

CHURCH OF GOD

EVANGEL

FEBRUARY 2015

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Parenting That
Lasts Forever

Romancing
Marriage

Grandparents
Needed



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—Genesis 12:3



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To Know Jesus and Make Him Known

Ministry of Church of God
Youth and Discipleship

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FEBRUARY 2015

VOLUME 105 ■ ISSUE 2



FATHER, HEAR US, we are praying,
Hear the words our hearts are saying,
We are praying for our children.

Keep them from the powers of evil,
From the secret, hidden peril,
From the whirlpool that would suck them,
From the treacherous quicksand, pluck them.

From the world's hollow gladness,
From the sting of faithless sadness,
Holy Father, save our children.

—Amy Carmichael

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MINISTRY SNAPSHOT

Members of the Poplar Springs Church of God (Statesville, N.C.) riding horses and witnessing for Christ on the riding trails in Love Valley (located near the church property)



If you have a ministry photo to be considered for this page, send it to evangel@pathwaypress.org.

CHURCH OF GOD DECLARATION OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE:

1. In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
2. In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
3. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
4. That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
5. That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
6. In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
7. Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.
8. In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
9. In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost.
10. In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
11. Divine healing is provided for all in the Atonement.
12. In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.
13. In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
14. In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.



EQUIPPING SHEPHERDS AND EMPLOYING SOCIAL ACTION

WE MUST EQUIP SHEPHERDS

One of the most important gifts Christ left the church is the pastor. Pastors are shepherds and form one of the most vital forces for God and His kingdom in the world today. As the pastor goes, so goes the Church of God.

Today, shepherds are called upon to carry out the mission of God in an age of religious pluralism and materialistic world-views. It is a day when the church and its message are being marginalized. Those coming to Jesus often face opposition from family members and persecution from peers for deciding to follow Christ.

Families are being redefined. People are historically dislocated. It is an age of addiction, and pastors face intense spiritual warfare. For this reason, the Church of God must give priority to affirming, resourcing, training, and caring for its shepherds.

I carry a burden for pastors. The Vital Initiative (vitalinitiative.com) for pastors of smaller churches was launched through Pastor Michael Nations to say every pastor and every church is vital. Small churches are not failed large churches. God has strategically placed congregations in towns and communities to shine in the darkness. Bi-vocational pastors may well be the most important mission force in our world today.

With 800 million users of Facebook, 40 million Instagrams posted each day, and 140 million users of Twitter sending 340 million tweets each day, I believe social media is one way pastors can be connected and resourced. *Faith Matters* was launched with the desire to bring matters of faith to the table in a conversational way.

Last summer, the International Executive Committee and I were thrilled to announce the debut of Ministry Source. It is a one-stop website that offers a robust, easy-to-search collection of useful content offering pastors inspiration, training, and


continuing education. This site is designed to equip anyone in ministry through live webinars, archived church services, worship music, children's resources, sermon outlines, and even PowerPoint slides. New content is being added regularly from our network of partners, including exclusive content provided by Lee University's Division of Adult Learning. Ministry Source is still in beta test, so give us your feedback. The site is free to use, but you must register to access it (MinistrySource.com).

WE MUST EMPLOY SOCIAL ACTION

For some time now, I have felt the Church of God corporately needs to regain its prophetic voice. So many issues—including abortion on demand, human trafficking, the exploitation of children, redefining of marriage, religious freedom, poverty, global hunger—call for a word from the Lord and action.

In this regard, I am so proud of Women's Discipleship. More than \$400,000 has been raised for *Operation Freedom: Rescuing Servant Children in Haiti*. These funds are being used to build a transitional safe house in Port Salut, Haiti, for children rescued from slavery.

World Missions, Men and Women of Action (MWOA), and YWEA are combining their efforts to build a firewall in Africa by establishing seven training centers in Senegal, Niger, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, and the Horn of Africa. The strategy includes planting new churches, strengthening existing churches, equipping laity for service, and developing young leaders.

In 2014, MWOA volunteers completed building project number 1,500. They have built and/or remodeled churches, schools, orphanages, clinics, and parsonages in 76 countries and 48 states. We thank God for their tireless efforts. 

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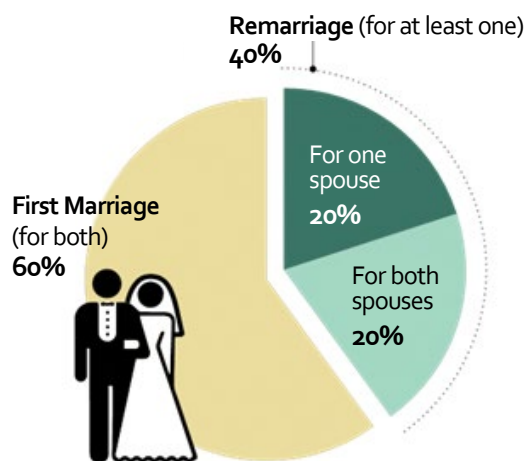
REMARRIAGES RISING

REMARRIAGE IS ON the rise in the U.S. Four in ten new marriages include at least one partner who has been married before, reports the Pew Research Center. The number of adults who have ever remarried now stands at 42 million—a threefold increase since 1960.

Men who have recently remarried are more likely than those beginning a first marriage to have a spouse who is younger; in many cases, she is much younger. Some 20% of men who are newly remarried have a wife who is at least 10 years their junior, and another 18% married a woman who is 6 to 9 years younger. By comparison, just 5% of newlywed men in their first marriage have a spouse who is 10 years younger, and 10% married a woman who is 6 to 9 years younger.

Four-in-Ten New Marriages Involve Remarriage

Percentage of new marriages in 2013



Note: "New Marriages" are marriages that began in the past 12 months. A first marriage is one in which neither spouse has been previously married. A remarriage includes at least one spouse who has been married before. Based on couples where at least one spouse is age 18 or older.

SOURCE: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013 American Community Survey

WHO SHOULD DEFINE AND REGULATE MARRIAGE?

SHOULD CLERGY divorce themselves from civil marriage? Such a church-state split—already endorsed by some Catholic and evangelical leaders—is showing popularity in two LifeWay Research surveys of 2,000 American adults released in December.

- 59% say marriage should not be "defined and regulated by the state."
- 49% say, "Religious weddings should not be connected to the state's definition and recognition of marriage."
- 36% say clergy should "no longer be involved in the state's licensing of marriage." More than half (53%), however, disagree.

Those most likely to favor a split between religious weddings and government or civil marriage include 54% of men, 53% of Catholics, and 45% of Protestants.



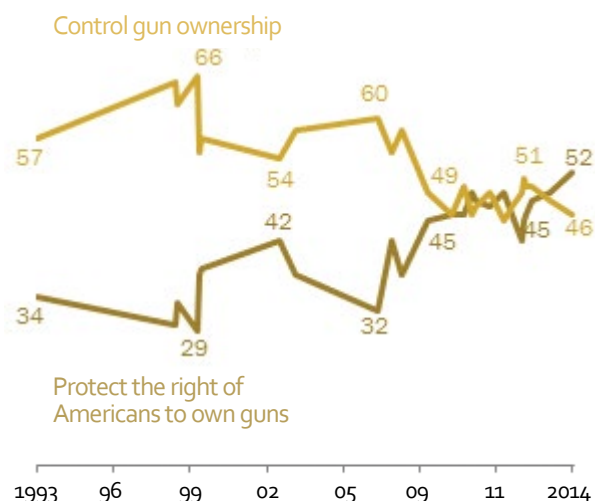
GROWING SUPPORT FOR GUNS

FOR THE FIRST TIME in more than two decades of Pew Research Center surveys, there is more support for gun rights than gun control. Currently, 52% say it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns, while 46% say it is more important to control gun ownership.

Support for gun rights over gun control marks a substantial shift in attitudes since shortly after the 2012 Newtown, Connecticut, school shootings.

Two Years After Newtown, A Shift in Favor of Gun Rights

Percentage saying it is more important to . . .



SOURCE: Pew Research Center. Survey conducted Dec. 3-7, 2014



CONFRONTING RACIAL PREJUDICE

AT AGE 10, I was a minority white in the South Seminole Baseball League. Just two of my fellow Angels were white, and one was black. The other eight were Cuban-Americans. I would feel out of place only when the majority talked to each other in Spanish.

Meanwhile, at Edison Elementary School, I was part of the white majority. There were some Hispanic students, but no blacks were allowed—they had their own schools.

The black kids also had their own Little League—Belmont Heights. In 1969, when our South Seminole All-Stars lost to them, I remember the whispers of prejudice: *Look how big some of those Belmont Heights boys are—they've got to be older than 12. Somebody must have doctored birth certificates.*

Such chatter reinforced the demeaning jokes containing the “n” word that I sometimes heard growing up in Tampa.

During my sixth-grade year at Edison, segregated schools were outlawed, and my family and I received a letter saying I would be bused across the city for seventh grade. Instead, we moved an hour north to a small town where schools were already integrated.

In eighth grade, sadly, my first black teacher reinforced negative stereotypes. He did not teach us much science, but I remember his off-color remarks made with a wink.

In high school, however, Coach Larry Wright was a black man who became one of my favorite teachers. During my public-school education, he was the only teacher I can remember who openly identified himself as a Christian. He backed up his claim with his actions and language (even on the football field when the white coaches were cussing).

One black teammate, called “Two-ray,” decided he would bully me. Meanwhile, I became friends with another black peer,

Jimmy, who was a benchwarmer like me. Jimmy and I also worked together bagging groceries at the Kash n’ Karry.

What’s the point of all this? As a youth, my relationships with blacks, as well as with whites (teachers and peers alike) were both positive and negative. However, there was instilled a prejudice regarding blacks. A black person was prejudged to be a less serious student, a less diligent worker, and/or less articulate than a white person . . . until he or she proved otherwise.

**WE MUST ASK
GOD TO REFORM
OUR HEARTS
CONCERNING
PEOPLE WHO LOOK
DIFFERENT FROM US.**

Such thinking still exists.

For example, my second daughter, Allison, is married to a young black man, Kevin. They are serving together in youth and children’s ministry in northern Virginia. Before they were hired, one potential pastor in a different state asked me about Kevin, “Is he a lazy black?” (Thankfully, they never went to that church for an interview.)

During Allison and Kevin’s engagement, we talked about challenges they might face as a biracial couple. Yet, I said the most important factor was their following God’s will.


Yes, I realize some people have distorted 2 Corinthians 6:14—“Be ye not unequally yoked”—to argue against interracial marriage, but that scripture is strictly addressing relationships between believers and unbelievers. Besides, there are no “unequals” within the family of God. Paul said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither

male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28 NASB).

Affirming what the Bible teaches about oneness in the body of Christ is the starting line in dealing with prejudice. Yet, we need more than intellectual assent to help us overcome stereotypes that have shaped us. Whether we are black, brown, or white, we must ask God to reform our hearts concerning people who look different from us.

Consider the ancient hatred between the Samaritans—a mixed-race people with a hybrid religion—and the Jews. When a Samaritan village refused lodging to Jesus, two of His disciples asked Him, “Do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them” (Luke 9:54-55 NIV).

After being filled with the Holy Spirit, Philip the evangelist broke through that wall of prejudice by preaching in Samaria, where many were saved, healed, and delivered. “And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). Then the Lord sent Philip down a desert road to minister to a lone black man sitting in a chariot, where more rejoicing took place after the Ethiopian accepted Christ and was baptized.

