Crabb’s decision was appealed to the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago on January 24, 2014,

by the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Department of Treasury, the defendants in the lawsuit. All legal filings before the appellate court are currently set to be completed by mid to late April, and theoretically a decision from the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals could come later in 2014 or very early in 2015. It is expected that the Church of God Benefits Board and the Church of God denomination will file "friend of the courts" legal briefs in support of maintaining the housing allowance within the next few weeks. Regardless of the decision by the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, it is expected that this matter will ultimately reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

Although for now, only the Western District of Wisconsin is directly impacted by this decision, the impact could eventually touch the entire nation. The Church of God and the Church of God Benefits Board, in conjunction with other denominations and church pension funds, will continue to fight to keep the housing allowance available to our active and retired ministers. ■

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.



Did Jesus Make Mud Pies?

ISBN # 9781596848009 **\$6⁹⁵**

Did Jesus Make Mud Pies? Is . . . a result of the author's life-long love for writing poetry, and her fond memories of how she felt as a child when making mud pies. Written from the viewpoint of a child, she captures the universal wonder and awe of the experience of childhood play in catchy sing-song rhyming that gets children's attention.



Judy Griffis holds a B.A. and M.Ed. in education from Lee University. She and her husband, David, have served in various areas of ministry for over four decades. Her greatest calling is to be "Nana" to her seven grandchildren, Asher, Charity, Isabella, Jayken, Eden, Jaron, and Jax. Judy resides in rural Georgia on the family farm named "Beaverpond Hill."

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BOOK REVIEW

Nellie Keasling

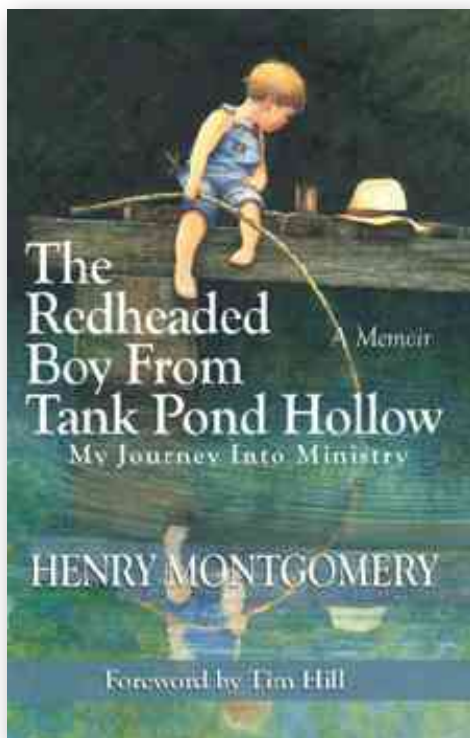
The Redheaded Boy From Tank Pond Hollow

HENRY MONTGOMERY, pastor of a small church in northeastern Kentucky, wrote about his personal journey into ministry in this delightful book. The author tells his story of coming from a place called “Tank Pond Hollow” to pastor a thriving small church in Wurtland, Kentucky. He describes challenges, frustrations, and the joys of witnessing people come to know the Lord. Pastor Montgomery also shares some of the lessons he has learned during his years of ministry.

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Tracking the Journey, (2) Lessons From the Journey, and (3) The Journey Ahead. The first section starts with Montgomery’s childhood, progresses to his early pastorates, and finally arrives at the church where he currently pastors. Along this journey, he had several discouraging experiences, one of which took place in a church of 12 people, which included his own family. One day as he was telling God just how discouraged he was, God spoke to him, saying: “If you can’t be content and faithful where I have placed you, I will not put My favor on you anywhere else.” Montgomery relates how he immediately repented of his attitude, and the church began to grow, eventually reaching 55 in a building that would hold only 50 people.

In the second section, Pastor Montgomery shares some of the lessons he has learned with

his readers. One important lesson he learned was to involve the members of the church to do the work of ministry. He says, “It takes more than prayer and fasting, as important as these are, to build a church. Members must be taught and trained to work, and God will build the church.” One example of this philosophy, which has worked beautifully for



Montgomery, is utilizing the men of the church when it comes to building projects. He says, "I share my vision with them and when they catch the vision, I let them make all the proposals to the church. When the men of the church take ownership of a project, they will get the church to move forward with the project."