Will we, like Philip, allow the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with divine love that tears down our prejudices and produces smile-making miracles? 

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THE PURPOSE OF **CURRENTS** IS TO INFORM READERS OF TRENDS AND EVENTS INFLUENCING THE CULTURE.



Clergy and staff from across Missouri gather at a payday loan shop in Jefferson City to pray for efforts to cap the rate lenders can charge. The average annual percentage rate in the state is 444 percent.

FAITH LEADERS FIGHTING EXORBITANT LOANS

■ DOZENS OF faith leaders and consumer advocates are pressing Congress to create a national interest-rate cap for payday lenders instead of the exorbitant three-digit rates currently charged to people in several states.

Eighty activists from 22 states came to Washington in hopes of shaping new regulations that are expected from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Many of their congregations are surrounded by payday-loan businesses that they say prey on poor residents by charging high-interest rates and creating a cycle of debt.

"Together, you guys are really bringing a strong message and a light and a moral perspective about predatory lending that's valuable," said Rachel Anderson, director of faith-based outreach for the Center for Responsible Lending, which spearheaded a three-day visit and training session for religious leaders on Capitol Hill. "We hope that your message is heard strongly."

The leaders asked members of Congress on November 19 to pass legislation capping interest rates, citing a 36 percent interest cap required by the Military Lending Act.

"If it's fair for the military, we felt it should be fair for all people," said the Rev. Susan McCann of Grace Episcopal Church in Liberty, Missouri.

Stephen Reeves, with the Georgia-based Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said a cap would eliminate "creative loopholes" used by the payday-loan industry.

"That's the solution—to make these funds affordable and attainable, where the trap is not set for the members of our communities and our churches," he said.

The Community Financial Services Association of America, which represents payday lenders, rejects charges of preying on poor and minority communities, saying payday lenders "provide services to a broad cross section of Americans because there is widespread demand." They say "payday-advance customers are typical hardworking adults who may not have savings or disposable income to use as a safety net when unexpected expenses occur."

In October, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) issued a statement calling on payday lenders to offer products that "do not exploit poor and vulnerable borrowers" and urged the CFPB to investigate abuses.

NAE Vice President Galen Carey said consumers like him may have access to a 3.5 percent interest rate through a credit union, but others do not. "That sort of resource is not available to all people, and so that's why we need to have other provisions," he said.—RNS

WEDDINGS LIFTING UP CHRIST

■ WHEN BRIANNA and Chris Lindsay married last June, they had the church, the minister, the bridesmaids . . . and a foot-washing ceremony for the bride and groom. It was, they said, a sign of their mutual submission.

"First, he took off both of my shoes and we had a water basin and pitcher," said the bride, recalling the five-minute ceremony during which a friend read a poem about the couple. "In return, I got down in my dress, took off his socks. . . . It probably was a little awkward for us—maybe a little—but we felt like it was an important message to show people."

In an age of big-ticket destination weddings and reality-show "bridezillas," some evangelical Christians are opting for what writer Catherine Strode Parks calls *A Christ-Centered Wedding*. Her new book details ways brides and grooms can fill their wedding with biblical touches to reinforce for friends and family the centrality of their faith.

"If we really believe that marriage is important, and that God infused it with so much meaning, then we want to share that joy with those who are present and invite them into that celebration and that worship," said Parks, who co-wrote the book with her mother, Linda Strode.

At her own 2005 wedding to Erik, their fathers—both evangelical pastors—co-officiated, and she and her husband were encircled by their family in prayer while some friends sang the hymn "Take My Life, and Let It Be."

Looking back, she wishes she'd done more to shift attention away from them

Ian and Larissa Murphy with their wedding party (photo courtesy of Lydia Jane Photography)

as a couple and focused more on God—like stepping back and joining the congregation in praise and worship, as a relative did at a wedding last year.

When Jennifer and Sean Perron married in 2012, their wedding represented the sacrifice of Jesus—with 10 bridesmaids wearing blood-red dresses and the bride wearing white, which symbolized the “pure, spotless righteousness” of Jesus.

“We wanted to exalt the picture of marriage being a reflection of Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and return—the Messiah leading His people into the romance of eternal salvation,” Jennifer Perron, a Southern Baptist who lives in Louisville, Kentucky, explained in an email. “Nothing But the Blood of Jesus’ was sung and is a huge reality in our life, wedding, and marriage.”

In their Baltimore wedding, Mia and Antonio Bailey included a liturgical dancer and walked down the aisle to praise and worship music as a message to their African-American friends and family about the importance of marriage. Mia



said, “Living in a *Love and Hip Hop* culture where marriage doesn’t hold the same sanctity as it once did among our ancestors, we felt an obligation to make Christ the center of our ceremony.”

Larissa and Ian Murphy, who married in 2010 after he experienced a traumatic brain injury in a car accident, chose to focus on heaven in their outdoor ceremony in northeastern Pennsylvania. Their minister read from evangelical author John Piper’s book *This Momentary Marriage*. Wedding guests sang the Matt Redman worship song that quotes the psalm

“Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.”

Although ministers have long included messages of faith within their sermons, some are encouraging couples to make sure their vows reflect a strong stance on maintaining their commitment to each other.

“I will have them actually say as part of their vows, ‘I will never divorce you,’” said J. D. Greear, a North Carolina megachurch pastor. “It’s demonstrating God’s love, and God does not divorce us when we disappoint Him.” —Adelle M. Banks (RNS)

TALIBAN INSURGENTS DEVASTATE FAMILY

■ THREE ARMED Taliban insurgents swept into a Kabul (Afghanistan) guesthouse on November 29, murdering three South Africans and two Afghans in the compound of an international aid agency in the Afghan capital. Werner Groenewald and his two teenage children were murdered in the guesthouse where they lived in Kabul’s western Karte Seh district, along with an Afghan employee of their small aid organization, Partnership in Academics and Development (PAD). Another Afghan man visiting the compound at the time was also shot dead.

Dr. Hannelie Groenewald, the wife and mother of the South African victims, returned home late that Saturday afternoon from her work at a medical clinic to find her family’s bullet-ridden bodies being loaded onto ambulances. They included her son

Jean-Pierre (17) and daughter Rode (15).

The attackers had set the house ablaze, leaving her with only the clothes she was wearing and destroying all the family’s documents and other possessions.

When the militants were finally cornered by Afghan forces, one attacker detonated his suicide vest, and the other two were shot and killed.



Werner and Hannelie Groenewald

In a Twitter message from Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid, the strictly Islamist insurgents fighting for political control of Afghanistan claimed that the PAD compound housed “a secret Christian missionary group.” But Riana Du Plessis—the sister of Hannelie—said, “They thought Werner was a missionary trying to convert Muslims to Christians, but Werner was not. He was an aid worker there to uplift Afghanistan.”

On his LinkedIn profile, Groenewald had written, “Wherever I can, I try to influence positive change. I find great peace in the knowledge that I have contributed to someone else’s advancement in life.”

Groenewald was the local director of PAD’s educational projects in Afghanistan. A former pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church, he and his family had lived in Afghanistan since August 2003.

—World Watch Monitor

BY WANDA GRIFFITH

SHE NEVER GAVE UP

WILMA CARTER PLACED HER ALCOHOLIC HUSBAND IN GOD'S HANDS.

WILMA AND CHARLIE Carter radiate with the joy of the Lord and their love for each other, which might lead you to believe their married life has been filled with many years of “happily ever after.” Truth is, the Carters have had the best of times . . . and the worst of times.

Wilma and Charlie grew up in the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area, where Charlie was president of his class four years straight and a star basketball player at City High. At Central High, Wilma was chosen “May Queen” and voted “Most Talented” in her class.

FAMILY, FEAR, AND FAITH

After they married, and just like in his basketball years, Charlie was an aggressive leader who owned four different businesses at one time. Without a Christian background, he focused on his business ventures while Wilma became a stay-at-home mom. A good provider, Charlie made sure their three sons had the best education Chattanooga had to offer by enrolling them in private schools—Chuck at Notre Dame, and Chris and Chad at Baylor School.

Life was good . . . but fear overcame Wilma when Israel's Six-Day War broke out in 1967. “I just knew it was the end of the world,” she said. “Even though I had been baptized as a 12-year-old and believed Jesus was the Son of God, a personal relationship with Him was not mine to claim.”

One day she heard the Lord ask her, “Where would you go if it was the end of time?” Not being able to answer that question truthfully, she called the pastor of the Methodist church in her neighborhood to pray with her.

“Gently and lovingly he explained God's grace and mercy and the reason for my misery. He prayed with me, but peace did not come. When he left, I went into the bathroom, knelt beside the commode [where else can a mother of two small boys go for privacy?], and poured my heart out to God. When I came out of that bathroom, a new day had begun, and my life of sacrifice was just beginning!”

“WALKING ON EGGSHELLS”

“Charlie drank beer when we were first married,” Wilma said, “but I didn't think much about it because my dad drank, and I thought it was probably what everyone did.”

Growing up, Charlie's entire family drank, so it seemed normal to him. However, Charlie moved from beer to hard liquor. He said, “You do not begin as an addict, but one drink leads to another, and before you realize it, you are addicted.”

To be close to Wilma's parents, the Carters moved to Sand Mountain in northeast Alabama. Charlie's quest for success grew, along with his thirst for alcohol. Soon

Charlie's drinking became intolerable. Their oldest son, Chuck, ran away from home in his senior year of high school, and Wilma and the other boys “walked on eggshells,” trying to survive as a family. Though it was difficult, Wilma never gave up. She continued her faith walk with the Lord and took the boys to church.

By 1981, their home life was so bad that Wilma contacted an attorney to discuss the possibility of getting a divorce. “But God's hand was present even in the attorney I chose,” Wilma said. “He was a Spirit-filled Christian whom God would use to turn my thinking around. His counsel was sobering as he suggested that I was better off in the home where I had the covering of my husband. Even if Charlie was an alcoholic and verbally abusive, he had never been physically abusive to the boys and me, and he had always worked hard to provide for us.



Wilma
and
Charlie
Carter

"The attorney gave me a book, *How to Live With an Alcoholic and Win*. One question in the book asked, 'Why do you want your spouse to quit drinking? Are you more concerned about the hell he is living in or the hell he is putting you through?'"

In prayer, Wilma was pressed to answer which was more important—her misery or Charlie's? Finally, she admitted it was the misery he was creating for her and the boys that weighed the most. She realized if they died, she would be with the Lord but Charlie would not. "I had to repent and confess to my prayer group at church that my husband was an alcoholic and we needed prayer."

BREAKTHROUGH

Wilma continued to pray for Charlie. In August 1981, the Lord sent an evangelist to their store on Sand Mountain and asked Charlie if he could set up a gospel tent on his property. Charlie agreed because he thought people would want to buy soft drinks and candy after the services. On the third night of the tent revival, Charlie slipped inside and sat on the back row. After witnessing the healing of one of his customers, Charlie responded to the invitation with tears streaming down his face.

The evangelist told Charlie, "I see you with a Bud Light beer can. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Yes, that's what I drink," Charlie said. The evangelist prayed with him, and he was gloriously saved and delivered. Charlie has been serving the Lord since that night and has never again had the desire to drink.

Charlie was a new man—a work of God's grace. His language changed immediately and he desired to be with God's people. Charlie's love for the Lord inspired him to become a cheerful giver, and he could not give enough of his time and material blessings to the work of the Lord.

FINANCIAL STRUGGLES AND BLESSINGS

When recession hit the nation in 1982, no amount of hard work could save the businesses Charlie had built. The Carters lost everything—their businesses, their home, the land they had purchased, and their cars.



Friends gave them enough money to move back to Chattanooga that October, where they rented a small rental house. Charlie went to Baylor during the Christmas break to tell the headmaster they had lost everything and he would be taking his sons out of school. The headmaster said that would not happen. Knowing the talent and leadership abilities of Chris and Chad, he made sure they would remain at Baylor on scholarship—tuition free! (They both eventually graduated from Baylor, where each received the H. L. Stagmaier Leadership Award.)

On December 24, 1982, there was no Christmas tree and no food in the Carters' pantry, but after reading Hebrews 13:15—"Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God" (NKJV)—Wilma began to praise God for providing their needs. Soon the other family members joined in and they were having a worship service in their living room.

At 10:00 p.m., the doorbell rang. Several couples they had met before moving to Sand Mountain had sent them nine bags of groceries, including a huge country ham with all the trimmings for a Christmas feast, and a bag of chocolate chips to make cookies for the boys.

"It looked like I had given them a grocery list," commented Wilma. "Only the Holy Spirit could orchestrate such a perfect supply of our favorite foods. We knew God had our new address and had sent us a Christmas Eve miracle."

Charlie filed for bankruptcy in 1983, relying on odd jobs and divine provision for three years until he found a steady job. Wilma worked at Eaves Formal Wear, measuring and cleaning tuxedos, to help buy groceries.

ADVICE AND PRAISE

"I learned to take so many steps of faith during those difficult years of praying for Charlie and the years following his conversion," Wilma said. "God taught me to pray about situations because I cannot change anyone or anything. If I place everything in His capable hands, He will answer in due season."

"My advice to the spouse of an addict is this: Do not try to cover it up. Be honest about the problem and seek counsel and prayer. Find a support group of strong Christians to encourage you along the way. Stay in the Word and in church."

Wilma and Charlie now live in Ooltewah, Tennessee, and are faithful members of The Crossing, a Church of God congregation. Their pastor, Terry L. Harris, said, "Charlie and Wilma are the kind of members that all pastors wish they could clone. They are prayerful, positive, polite, and purposeful. They always have the church's best interest in mind. They genuinely love, understand, and care for people." 🕊

Wanda Griffith is a writer, teacher, speaker, and singer who lives in Cleveland, Tennessee. wlgriiffith@bellsouth.net



BY CRAIG & AMY
GROESCHEL

LOOKING FOR “THE ONE”

BECOME THE KIND OF PERSON YOU WOULD LIKE TO MARRY.

IN OUR CULTURE, everybody knows about “the one.”

Romantic comedies, “successful” celebrity relationships, online dating sites, even most of our friends, are constantly repeating this message: “All you have to do to be genuinely fulfilled is to find ‘the one.’ Once you do, everything will be rainbows and hearts and flowers and love songs from then on.”

So even as Christians, we spend a lot of time before marriage searching for that one perfect soul mate. We even reinforce our quest with Scripture. You’re probably familiar with that “seek and you will find” verse. You know, the one in Matthew 7:7-8 where Jesus says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (NIV).

You may even have it memorized. If you’re a single follower of Christ still looking for that special someone, maybe you even pray it every day with genuine sincerity: “Jesus, You said I could ask for whatever I want and it will be given to me. You said that if I seek, I’ll find, and that if I ask, I’ll receive. So Lord, this is me asking: Please send me that person who will complete me. You *promised*. So now You have to do it! Also, thanks. Amen.”

I mean, everybody knows that you can’t truly be happy in this life until you’ve met “the one,” right? If you’re a Christian who’s not yet married, you’ve probably already been seeking that one person who you’re just certain can meet your needs. They’re your future spouse—they just don’t know it yet. And if you’re married, all you want is for the spouse you already have to just step up once and for all and meet all those needs you expected them

to. (Why are they so stubborn, anyway? Why won’t they just do what you want so you can finally be happy?)

You know the story: Boy meets girl. Boy sees girl is pretty. Boy notices that girl’s hair smells good. Boy’s mind is blown. “She’s the one!”

Of course, girls are much more sophisticated than that. She starts a mass text exchange with all her girlfriends immediately after that first magical date: “OMGosh! So sweet! His eyes are amazing and you can tell he works out!” And what’s the one thing they *always* say? “We just talked and talked and talked for hours! It felt like we could talk forever!” (Enjoy that while it lasts, ladies.) “He completes me. I just know he’s the one!”

If you’re already married, maybe you’ve prayed that same Bible verse, only slightly modified: “Jesus, You said I could ask for

anything I wanted, and that if I asked, I'd receive. I honestly thought this person You sent me was the one. Now I'm not so sure anymore. But I'm asking You: Please change my spouse into the person I know they *could* be, someone who can complete me. I sure hope You're listening. Amen."

Usually, even when you think you've found "the one," it doesn't take long to question whether he or she really is the one. Things seemed to go well enough at first but then began to unravel. In the long run, finding that special one seems as impossible as panning for gold in the ocean. Why is that? Why does the one never seem to really be the one we were looking for?

I'm convinced there's a simple reason. While it's true that you *do* need to find that "one" to be truly complete, another *person* can never be "the one."

Just once I would love to hear somebody say, "I just met someone awesome and godly! We have so much fun together. We have this amazing spiritual bond. You know, I think I might have just met 'the two!'" Why? Because to really be fulfilled in life, you do have to meet the One.

Here's the catch: God is your One. Your spouse is your two.

YOUR ONE AND ONLY

Usually, when I address the single people at my church, I have them raise their hands. Then I have them look around and see if there's anybody else with their hand raised that they might consider a possibility. I really hope that one day—say, 19 or 20 years from now—I start getting graduation announcements from kids at my church named Craig because I helped their parents find each other.

If you're not married yet, but you hope to be one day, I'd like you to commit to this. I suggest you even write it down and maybe tape it on the mirror in your bathroom or in your car—just someplace you'll

see it every day: "I will seek the One while I prepare for my two."

If you're not married and you follow Christ, then, above anything else, you should honor God. You should love Him, seek Him, get to know Him, seek to please Him, and live by His Spirit. You should structure your life so that everything you do brings glory to God. Don't seek a spouse. Instead, seek God's kingdom and His righteousness. When you do that first, according to Matthew 6:33, God will give you everything else you need.

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The challenge is that a lot of the single people who consider themselves Christians in our culture today believe they can just put off "the God thing" until they're older. They figure they'll have plenty of time to focus on that later in life, convincing themselves that those things don't really matter much while they're young.

Single people often seem to think, *One day I'll get married, and then I'll get my family in on that whole church thing. But for now, I really just want to have some fun. I'm going to hit a few clubs and try to meet lots of different people. Sure, I might be jumping around from person to person now—and maybe some people might even consider my life sort of shallow or "ungodly" or whatever—but I can always take care of my spiritual business later.*

This lifestyle attitude has become quite common, and it's incredibly dangerous, preventing you from finding the kind of person you truly want to marry.


SOMEONE LIKE YOU

Here's a very simple principle you can take to the bank: It doesn't matter what you *want*; like attracts like. If you hope to have a godly marriage one day, you need to start living a godly life today.

Become the kind of person you would like to marry.

If the kind of person you want is someone who's had 18 different sex partners, then by all means, go right ahead and be that person yourself. Only remember: If you do the same things everybody else does, your odds of a lasting marriage will be about the same as everybody else's: 50-50. Your odds of a meaningful marriage will be much less. If you want something different from what everybody else has, then you're going to have to do something different than what everybody else does.

If you want a spouse who's sold out to Christ, then you need to devote yourself to Christ. If you want someone who seeks God daily in every area of their life, then you need to start pursuing God daily. If you're single and you want to be married one day, become the kind of person you would like to marry.

I will seek the One while I prepare for my two. 

Craig Groeschel is the founding and lead pastor of LifeChurch.tv in Edmond, Oklahoma, where his wife, **Amy**, leads the church's women's ministry and home-educates their six children.

This article is excerpted from their book *From This Day Forward: Five Commitments to Fail-Proof Your Marriage* (copyright © 2014 by Craig Groeschel). Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com/from-this-day-forward



BY RICK WHITTER

GRANDPARENTS NEEDED

AS THE GRANDFATHER of the most wonderful grandchildren on earth (apologies to all you other grandparents), there is nothing better than spending time with these little blessings from heaven!

However, what about when grandparents are separated from their grandkids by many miles? How can the church address the unique challenges these families experience?

For a variety of reasons, families have spread out across the country and the world. It is becoming less common to see three generations of one family attending church together. This phenomenon leaves many of these families without the benefit of spiritual influence of older generations.

The authors of *Grandparents/Grandchildren: The Vital Connection* say this bond is vital because “grandparents serve as role models, purveyors of family histories and experiences, and caretakers” (Kornhaber and Woodward). Grandparents can help

bring up children in “the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4 NIV). When grandparents are separated by geography from their children and grandchildren, important elements of family spiritual life may be missing.

The issue of geographically divided families arose at a Florida church where I served as lead pastor for eight years. The congregation was generationally diverse, but only a few of the families had more than two generations living in the area and attending the same church. Many senior citizens had migrated south to retire, while some young families had moved to south Florida for the amenities. Because the church was comprised mostly of individual families and senior citizens who were unrelated to anyone nearby, we faced unique challenges for family ministry.

Grandparents separated from their grandchildren sometimes felt lonely and isolated. Young parents lacked an immediate source of counsel on how to raise their

children. Children had an insufficient number of spiritual examples to follow.

These families did not have the advantage of building on the foundation prepared by the previous generations. As a result, the general spiritual condition of the families suffered. Paul’s observation about Timothy’s family is pertinent: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5 NIV). Families have the responsibility to provide spiritual support from one generation to the next. When this structure is missing, the spiritual condition of each generation is weakened.

Local churches can address the issue by starting a system of spiritual grandparenting. Church leaders can design an arrangement where godly senior citizens are paired with young families who are without grandparents. The elders can be available for interaction with the children, advice

for the parents, and general family-style interaction. The seniors will also be served by having fewer hours alone and being respected for the wisdom they possess.

The holidays could provide special times of interaction together. Family picnics, day trips to the zoo, and storybook time are all opportunities for the generations to engage. Imagine the joy for everyone if “Grandpa Don” would teach young Jacob and Emma how to catch a fish!

In 1986, the Church of God adopted a resolution regarding aging adults:

Be it resolved that the Church of God give added attention to this segment of our population; that we structure programs to help minister to the needs of the aged; and that we encourage all local congregations to be especially aware of the plight of those saints who have contributed so much to us during the past years.

In a 1998 resolution, the Church of God also recognized the responsibility of the


church toward parents: "Be it further resolved that we intensify our efforts to support and equip parents for their role as the primary caregivers and teachers of children and youth."

These resolutions recognize the church's responsibility to all families, and they encourage a structure that would accommodate a spiritual grandparent ministry.

The concept of spiritual grandparents is not new. Lawrence DeWolf wrote of the positions that Simeon and Anna assumed with Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus upon His presentation in the Temple (*Presbyterian Record*). While we are unaware of a continued relationship between these elders and the family, we do see them playing a vital role on that special day (Luke 2:25-38).

A modern-day application could be spiritual grandparents standing with the family on the day of baby dedication. The principle stated in 2 Timothy 2:2 could serve as an infrastructure for a spiritual grandparents ministry: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (NIV).