Loving and pastoring a rural congregation can sometimes test the strongest faith. Pastor Montgomery relates how in one community he went to visit a sick man. As he approached the house, the stench met him at the door. He silently said, *Lord, I can't go any farther than the door.* Then God said to him, "I would go all the way." God helped him; he prayed for the man; and the man was healed. The stories go from here to an alcoholic named Larry who was gloriously saved to some ladies who walked out of church to "settle" their differences. Pastor Montgomery had to break up an "almost" fight. Loving people is not always easy, but the reward of faithfulness is seeing souls won to Christ.

Montgomery believes very strongly that a congregation should trust God to supply their needs. Just as Jesus did not want the Temple to be a place of merchandising, neither does Pastor Montgomery believe in selling chicken dinners, donuts, or candy to pay bills. He believes in teaching the people to tithe and give, and God will supply the needs. He suggests that the church should not "ask the community to help build the church," rather the church should "reach out to the community and minister to them."

In the last section, Pastor Montgomery challenges other pastors to love their people, no matter where the location is—a rural set-

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ting, the inner city, an urban area, or darkest Africa. God honors faithfulness and will bless those who are true to His calling. If God can take a redheaded boy from Tank Pond Hollow and use him, then God can use any willing vessel.

The book is a delightful read with many nuggets of truth. The reader can feel Pastor Montgomery's heart as he leads you on his journey from childhood to his present pastorate. Using his strategies and love of people, Montgomery's present congregation now averages 500 in a community of 1,400. By the end of the book, the reader comes to appreciate the author's humble spirit and his love of people.

Montgomery's book, *The Redheaded Boy From Tank Pond Hollow* may be purchased directly from the author at 1423 Walnut Street, Greenup, KY 41149, or from Pathway Press by calling 1-800-553-8506. The ISBN number is 978-1-59684-782-8, and the book sells for \$14.95. ■

Nellie Keasling is Editorial Coordinator for the Church of God Division of Education.

CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

News from around the denomination for the first quarter of 2014



Marcelly's Dream Project Reaches \$1 Million Milestone

January 15—World Missions Marcelly's Dream initiative topped the \$1 million mark. Launched around Christmas 2012, the project addresses needs on the mission field that could not be accomplished otherwise because of the International General Assembly-mandated reduction of funds from the tithe fund to World Missions. Marcelly's Dream was inspired by the experience of Marcelly Thompson, the daughter of missionaries who were in transition at the time. In a dream, Jesus appeared to the 7-year-old and told her she would preach the gospel in Africa, and she shared it with her parents. Within a few days, the Thompsons were transferred from their Latin American orphanage assignment to a new position in Liberia, Africa. Missions leaders who made the appointment did not know of Marcelly's dream.

Marcelly's Dream funds have empowered Missions to retain significant ministries and establish new emphases on Bible distribution,

clean water, and other needs. The initiative targets four strategic areas: Word, Water, Walls, and Wellness. An impressive array of missions projects have been realized. A sample list includes assistance with... Awarding new Bibles among 130 church-related orphanages • Distribution of 7,500 Fire Bibles, including junior youth camps in the USA • Drilling water wells in Senegal, Zambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea • Building a boys dormitory in Indonesia • Assisting Phebe Grey Orphanage, Casa Hogar, El Shaddai, Kibera Kids, and other orphanages • Building a church in Cameroon and another in Niger • Undergirding Indian Ministries of North America • Initiating the African Firewall Project that will build churches and training centers across the continent • Building 50 homes in the Build a City project in Cambodia • Enhanced missionary resourcing.

Executive Committee Approves Designation of "USA Missionary"

January 23—The Church of God International Executive Committee approved a proposal to create the designation of "USA Missionary" for individuals commissioned for or engaged in unique missionary ministries within the United States of America. According to officials with USA Missions, the United States of America "is the third-largest mission field in the world. It is believed that there are 100 million unchurched Americans (75 million adults). While the Church of God will not, and must not lessen its emphasis

on reaching the lost in other lands, the passion in USA Missions is to find new and innovative ways to reach those without Christ here in America."

Marker Dedication Celebrates Edmond and Rebecca Barr

February 7—Church leaders gathered in the Prayer Plaza of the Church of God International Offices to dedicate a historic marker which commemorates the life and ministry of Edmond and Rebecca Barr, the first Church of God ministers to take the gospel outside the United States. The 2:30 p.m. ceremony took place as the highlight of a two-day conference celebrating Black Ministries in the Church of God.