What one spiritual generation learns from God should be shared with future generations so all generations are blessed. We should seek wisdom and counsel from those who have gone before us. We should willingly share with others the spiritual principles we have learned. A spiritual-grandparenting ministry could help to provide a framework for these types of relationships.

The problem of families divided by geography will not dissipate. The ramifications of this problem will continue to provide spiritual challenges for them as well as the church. Therefore, the church should be intentional about providing a meaningful and effective ministry that allows spiritual grandparents, children, and grandchildren to connect as the family of God. 

Rick Whitter is administrative bishop for the Church of God in Minnesota. rickwhitter@gmail.com

GRANNY NANNY

The benefits of multigenerational living outweigh the burdens.

by Tom Ehrlich

FOR ONE YEAR, my wife and I are living 2,700 miles apart.

She lives in a one-bedroom apartment in San Mateo, California—south of San Francisco. Each weekday she walks two blocks to the home of our middle son and his wife, where she cares for their 9-month-old son.

"Granny nanny" is what they call this phenomenon. Once maternity and paternity leaves expire, grandparents across the country are moving close to their adult children, maybe into their homes, to provide child care so both parents can pursue their careers.

A six-hour plane ride away, I am back in our Manhattan apartment, where our youngest son, age 23, is living at home until he lands a job in the worst job-finding environment since the Great Depression.

Our oldest son, meanwhile, is adapting his country house to become a multigenerational household next year, when my wife returns east. I have already had a taste of caring for their 8-month-old daughter, and it is wonderful.

It seems we have joined a growing trend toward sharing living space: three generations (grandparents, parents, and children) or two generations (parents and adult children).

Once common in America, and still common in most of the world, multigenerational households fell out of favor in the years after World War II. Prosperity made it unnecessary on financial grounds, and new suburbs catered to "nuclear families," not extended families.

The financial picture has changed, as more young adults marry later and find it difficult to get launched in careers, and as older adults live longer on reduced retirement incomes.

Child-rearing is changing, too. Soaring costs for housing and education make two incomes necessary. Daycare can be expensive, often canceling out one partner's paycheck, and difficult to find, such as the one-year waiting list that required my wife's temporary move.

This rediscovery of the

multigenerational household is not exactly new. Pew Research reported in 2010, "Since bottoming out around 1980, the multigenerational family household has mounted a comeback."

What I see is that, in addition to hardship factors like job losses, many families are choosing the multigenerational household for social and personal benefits. They want a child reared by family, for example, rather than daycare and afterschool care. They want grandparents around to share the load of home duties, such as cooking and property maintenance, while young parents pursue careers. They want to provide an alternative to nursing homes when late-in-life aging kicks in.

Years before our children were married or siring, my wife and I built the "house of our dreams" in Durham, North Carolina, with multigenerational living in mind: a master bedroom suite on the first floor, bedrooms and a living room on the second floor, multiple options for entertainment and home-office space.

We were not alone. On our four-house cul-de-sac, a young couple was caring for her parents, one with Alzheimer's, and an older couple bought a house for their adult daughter to share with them.

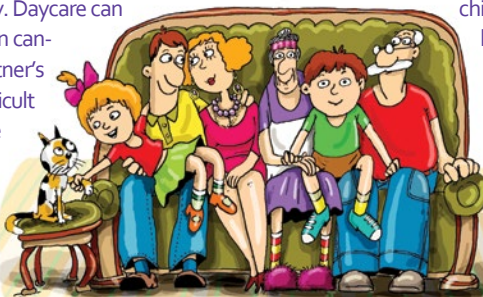
Immigrant families, meanwhile, are maintaining the multigenerational expectation they brought with them, Pew reports.

Based on my experience thus far, multigenerational living requires patience—never my strong suit—and clear boundaries in parenting and in space. It helps to have enough rooms to escape each other.

As early Christians discovered in their bold experiment in communal living, multigenerational living requires putting the other first, not oneself; approaching decisions with humility; an attitude of gratitude; and paying special attention to the vulnerable. These, of course, are countercultural values, but God is in them.

The good news? The benefits far outweigh the burdens. No one has to do it all. Young children are surrounded by love. So are we all.

Tom Ehrlich is a writer, church consultant, and Episcopal priest based in New York. He is the president of Morning Walk Media. morningwalkmedia.com





BY DARIS HOWARD

Toddlers AND WHITE CARPET

REMEMBERING WHAT REALLY MATTERS

WORKED FOR two years on our new addition: a 500-square-foot sunken living room with a foyer and a half bath.

After two years of hard work, smashed fingers, lots of cuts and scrapes, and a nasty fall, I was finally ready for the carpet. The color was up to my wife, since I'm still trying to understand why pink and red don't go together. When I get my two youngest daughters dressed for church, my wife usually has to redress them for proper color coordination.

My wife had this wonderful dream of a living room where everything was always perfect when company dropped by. Forgetting that we have children, she chose a nice, off-white carpet. When I questioned her color choice, she said, "It will be all right. We won't allow the children to take food into that room."

I started to tell her I had also heard a good joke, but I held my tongue, and the carpet installer came a few days later. I have to admit the carpet was beautiful; it made the room look elegant. If only we could have afforded furniture!

Our children were happy in this new room with its great expanse. They would endlessly roll and play on the carpet. Then, one day when I came home from work, 2-year-old Elliana and 3-year-old Heather met me at the door. One held a blue marker; the other, a red one.

"Daddy! Daddy!" Heather said excitedly. "Come see the picture we made!"

They slipped their hands into mine, and we walked into the house. As I stepped into the foyer, Heather pointed at the new room and said, "Didn't we do good?"

The new white carpet now had the biggest blue-and-red smiley face I had ever seen . . . or at least what was supposed to be a smiley face. The drawing stretched about 10 feet in diameter, reaching across most of the room.

I know I should have looked at my two smiling angels and said, "What a nice smiley you have drawn! My, you definitely have art careers ahead of you!" Instead, what came out was more like a strangled scream.

My wife quickly appeared to see what caused my consternation, and she gasped. She looked like she was about to cry.

After conspicuously confiscating the offending markers and making sure all others were out of reach, I got some carpet cleaner and some old towels and started scrubbing. I grumbled audibly as I worked for four or five hours that evening, even skipping dinner. My wife suggested renting a steam cleaner.

"Why would I need to do that?" I grumbled. "I'm already a steamed cleaner!"

At bedtime, Heather and Elliana approached me cautiously, a book in

hand. Our nightly routine was for me to read them a story, coach them on brushing their teeth, help them say their prayers, and tuck them into bed. But this night, as I was finishing up the carpet cleaning, I gruffly told them they would have to skip a story.

Seeing how upset I was, they did not argue. By the time their teeth were brushed, the carpet showed only the faintest outline of a smiley face.


As Heather prayed, she said, ". . . and help Daddy not be mad and still love us."

Suddenly I felt like a heel, and the colored carpet paled in significance with what really mattered.

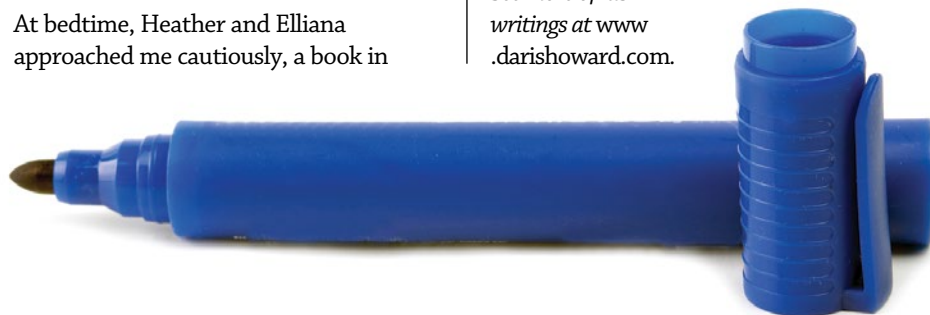
"Sweetheart," I said to Heather, "your daddy will always love you."

"No matter what?" she said as tears glistened her eyes.

"No matter what," I answered.

As my two little girls sniffled softly, I pulled them onto my lap. I figured they needed a hug. I know I did. 

Daris Howard lives in St. Anthony, Idaho. See more of his writings at www.darishoward.com.



globalCONNECT

A monthly update from the world of Missions



TIM HILL
Director



JOHN CHILDERS
Assistant Director

They Say Yes!

World Missions honors its heroes during the "Year of the Missionary."

From the Director

Recognizing the men and women who serve in 178 countries outside North America, World Missions Director Tim Hill and Assistant Director John D. Childers have designated 2015 the "Year of the Missionary." Special activities and benefits are planned throughout the year and leading up to the 2016 General Assembly.

Knowing that since 1988 Church of God missionaries have been responsible for raising their entire ministry and operational budgets, World Missions leadership desired to make a tangible and meaningful difference this year. In an earlier interview Hill stated, "The World Missions Board has fully endorsed a number of measures that I hope will bring financial relief to our Career Missionaries this year. My greatest desire however, is that through this emphasis missionaries are affirmed in their calling and embraced as never before by a caring denomination."

Beginning with a Christmas bonus that was totally funded through World Missions, there will be other financial and encouraging blessings throughout the year. Birthday gifts and a one-time stipend to be applied to the ever-rising cost of missionary medical insurance are among the items approved recently by the World Missions Board.

"These stalwart champions of the Cross are the church's outposts, far from home," said Director Hill, "and they deserve particular attention and care. World Missions wants to remind the church in the United States how exceptional and distinctive these missionary servants are, and how deserving of our recognition."

The Missions executive leadership team has set up weekly Skype sessions, contacting missionaries periodically to discuss their accomplishments and challenges. Additionally, an arrangement is being established that allows field personnel to contact medical professionals in the United States by email, telephone, or Skype to deal with health issues. Dr. Allen Tyson, son of Missionary Frankie Tyson, is assisting with the program, which will involve eight physicians and dentists as consultants.

"These personal and financial actions represent expressions of our sincere appreciation of men and women who are sometimes—unfortunately—forgotten and neglected," Hill observed. "We know missions supporters will be with us 100 percent as we take care of the ones who have said 'Yes' to the Great Commission." ■



Global Connect
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WORLD MISSIONS LEADERSHIP

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Five Minutes a Week with Missions

"Hearing news of what's happening on the mission field, seeing a real, live missionary talk about his or her work, I can almost imagine being there with them!"

This was the enthusiastic response of a new fan of GlobalConnect via the Internet. Each week a brief video report originates from the World Missions offices in which highlights from the work of Missions are presented in a news desk format, missionaries appear personally to greet viewers, and World Missions Director Tim Hill shares a one-minute message.

The video report, full of news and inspiration, generally lasts less than five minutes. To view a sample report, visit www.cogwm.org, click on "Media," and open the current newscast. A button at the top says, "Sign up for Email." There is no charge for the service. ■

First Church In Cambodia

The new church in Cambodia uses an architectural style popular in the nation.

Villagers celebrate the completion of Cambodia's first Church of God building.

When a group of American pastors visited Cambodia a year ago, one of their favorite stops was Takam Village, a small rural community where People for Care and Learning (PCL) operates a farm that teaches people how to maximize the use of their land. Takam was also the site of one of the first Bible study locations in the country.

For several years, the people who have become Christians in the village have met each Sunday under the home of the Cambodian pastor, at times gathering crowds nearing 100. Although it has served their purpose, it is too small and in the rainy season is totally inadequate.

The pastor and the Cambodian brother who works closely with missionary Isaac Lutz, the farm manager, had prepared a presentation for the Americans—unknown beforehand by PCL leaders. They pointed out a piece of land adjacent to the village, showed a handmade drawing depicting how the property might accommodate a church building, a pastoral residence, a fellowship area, and an adjoining fish pond that would provide income for the church.

The visiting pastors immediately caught the vision. One of them spontaneously offered to buy the plot of ground, another pledged money to build the church, and on it went, until the total project was subscribed. Although house churches exist in several locations in the country, the Takam congregation is the first to have its own structure. Missionary Julie Martinez, the country director, is now seeking funds to outfit the building with seats, sound system, and other needs. The building already houses the worshipping congregation.

Takam Church of God will be officially dedicated in May, when the sponsoring U.S. pastors and dozens of others will visit the country for the Build a City completion celebration. For information, contact Shirley Garmon at shirley@pcl.is. ■



An interior view of the new church

Around the Globe

A Church in a Week

A remarkable account of how 10 men of God launched a church in Ecuador

Nine Eastern North Carolina pastors and their administrative bishop, Wayne Brewer, traveled to Guayaquil, Ecuador, recently and returned home after a week with a strong new congregation left behind.

Guayaquil boasts more than 2.7 million citizens and is the nation's commercial and economic center and its largest city. Sixty percent of its people are poor, and many of them live in a polluted marsh area, but it has been a fruitful field for the gospel. In 50 years, Ecuador's evangelical population has mushroomed from less than 20,000 to 1.2 million. The Church of God is the nation's fifth largest Protestant denomination.

Guided by Richard Dial, a member of the World Mission Board—who has dedicated more than 20 years of regular visits to Guayaquil, with a legacy of dozens of churches planted there—and Samuel Carpio, the regional overseer, the North Carolina team spent each day going from house to house in assigned areas and meeting the residents. Witnessing to the people and inviting them to make Jesus Lord of their lives, they encouraged the ones who accepted their message to gather at a central location each afternoon at 4:00 for discipleship teaching. By the end of the week, more than 250 adults and 60 children were attending.



Responsive young people in Guayaquil pray with members of the Carolina team.

Among the converts who became the nucleus of the new congregation were two police officers, the man who owned the property used for the afternoon classes, gang members, professed alcoholics and addicts.

The missionary-evangelist-pastors took 120 Bibles with them to Guayaquil, and by midweek had given all of them to people who attended the afternoon training. They purchased 150 more Bibles, and that supply was also exhausted.

Carpio appointed Milton Ganchozo as the pastor of the new congregation. ■



Israel Offerings Get Results

Young people throughout the Church of God have worked diligently to provide funding and prayer support for "Heart for the Homeland," this year's Youth World Evangelism Action project for Israel, reflecting the church's high regard for the land where the church was born. Their gifts have been paired with the generous offering donated by worshipers in the General Assembly World Missions service to engage in a number of causes in the Holy Land.

Already several significant undertakings are well along. One of the emphases has been to acquire land adjoining the Church of God in Aboud, in the West Bank area, where a Christian school serving grades 7 through 12 could be built. In December, the final installment for the land was paid, and the property is secured.

World Missions has also partnered with Jamison Creel, headmaster of the Bethlehem Christian School, to purchase curriculum and supplies. The institution has become the premier educational provider in the area.

An upcoming gathering in support of the Billion Souls Initiative, led by James Davis, will convene in Jerusalem, and the Church of God will take part in the efforts.

In partnership with the European Theological Seminary, a Center for Israeli Ministries is being established. An arrangement is being set up with the Israel Ministry of Tourism to encourage educational and inspirational trips from the United States.

The Mount of Olives Church, long in need of a construction upgrade, is being given attention. Further, benevolent causes are being evaluated for increased participation. Thank you to the men and women who gave and made pledges for these and other efforts in the Holy Land. ■

Firewall Training Upcoming

500 New Congregations in Africa — Just the Beginning?

“An army of one-week missionaries is what we must have to ensure the success of the Firewall,” declared Hugh Carver, director of Church of God Men and Woman of Action, the U.S. point person for World Missions in the evangelistic initiative that intends to plant thousands of new churches in Africa. Training is now available for those who wish to go.

The Firewall identifies the joint efforts of African church leaders, World Missions, and MWOA to erect seven training centers and establish some 2,000 new churches along a line reaching from Senegal on the west coast, across the continent to Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa on the east coast, southward to Mozambique. The track defines the division between Islamic Africa and the rest of the country, where Christians are more established. The Firewall will mark an advance of evangelism and a wall of resistance against invading spiritual forces.

In less than 18 months, with a limited number of pastors in training, the Church of God has already set in order more than 500 churches in seven of the Firewall countries. The pressing need at this time is for preparation of new pastors.

During the week of April 20, a three-day training event at the North Cleveland Church will equip volunteer American pastors who will be invited to take the training they receive to Africa for a four-day teaching trip within a year. Potential pastors are available in Africa, but they need to receive essential rudimentary instruction in order to fulfill their calling. The classes, taught by two experienced brethren from South Africa, have proven unusually effective; the approach has been used among the Church of God and a dozen other evangelical denominations in the past 15 years to establish more than 30,000 congregations.

There is no charge for the training other than for materials and for lunches during the three-day event. At press time, it was projected to be \$40. An overview of the Firewall is posted on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjKtSdDhZOw>. Updated information is available at www.africafirewall.com.

Participants will receive books with outlines and manuscripts, be oriented to the contents, and instructed how to teach material in the first book to young pastors on a weeklong trip to Africa. Projected teaching areas are more than 1,000 miles from the part of Africa where last year's Ebola outbreak was located. For additional information, interested pastors and laity may contact Mrs. Teddie Bennett at tbennett@cogmwoa.org. ■



The first Firewall training brought 60 participants from seven states.

Leadership Training Accelerates

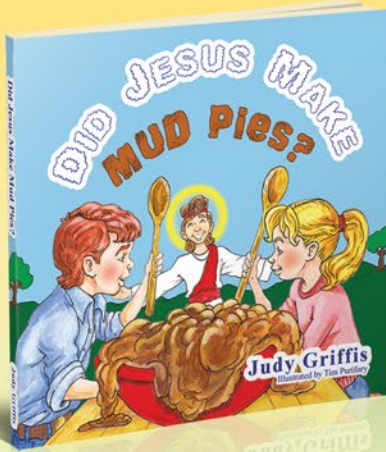


Newly minted graduates of Bethel celebrate the completion of their studies.

With a fast-growing number of churches, one of the highest priorities in Africa is the preparation of leaders. Because of the increasing demands of the Firewall Initiative, it becomes even more vital.

Fourteen of the senior officials of the Church of God in Africa met recently for the next-to-last series of master's-level classes with visiting teachers: Dr. Luke Queen, Dr. Fred Garmon, and Gene Mills. Most of these men occupy key places across the continent. They will meet once more for the last training cohort.

In Lusaka, Zambia, Bethel Bible College celebrated graduation ceremonies just before Christmas and awarded diplomas and degrees to 90 students. Sixty-two received the Certificate in Ministerial Studies, a course of study also offered in the United States. Twenty earned diplomas in Practical Theology, and six were awarded accredited Bachelor of Arts in Theology degrees. ■



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.

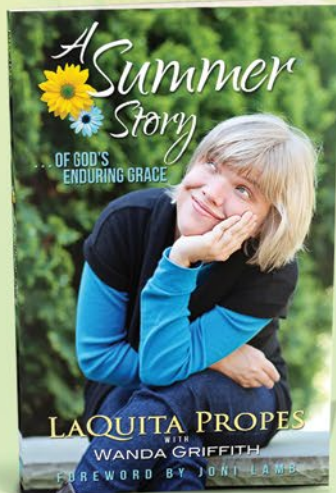


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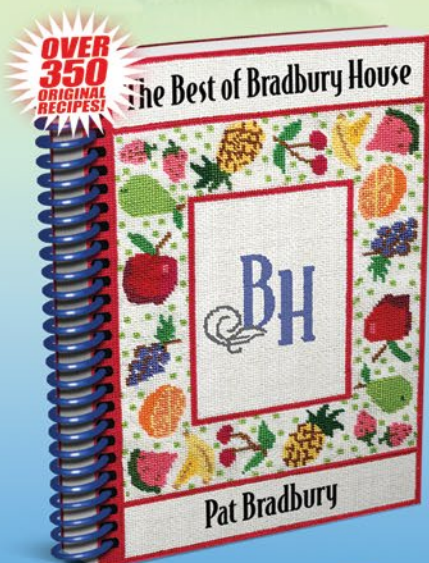
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PAT BRADBURY



BY DON STEFFY

FATHERHOOD PREDESTINED

AS GOD PROMISED, PATRICK CAME.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE 2000, I sat Marcy down, got on one knee, and asked her to marry me.

Before she was able to respond, I added, “And I want to adopt Patrick.”

Much to my relief, she said yes to both!

On February 23, 2001, my life forever changed for the better when I became a husband and father. Two blessings God had promised me years earlier had now been fulfilled.

THE BACKSTORY

Flash back with me another 14 years. I was sitting in my 10th-grade American History class (my favorite subject) actually listening to the teacher when, out of nowhere, I heard God say to me, *Your first child will be a son, and his name will be Patrick.*

This was not some random thought in my 16-year-old mind. God spoke those words

into my spirit, and I could never shake them off.

After graduating from high school, I joined the Army, then served my community as a police officer, volunteer firefighter, and EMT. Throughout those busy single days, I often wondered about God’s plan for me to one day have a family of my own. His message about Patrick echoed in my mind and soul. However, what I saw in the natural did not line up with what I had been told in the supernatural.

I remained perplexed until summer 1999. A friend of mine (then a fellow police officer) asked me to help move him and his family into a new house. The next day, I drove to their old house after finishing my shift at work. Other people were there helping too.

As soon as I entered the house through the side door, a beautiful young woman caught my eye. She was carrying a box to the moving truck. For only the second

time in my life, I heard God speak to me in an almost audible voice, saying, *You’re going to marry her!*

Despite my love-at-first-sight feeling, I quietly laughed it off, thinking, *Yeah, right; whatever, Lord.*

After a long day of moving, I sat down and ate pizza with this beautiful young woman and our friends whom we helped move. I learned her name was Marcy. She was a single mom to one son, who was 6 years old. When I asked her, “What’s your son’s name?” she smiled and said, “Patrick!”

FROM BROKENNESS TO ADOPTION

Patrick’s biological father was a drug addict who had been physically and emotionally abusive. Marcy said she could count on one hand the times the man had spent time with Patrick, with those not being positive occasions.

In the end, the man wanted nothing to do with Patrick or Marcy. However, God

Patrick’s adoption day—July 19, 2001—Marcy with her parents; Lancaster County Court Judge Cullins; Patrick; and Don with his parents



reached out to Marcy through His love, grace, and mercy. One night, sitting on her bedroom floor in a pile of rubble, Marcy dedicated her life to Jesus Christ. Through the Lord's help, she was able to completely cut ties from the abuse she and Patrick had endured for too many years.

As time progressed, God had my path cross Marcy and Patrick's life. On my wedding day, I became an instant husband and dad; yet Patrick had started calling me "Dad" even before I married his mom. I wore that badge with pride and honor. When people would see us together in public, I would immediately introduce Patrick as my son.