Edmond Barr was a black Bahamian, who immigrated to the United States for work and met a young American woman, Rebecca Clayton. They married in 1894 in Arcadia, Florida. In May of 1909, the Barrs attended the Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting near Durant,

Florida, where they heard Church of God General Overseer A. J. Tomlinson preach on the importance of restoring God's church. Tomlinson credentialed both Edmond and Rebecca as evangelists on May 31, making them the first people of African descent in the Church of God. Tomlinson returned to Pleasant Grove in October, and the Barrs experienced a call to preach the gospel in Edmond's homeland. The couple sailed for Nassau where they landed in November 1909, becoming not only the first Church of God ministers, but also the first people of color to take the gospel outside the United States for the Church of God just two years after the fledgling movement adopted the name Church of God.

Lee University Announces New Academic Standard

March—In a move that was "painstakingly developed" by a task force of faculty and administrators, Lee University has reduced its required number of academic hours to graduate from 130 to 120, or approximately 8 percent. The action was taken to follow a national trend of colleges and universities trying to assist students to graduate in four years or less.

Dr. Debbie Murray, Lee's vice president for academic affairs, said the requirement of 120-hours is standard for many schools, including nearby University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. "It's a national and state trend to not only give students access but to also make sure they finish." Lee found ways to make the cut without sacrificing distinctive courses related to its mission as a Christ-centered university, its service-learning component, and its global perspectives component. In the end, according to Murray, six hours came out of the general education core and four in various ways from individual degree programs.



Leaders gather at the marker dedicated to Raymond and Rebecca Barr. Left to right, Coordinator of Black Ministries Ken Hill, Assistant General Overseer J. David Stephens, Secretary General M. Thomas Propes, General Overseer Mark Williams, and Assistant General Overseer Wallace J. Sibley.

Dr. Bill Sheeks Passes Away

March 19—Dr. Bill F. Sheeks, former assistant general overseer of the Church of God,



passed away on March 19. He had celebrated his 80th birthday earlier that month.

Ordained in the Church of God in 1962, Dr. Sheeks served the Church of God in a variety of ministry posts, including eight years on the International Executive

Committee. His first pastorate was in his native North Carolina, and he served as state director of Youth and Christian Education and director of Evangelism and Home Missions.

Dr. Sheeks served as state overseer in Hawaii (1974-78), Illinois (1978-1982), and Alabama (1982-86). At the 1996 General Assembly, Dr. Sheeks was elected assistant director of Evangelism and Home Missions. Reelected two years later, he was elevated to the position of director in 1990 where he served until 1994.

Upon completion of his term as general director in 1994, Dr. Sheeks was appointed by the Executive Committee to return to his home state where he was honored to serve as state overseer in Western North Carolina. However, his tenure would last only two years. At the 1996 General Assembly, he would be elected to fill the position of general secretary-treasurer for the Church of God—a post he would be reelected to in 1998. In 2000, he would rise to the position of third assistant general overseer and then second assistant for two years before completing his eight-year tenure on the International Executive Committee in 2004.

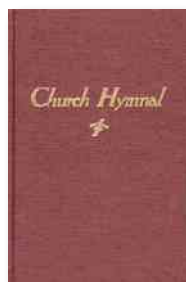
Dr. Sheeks was highly educated, earning his first degree from Lee College (now Lee University) in 1954. He received the B.A. degree

from Catawba College in 1956, a master's degree in 1978, and the D.Min. degree in 1979 from California Graduate School of Theology.

Upon reflection of the life of Dr. Sheeks, Church of God General Overseer Mark Williams said, "Dr. Bill F. Sheeks lived and breathed church planting, passionately believing that no city, town or village should be without the witness of the Church of God. We have lost a true apostolic visionary."

Pathway Press Honored for "Red-Back" Church Hymnal

March 25—The success and longevity of the well-known "Red-Back" hymnal was honored at the Southern Gospel Music Guild's 2014 Harmony Honors. The annual Harmony Honors recognizes the best and brightest singers, songwriters, quartets, groups, and innovators in this unique American musical genre. This year the Harmony Honors recognized two of Southern Gospel Music's most storied publishing resources: Pathway Press and Stamps-Baxter Music. Southern Gospel aficionados recognize Pathway Press as publisher of the classic "Red-Back" *Church Hymnal*, used by thousands of churches across the South for over 60 years. Generations of gospel groups have dipped into the depths of the old "Red-Back" hymnal for classic quartet and convention songs by such legendary songwriters as Albert Brumley, Vep Ellis, Luther Presley, Lee Roy Abernathy, and many others. Accepting the recognition at the ceremony was Charles Towler, long-time contributor and employee with Pathway Press and Tennessee Music, the branch of Pathway which has produced the popular hymnal.



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GUEST SPEAKER:

DEVEN WALLACE
CO-PASTOR OF REDEMPTION POINT CHURCH,
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