I remember one day talking to an acquaintance I had not seen in years. He looked at Patrick and said, "There's no denying he's your son—I see the resemblance!"

A few months after our wedding, I was privileged and humbled to be able to adopt Patrick officially. I didn't *have* to adopt him. Either way, I would have raised him and loved him as my son. However, I *wanted* to adopt him. It was important to me, to Patrick, and to God. This act declared my commitment to accept Patrick as my own son and to help

bring him up the best way I could with God's help.

The act of adoption brought Patrick into the family as my firstborn. God's adoption of us, through faith in Jesus Christ, is God's way of taking us out of our brokenness and into His family. Adopting Patrick was an act of my love, declaring that he is my beloved son. God does the same for each of us who put our faith in Christ Jesus.

THE WONDER YEARS

As the years flew by, I was busy taking Patrick to football and baseball practices and games, a season of school band practices, and many church activities. Before my eyes, he grew into a young man of God, graduating from high school and going to Lee University.

Amy, his high-school sweetheart, also enrolled at Lee University. They married in June 2012, and I was honored to officiate their wedding. They graduated together in May 2014 and moved back to our native Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where they are settling in as their own family.

As I look back, I try to figure out where the time went. It was just yesterday when I first met 6-year-old Patrick at our

friend's house, playing in the downstairs room with our friend's son. Now he is a man with his own family, his own direction, and his own calling in life.

ALWAYS DAD

One can never turn off being a dad; there isn't a stop button! I pray for Patrick and Amy every day. Even though he now has his own family, I still worry about him, wanting the best for him—sometimes pacing the floors because the miles between us keep me from hopping in the car and driving over to his house to give him a big hug, and to see with my own eyes that everything is OK. A day never goes by without thinking about him.

Just as the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus—"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (1:5 NASB)—so God foreordained Patrick to be my son. It is what God wanted, and it is what I wanted ever since He told me nearly 28 years ago, *Your first child will be a son, and his name will be Patrick.* 📖

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The Steffy family on Patrick and Amy's wedding day—
June 15, 2012



BY RHONDA K. HOLLAND

PARENTING THAT LASTS FOREVER

BE **CHRIST-CENTERED** AND FUTURE-FOCUSED

DECEMBER 2007 was a difficult time for my family. My sisters and I knew our beloved mother was soon to be leaving for her eternal home in heaven; yet, an almost tangible peace filled her hospital room.

The doctors and hospital staff often commented on the peacefulness and the obvious love we had for each other even in this valley of great sorrow. One of Mother's physicians was also an instructor at the medical center. He later asked permission to write about "the supernatural atmosphere of the peace" that he felt

while in her room so he could discuss it with his medical students.

HAVE A CHRIST-CENTERED MIND-SET

I am the middle daughter of three girls. We are a close family, and the tie that has always kept us together is our common love for God and His Word. Our parents raised us to love the Lord, our family, and our church. We were instructed to always look to the Lord for whatever we faced, because He was the answer to every question life presents.

As Mother was leaving this life, my sisters and I were alone in the room with her. We

each expressed our love, and she in turn did the same. I leaned in close and told my sweet mother she was a wonderful example of the "Proverbs 31 woman." I said she had nothing to fear in leaving us, for she had "clothed with scarlet"—the scarlet blood of the Lamb—"all her household" (v. 21).

I reminded her that she had been the first to introduce us to Jesus. The God she had served so beautifully before us was also *our* God! I told her we were there to praise God with her as she entered His presence.

What a blessing it was to see her leave in peace and joy, knowing her work here was

complete and that an eternal reunion day would be ours to gain!

Our mother wasn't a teacher or preacher . . . not behind a pulpit or podium, anyway. She led by example in word and deed. She was always supportive of us following God's will for our lives even if it didn't seem logical at the time. Her mind-set is reflected in Mary's words about Jesus in John 2:5: "Whatever He says to you, do it!" (NKJV).

KEEP THE FUTURE IN FOCUS

We as Christian parents must lead by word and deed. We must set an example—a clear path—for our children to walk. When we miss the mark, we must be ready to admit it and quickly get back on course, knowing our children will be ever mindful and watchful of our choices and behavior. The adage "Do as I say, not as I do" is just a waste of words!

There are examples throughout the Scripture of parents who got it right . . . others who missed the mark . . . and some who did both. Consider Hezekiah, a king who "did what was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 18:3 NKJV). He trusted in God so much that there was not a king of Judah like him before or after his reign (vv. 5-6). However, at the end of his life, he seemed to lose sight and concern for the future of his posterity. When Isaiah prophesied tragedies concerning his possessions and family (20:17-18), Hezekiah responded, "The word of the Lord you have spoken is good. . . . Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?" (v. 19 NIV).

Sadly, Hezekiah's response implied he could willingly accept the prophecy as long as the tragedies did not occur in his lifetime.

If the Lord delays His return, we should be mindful as parents of our children and their future after our departure. We must give prayer coverage that lasts, examples that teach long after we are gone, and words of wisdom for them to live by when we are here only in their memories.

Jacob, unlike Hezekiah in many ways, missed the mark multiple times in his life.

However, in the end, Jacob had learned the value of what really mattered. Hebrews 11:21 records, "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff" (NKJV). His desire was to leave a righteous heritage for his lineage.

LEAD A CONSISTENT LIFE

As parents and grandparents in our ever-changing world, consistency in our walk is imperative! If we do stumble in our relationship with Christ, we must quickly demonstrate a willingness to repent and return to a right standing with God. We must be consistent in times of joy and in times of sorrow. We must show our

WE MUST GIVE
PRAYER COVERAGE
THAT LASTS AND
LEAVE EXAMPLES
THAT TEACH
LONG AFTER WE
ARE GONE.

children—regardless of their ages—that our redeemed nature will come through at our place of "pressing" as much as it does when we are in our place of "blessing"! This shines a clear light of truth on the path of life that can quickly become darkened by circumstances we face.

Speaking at our dad's funeral in 2002, I used Psalm 1, for our father was truly "like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (v. 3). He had faced many challenges in life and had suffered physically in his final years, but his faith was consistent. In the last years of his life, Daddy was confined to a wheelchair, but his spiritual "walk" with Christ remained steady.

The Book of Psalms begins by describing a life that is built on a firm foundation in God, and it concludes with the shout, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!" (150:6 NKJV).


Between Psalm 1 and Psalm 150, every type of emotion is recorded . . . songs of victory and songs of battles lost are penned . . . sorrows are expressed and joyful anthems are sung and shouted in triumph! Life is like the Book of Psalms. And, just like the Psalms, we must start our children out on a firm foundation in God. We must teach them consistency and demonstrate it before them. In the end, their final declaration will be that of Psalm 150—triumphant praise to God!

KEEP LOOKING TO THE LORD

We can teach our children many powerful truths from God's Word that will bring them joy, contentment, and certainty in these perilous times. Among them, one simple message preached by John the Baptist—who also lived in troubled times awaiting the coming Messiah—is, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Every lesson we teach and every example we demonstrate must instruct our children "Behold the Lamb of God!" Anything less is insufficient, for Jesus is the answer.

As children and young adults, my sisters and I were instructed to always look to the Lord for whatever we faced, because He was the answer to every question life presented. *Behold the Lamb of God!* He takes away sin and wins the battles that sin causes; He moves mountains and brings victory to impossible situations. His sufficient grace is always available and always amazing!

Let us live daily "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). In doing so, we will keep the path clearly marked and the light shining brightly for those following in our steps, both now and in the days ahead. We will teach our children how to love, how to live, and how to leave this world victoriously. 

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IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING. Hundreds attended to celebrate the marriage of Bill and Kim.

Three years later, Bill and Kim wake up every morning as if they're strangers. The exciting feelings of being newlyweds have quickly diminished.

One of their friends suggests they should have a date. Bill goes on the date to prove he is not at fault; Kim goes in anger, determined to make him pay for her perceived mistreatment. This undercurrent of ill feelings undermines the evening.

MORE THAN A TEMPORARY FIX

Romance is a tricky term. It can mean anything from exciting feelings to flattery, from gifts to idealizing another person, from a love story to sexual relations.

Much writing on the subject and counsel from pop psychology recommend various ways for couples to rekindle romance. They might do an activity together—going out for dinner, hiking, or doing a project—or buy the right gift (chocolates, a new shirt or dress, or tickets to a special show). While there is nothing wrong with any of these ideas, building lasting romance takes more than a temporary fix.

Romancing marriage is another way of saying “building marriage intimacy.” *Romance* in this sense means fostering heart-to-



BY JOHN & SU VINING

ROMANCING MARRIAGE

BUILDING MARRIAGE INTIMACY

heart connection. It is being open and to and pursuing *koinonia*, which is the scriptural term for “fellowship.” *Fellowship* here means deeply knowing and deeply caring. Romancing marriage in this way deepens marriage intimacy.

Bill and Kim spent a night together doing an activity, but their hearts were far apart. He even suggested she get herself a new outfit for the occasion, but a new wardrobe can never suffice for intimacy in relationship.

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHTS

We see intimacy in God’s relationship with us, as portrayed in Psalm 139. The psalmist David says to the Lord, “You know everything about me” (v. 1 NLT). David goes on to detail how God knows him, and us, inside and out. He knows what makes us tick. “How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!” David declares (v. 17 NLT). God relates to us in such a way that when there is something out of place

in our relationship with Him, He is anxious for reconciliation.

Scripture shows us the essence of romance from several vantage points. The lover and beloved in the Song of Solomon give graphic depictions of how they romanced each other invoking all the five senses. Hosea romanced a wayward partner in spite of her behavior. Jesus, in a manner of speaking, romances His people in that He knows them and knows what is in them (John 2:24-25). The essence

of Paul's relationship with the church at Thessalonica was one in which he romanced them in that he imparted not just the gospel but his very life in them (1 Thess. 2:8). To use the imagery of John the Revelator, Christ the Bridegroom romances His bride, the Church (Rev. 21:9; 22:17).

Gift giving, special purchases, and spending time doing novel activities can enhance a relationship, but a lasting romance necessitates intimate connection through deepened knowing and deepened caring.

Again, Scripture is instructive for understanding how to romance marriage as we consider how God relates to us. God knows us through and through. He knows . . .

- us before we are born (Jer. 1:5)
- “our frame” (Ps. 103:14)
- “the secrets of [our] heart” (44:21)
- “the thoughts of man” (94:11)
- our words before we speak them (139:3)
- our deeds (69:5)
- our sufferings (Ex. 3:7)
- our names (33:12, 17).

Jesus summarizes this deep knowing and deep caring in John 10:14 when He says, “I know My own and My own know Me” (NASB).

FOUR INGREDIENTS OF INTIMACY

Bill and Kim seemed to know some things about each other, but they apparently didn't know how to deeply care for each other. Scripture is helpful in teaching us how to romance our marriage in practical ways. Drawing on biblical insights, David Ferguson of Intimate Life Ministries gives four ingredients of intimacy that can be applied to romancing marriage.

1. *Affectionate caring* (John 21:16) is wanting to know your partner, entering his or her world, and being available.

2. *Vulnerable communication* (1 Thess. 2:8) happens when a couple invites the knowing of the innermost being by the partner through invoking the OATH principle—openness, acceptance, trust, and honesty.

3. *Joint communication* (1 Cor. 12:21, 25) is vulnerable disclosure that occurs when partners communicate their need for each other. It is only in being jointly fit together that couples become a one-flesh union. Vulnerable communication is imperative for this to be experienced.

4. *Mutual giving* (John 15:12) emanates from being other-centered. That is, the needs and desires of the spouse become as important as my own needs and desires. It is an expression of deep love.



As recommended by
Christian Spotlight on Entertainment

Beauty and the Beast (2012)
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Love's Abiding Joy (2006)
The Man From Snowy River (1982)
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Pride & Prejudice (2005)
Sense & Sensibility (1995)
Sleepless in Seattle (1993)
The Sound of Music (1965)
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These ingredients must be built into the marriage relationship. Recycling these intimacy ingredients on a regular basis promotes romance. In this kind of relational environment, gifts and activities have the best advantage of engendering exciting feelings, secure hope, and the fire of passion.

Romancing marriage also produces health benefits. Dr. Dean Ornish, medical doctor and author of *Love and Survival*, has shown deep knowing and deep caring can literally prevent death and/or prolong

life. His research, and that of others, has shown that loneliness and isolation kill people. The immune system can become depleted and disease can set in. In one study, people who felt unloved and unconnected and had no religious faith were seven times more likely to die within six months than those who felt loved and connected and who had faith.


Dr. Ornish states, “Anything that promotes feelings of love and intimacy is healing; anything that promotes isolation, separation, alienation, loneliness, loss, hostility, anger, cynicism, depression, and related feelings leads to suffering, disease, and premature death from all causes.”

The implication for Bill and Kim, and for all of us, is that romancing marriage is a relational task with spiritual components. At the core of the idea of romancing marriage is the opportunity and necessity of attending each other's intimacy needs.

As Ferguson suggests:

- Caring involvement tends to the needs of attention, affection, and comfort.
- Vulnerable communication lends to meeting the needs of appreciation, security, and acceptance.
- Joint accomplishment ministers to the needs of respect, encouragement, approval, and support.
- Mutual giving underlies this process of offering and receiving at the point of heart needs, leading a couple to be vulnerable when needed and jointly addressing issues and challenges they face.

READY FOR ROMANCE?

Are you ready to inject your marriage with an effective infusion of romance? Offer your heart *and* your hands. Listen and respond in place of doing all the talking, or not talking at all, and making demands. Romance your marriage. 

Dr. John Vining is the director of the Center of Relational Health and oversees Youth Counseling service in Cleveland, Tennessee. John's wife, **Dr. Su Vining**, is a schoolteacher. The Vinings lead marriage and family seminars. johnkvining@gmail.com

BY ELISA MORGAN

DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

WHEN THE UNFAMILIAR ENTERS YOUR FAMILY

WHEN EVA FIRST began middle school, she ran to the pickup zone clutching a wrinkled envelope in her hand. She opened the car door, threw in her backpack, and plopped in her seat, announcing as she buckled in, “Mom! I’ve been invited to Stephanie’s sleepover!” Her face was alight with joy as she thrust the invitation at me.

“Who’s Stephanie?” I asked as I pulled out the card and read the contents. I’d never heard of her.

“Oh, she’s a girl in my third-period class. She’s cool!”

No help there. And no real help as I read the invitation. I didn’t recognize the last name or the address or even the handwriting. Ugh.

“Can I go?” It was the obvious next question. I didn’t want to answer it. Actually, I didn’t know the answer. I had to think. And research. And talk to my husband, Evan.

“We’ll see.” A mom’s automatic response to all things unknown.

I hadn’t even begun to adjust to Eva being in middle school. The first day of orientation she’d floored me by carrying down every doll and every piece of doll paraphernalia she owned from her upstairs room and placing it in a heap by our backdoor, announcing, “I don’t need this stuff anymore.”

What? The Cabbage Patch Doll I’d carefully selected and then Eva had “adopted” on her sixth Christmas? The little cradle that went with it? The high chair? “Well, you never know, Eva. You might want them for your children.” Right.

“I’m done with them, Mom,” she said.

Should have been a clear enough clue for the day a few weeks later when Stephanie

suddenly became my daughter’s newest interest.

Not only was I not ready for Eva to leave her childhood behind, I wasn’t ready for her to spread her wings out of our tight and happy neighborhood into other subdivisions. Middle school opened access to families who lived farther north, east, west, and south of us. People I didn’t know living on streets I didn’t drive through on my normal errands.

I decided to call Stephanie’s mother and “interview” her to see if I thought it would be appropriate for Eva to attend the sleepover. When the phone picked up, there was a very young voice on the other end, too young to even be Stephanie, I thought. “Oh my mom’s asleep,” the little sister replied.

At 4:30 on a school day? She must be on drugs, I decided. Or sells them. No way was Eva going. (Yes, of course I realize now that I was assuming Stephanie’s mom was like my mom had been. That Eva would go to Stephanie’s and smoke cigarettes and do all kinds of naughty things while Stephanie’s mom was “out of it.”)

Evan thought differently. He thought I was making way too much of things. “Besides,” he reminded me, “you’ll be out of town that weekend. I’ll take care of it.”

My throat clenched. Oh yeah, I was speaking that weekend. If I was out of town, I wouldn’t even be able to drive Eva to and from—and to check things out for myself.

As I prepped for the speaking engagement, I loaded up my makeup bag. I’d been so distracted by Eva’s ordeal that I’d not spent much time preparing my talks. I figured I’d make up for any possible lack of depth by looking good. A song was going through my head, “He who began a good work in you . . .” I hummed along. Then the song went from the back of my

mind to the front of my mind as it finished the words of Philippians 1:6, “He’ll be faithful to complete it in Eva.”

God was the One who began the good work in Eva, and He would be the One to complete the good work in Eva. While it made good sense that I would worry over Stephanie’s slumber party and whether or not Eva should set foot in her house, my *worrying* over it would do nothing but distract *me* from trusting Him.

Eva went to the sleepover. She didn’t smoke. She didn’t end up caring about Stephanie all that much. Now I know that while my concerns had merit—mothers very much need to know where their daughters are going and what they are doing there—mine were rooted in fear. Fear of things I didn’t know, didn’t like, didn’t understand, didn’t comprehend how God could use.

Oh, how much I had to learn on this topic! And mercy, how much our children have to teach us! Way back at the baby shower that my friend, Cindy, gave me for Eva, she shared the words that our children can either be our trophies—sitting on the mantelpieces of our lives and proclaiming how very effective and successful we are as their parents—or they can become our teachers, instructing us about our world, our families, and ourselves.

My friend Amy returns from a holy meeting with her adult daughter, a daughter she has strained to know and understand over the years. Amy whispers a prayer in my presence, “Oh Lord, teach me about my daughter who is so *different* from me. Help me to learn from her and to love her the way she needs me to love her.” I sit back in my chair and receive her words into my own mother-child relationships.

We do life so differently. All of us. As we yield to God completing *His* good work in us. Young and old. This generation and

the one above it and the one below it and the one below that. Each generation chooses its own language of value—and rebellion. Each of us considers our view the “right” view, even the “biblical” perspective, and then we urge others to adopt our view as their own. When they don’t, we scratch our heads in surprise. Or throw darts of judgment in frustration.

I remember sitting on the soft couch in a counselor’s office worrying about my grandson, Marcus. He’d been at our house the night before and, in a moment, I found him squatting on the floor, working his fingers. His thinking was visible as he silently gestured: one, two, three, four, five—and then on to the next hand: six, seven—clearly counting. With his face all crinkled, he looked up, “Yia Yia, how many grandparents do I have?”

“Eight.” We reviewed them together. Then I added my triumphal, “But you only have *one* BeePeez and *one* Yia Yia.” To which he smiled, nodded, and agreed. Oh how I love those tie-it-up-in-a-bow moments!

But I worried. I asked my counselor, “How will he sort through all the relationships in his life?”

She replied, “Elisa, this is Marcus’ story. It’s *his* story that is shaping him. Just as *your* story has shaped you.”

Diversity births from the unexpected—both tragic and delightful. Each generation—from builders to boomers, and then from boomers to busters to Xers to millennials and on to edgers (or whatever they end up being called)—births a new version of people on this planet. Along with the people come the choices they make: Divorce. Adoption. Disability. Addiction. Fame. Genius. Beauty. Diversity results when we recognize—and learn to welcome—what is unfamiliar into the family.

Brenda didn’t expect to raise a special-needs child. But when her son, Zach, was accidentally dropped on his head and sustained a traumatic brain injury, Brenda opened her arms to a world she never imagined.

Marilyn never dreamed she’d become a widow at age 50. But when her husband died from pancreatic cancer, Marilyn joined the ranks of a “club” she never wanted to join.



At 60-something, Myra learned that her son and his wife would be divorcing after nearly two decades of marriage. She couldn’t imagine her large family enduring the fracture, much less moving through and beyond it. The holidays loomed and she prayed over how to prepare. It seemed her usual, wide-armed, and lavish love would fall in the empty places left by the choices of those around her. Now she struggled over just who to invite to the table. Of course her son. But her former daughter-in-law? His new girlfriend? What a mess!

In church one Sunday, she bowed her head and her heart and felt God leading as she sensed Him saying, *Extend your table.*


The result was questionable, but her action was obedient. “You’re always on solid ground when you obey—regardless of the outcome,” Myra tells me.

Such differences—such variety, such *diversity*—threads through the tapestry of our families and, for that matter, through our entire globe, creating dimension, depth, and an extravagant expression of the God who weaves. We are wise to learn to embrace and even enjoy the multifaceted reality about us. As Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf prophesies, “It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference.”

Our concept of a life lived for God can—in the end—be oh so different from His. Our God is, Himself, diverse and He embraces a diverse people. He speaks all languages. He glories Himself through myriad styles of music. He dwells in every country. Every life is special to Him. Things we have no room for, He not only embraces but redeems because He can see in, through, and in spite of.

In some ways my children—in their diverse lives—will always be outside of my comfort zone. But that doesn’t mean they are outside of God’s economy. Brennan Manning writes, “While we love someone for what we find in him or her . . . Jesus loves men and women not for what He finds in them, but for what He finds in Himself.”

God promises to complete the good work He began in *each* man and woman He creates.

Read those last two paragraphs again if you need to. I did. 

Elisa Morgan is a speaker, leader, and author of 15 books on mentoring, spiritual formation, and evangelism. She served as CEO of MOPS International for 20 years. This excerpt from *The Beauty of Broken* is used with permission from W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson.

WHAT STRENGTHS DO CREDENTIALLED WOMEN MINISTERS BRING TO THE CHURCH OF GOD, AND HOW CAN THEIR MINISTRY BE ENHANCED?

MINISTRY GIFTS, RELATIONAL ABILITIES, & KEEN INSIGHT

SANDRA KAY WILLIAMS IS THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DIRECTOR FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD, AND IS MARRIED TO GENERAL OVERSEER MARK L. WILLIAMS. SHE IS A PRAYER LEADER, SINGER, SPEAKER, AND MENTOR WHO PRIORITIZES MINISTRY TO HER OWN FAMILY.

CREDENTIALLED WOMEN ministers bring numerous strengths to the Church of God by offering a balance of ministry gifts, natural relational abilities, and keen spiritual insights. We must face the fact that God saw Adam and said (in current



vernacular), "He needs help." Some male ministers miss the wisdom, discernment, and anointing that women ministers could bring to the table if they were only invited.

Women ministers are networkers and collaborative in their approach to ministry. They are not "large and in charge," but humble and honorable toward those who are facing similar struggles. Women are willing to reach out with com-

passion and mercy to those facing judgment and ostracism. This relational wisdom strengthens the Church of God.

God's voice to male ministers is not louder or more pronounced than it is to His daughters in ministry. He gives His maidservants powerful insights to His Word that need to be shared with the church. Their spiritual discernment is a valuable strength to the Church of God.

The ministry to credentialed women in the Church of God could be greatly advanced if more training opportunities were given. For example, when I completed the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) in 1989, the master pastors (those training candidates for ministry) were all male. They were so uncomfortable with a young woman as a candidate for ministry that they made me attend the session with the ministerial wives even though I was not married or even engaged at the time. However, if I had been a 21-year-old young man, I would have been warmly and enthusiastically encouraged to pursue my license and even been given opportunities to minister in their churches. These were godly, successful ministers whom I loved and respected, but they were blind to their chauvinism.

Thankfully, a growing number of young women are boldly answering the call to ministry in these last days. They must have mentors who can adequately prepare them for what they will face. It thrills me to be mentoring a group of Lee University female students and to share with them a little of what God has allowed me to experience. Maybe I can help them avoid some of the mistakes I've made over the past 30 years since I first answered God's call.

Only a female minister can properly relate to the challenges and obstacles women will face in their future ministries. Even the most successful male pastor will never experience what it is to be a female pastor. It is my hope that every state MIP training program appoints at least one credentialed woman minister to the teaching team to address the specialized needs of female candidates and to educate the male ministers on recognizing and affirming the ministry of women.

The Church of God could enhance its ministry to all its members by allowing credentialed women leaders to serve in places of significant decision-making. Spiritual insights can come from women who chair meetings rather than simply type notes. Women get knocked down enough in the world; Christ's body should be the place where women ministers are treated with respect and honor. That was Jesus' way of relating to women He encountered. He never put them down, but always lifted them up. Men and women alike could have their ministries enhanced through validation, affirmation, and recognition.

PASSION, PERSEVERANCE, & POWER

JOCelyn BARNETT IS A FULL-TIME EVANGELIST WHO LEADS HEALING THE HARVEST MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL BASED IN WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA. AN ORDAINED CHURCH OF GOD MINISTER, SHE SERVED AS PASTOR OF RHEMA WORD MINISTRIES CHURCH (FORT LAUDERDALE) FOR 17 YEARS.

MY ENTRANCE INTO credentialed ministry was not easy. In those years, the dominant message was that God did not call women into pulpit ministry. It took great personal *strength*—firmness and courage—and the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome what I had heard for so long and to step out by faith and acknowledge that the Lord did indeed call me to ministry. My story is not unique—it is *our* story as women ministers.

Credentialed women ministers have been tested, tried, rejected, and refused. Yet, they have persevered against all odds to obey the divine call of Christ on their lives.

We bring the strength of the Samaritan woman at the well who, despite her reputation, became the first New Testament evangelist, compelling men and women to "come [and] see" Jesus (John 4:28-30). We have the strength of Mary, who made the better choice by sitting down to learn from the Master (Luke 10:39-42). We offer the strength of the woman with the alabaster box, who anointed Christ for His burial despite the ridicule (Mark 14:3-9). We bring an anointing to our church that is born out of suffering for the privilege to do what we have been called to do.

When I was assigned to plant and pastor a church in Fort Lauderdale, women pastors did not have the authority to baptize, serve Communion, or receive members into fellowship. However, when the Church of God General Assembly changed this, giving women pastors the authority to function as male pastors, it attracted the attention of the local media. I had no idea that anyone outside of

our church even knew who I was, but the newspaper located me and interviewed me about the new ruling. I realized then that I was representative of something greater than a local church. I represented the forward movement of the Church of God as it sought to embrace the expanding authority of its clergywomen.

Whatever our Kingdom assignments—preachers, teachers, church planters, pastors, evangelists, missionaries, intercessors—we will always bring to our church passion, perseverance, and power!

The ministry of credentialed women must be strengthened by acknowledgment and affirmation of the legitimacy of the



ministry of women. There is New Testament validation for our ministry. Paul exhorted the brethren in one church, “Help these women who labored with me in the gospel” (Phil. 4:3 NKJV). It is time for credentialed women ministers to be affirmed by all members of our church without debate or discussion. Many of us have encountered licensing problems, closed doors, and promotion of male counter-

parts over us despite our experience and training. It is my prayer that women who desire to enter the ranks of credentialed ministry will be embraced, received, and affirmed. I pray that they will not repeat my story.

Today we desire to stand in unity alongside our fellow ministers to contend for the gospel of our Lord Jesus and for our faith . . . because we are *one*!

WILL WE GO FORWARD?

KIMBERLY L. KEEN, M.S., LMFT, IS A CREDENTIALLED MINISTER AND A LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST. SHE IS A THIRD-GENERATION CHURCH OF GOD MEMBER, GRANDDAUGHTER OF A DECEASED MINISTER, AND A WIFE, MOTHER, AND TEACHER. SHE LIVES IN OCILLA, GEORGIA.

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, female ministers in the Church of God were asked to complete a survey regarding their experiences as women in ministry. It was approved but not administered by the Church of God. The first part was a typical “click, click, click” survey, but a follow-up survey required narrative answers. The level of honesty requested was somewhat daunting, especially regarding such a sensitive subject.

Later, the book *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak for Themselves* (Seymour Press, 2013) was published from the research. It opened many questions.

In the secular world, there are questions about whether feminism has run its course; however, *feminism* is almost considered profanity in the Christian world. Feminism in the form of equity must be examined by the Church of God. The word brings fear of women trying to overtake roles that are predominantly held by men. However, an examination of the value that women can provide to the church as a whole must not continue to be ignored.

God made His people male and female. He also created our brains to function in different but equally important ways. Those functions can work synergistically, creating a well-balanced local congregation, instead of ignoring the gifts that God has placed in females.

It has been four years since the General Assembly approved for women to serve on local church and pastor’s councils. How many local congregations actually have women who serve? How many pastors have made it clear to their congregations that women are qualified to serve? Are congregations aware of the qualifications that their women possess?

Looking around my local congregation, I see women who have taught Sunday school for over 30 years, presided over weekly prayer services, and worked in altars all of their adult lives. I see women who have had successful careers in banking, government, and private industry. These women are both spiritually and financially sound. They have strong spiritual lives, strong business backgrounds, and a history of managing annual budgets of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Some of these women are ordained ministers in the Church of God but have never even sat in on a church council meeting because they are not lead pastors.

These women do not submit their names for membership on the council. Is there a responsibility for the local congregation to be educated in the area of women and their respective roles? If so, whose responsibility is it?


In the book *What Women Want*, some Church of God ministers equated women in ministry with allowing homosexuals into ministry. This harsh statement is a reflection of the attitudes that godly women encounter regularly throughout their involvement with the church.



My concern is that we are going to lose the godly, intelligent women of the upcoming generations if we as a church do not do something to provide some equity for women. I believe we can do this in a godly, biblical way.

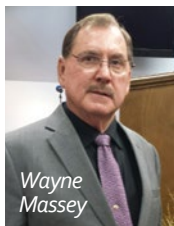
God allowed Deborah to lead the Israelite people in the Old Testament (Judg. 4:4). Philip’s daughters were referred to as *prophetesses* (Acts 21:8-9). Timothy was commended for his genuine faith—faith that was also present in his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). These references were made in a time when women were still commonly considered as property.

This appeal is not a request to go against godly principles. It is a request to identify which of our practices are biblical and which are just traditional. A brief reading of the research in *What Women Want* indicates that godly male ministers in the Church of God see little future for their daughters who feel the call to ministry.

In the next part of the 21st century, will we go forward as a strong Pentecostal church, or will we lose a large part of our base because women cannot fulfill their calling? The answer may depend on what we do within the next few years. 

GOD SAVED OUR PASTOR

Mulberry, FL—Eighteen years ago, Wayne Massey had a major heart attack that damaged his heart, but it did not keep him from



Wayne Massey

preaching God's Word and serving the Willow Oak Church of God as pastor.

On Sunday, September 7, 2014, he called

for a healing line when he finished preaching. After he prayed for the third person, Pastor Massey collapsed. As he lay on the floor, the congregation interceded for him. Everyone had the same mind. Our pastor was having a heart attack and needed God to intervene.

At 12:26 p.m., Pastor Massey died. He turned that ashen gray color I had observed many times while working in a nursing home and seeing many people pass

away. Pastor Massey had no pulse and no blood pressure for five minutes. There was nothing.

Suddenly, his eyes fluttered and he looked around. By then the fire department had arrived. The pastor's blood pressure was 55/40; his heart rate was 35. They were beginning to check it again when the paramedics arrived and took over. A paramedic said his vitals had come up a little and they were taking him to the hospital.

They released him the next day! The doctor could not find anything wrong. He went for a follow-up visit the next week, and the doctor said, "You are fine. In fact, we can't even find the damage that was done during the heart attack you had 18 years ago. There is no evidence you ever had an attack."

We are so happy God gave our pastor back to us.—*Willow Oak Church of God reporter*



HELPING TO FILL THE GAP

Six Mile, SC—The Gap Hill Church of God College and Career group—"C2"—consists of about 30 young adults who meet weekly for Bible study and fellowship. They also participate in monthly outreach projects.

This group has volunteered to help Volunteers in Medical Missions (vimm.org) on many occasions for "pill packing" sessions. They count out a month's supply of vitamins, place them in small bags, and label them with instructions in the language of the destination country.

BUILDING AND REBUILDING IN RIO VERDE

Rio Verde, Goiás, BRAZIL—Nine years ago, Benedito Arrais and his wife, Mariza, came to Rio Verde to pastor a church and serve as the district overseer. His salary was only \$200 per month (U.S. dollars). The church was struggling in all areas. Pastor Arrais had a burden for this church and for his entire district. He began to seek God, and God gave him a plan.

He felt like God told him to tear down his church's building all the way to the foundation and rebuild it. He did not have the money to do this, but he obeyed God. Two women from the church came for a Wednesday night service, and the building was gone! Some people thought he was crazy.

It took three years to rebuild, but with God's help he raised \$220,000. The building is almost complete, and the church is flourishing.

Pastor Arrais was not only concerned with his church, but with all of Rio Verde. There were only four Church of God congregations in this fast-growing city when he arrived. Today there are 18 churches in Rio Verde that he has planted, and 11 of them have been organized, having reached the 33-member level required to be confirmed by the Church of God. He said his district has grown from 252 members to more than 2,500 in nine years!



Benedito and Mariza Arrais

Pastor Arrais' district is the largest one in Brazil, with a 1,500-kilometer radius. There are 51 churches on his district. Some of them are situated in Paraguay, and he travels 1,000 kilometers to take care of them. Most of his pastors are young men and women.

While traveling around the city one Sunday afternoon, Pastor Arrais took us to 11 of the congregations in Rio Verde. He named how many members each church had, and told us of their history. Many of the churches have followed his pattern of demolishing the old structure and rebuilding it. Every church that has rebuilt is thriving, and is planting other congregations.

When asked for his secret to church growth, Arrais said, "Never lose an opportunity to start another church."

Bishop Arrais has obtained 1,000 acres on the outskirts of Rio Verde. He's set up a payment plan so each church on the district will pay four payments over a four-year period. The property will be paid off by 2017. They will plant yucca and raise cows to help raise the money to build a drug treatment center and to finish the church building that's already been started on the property.

Also, the bishop started a seminary in Rio Verde five years ago that is an extension of the Church of God seminary in Goiânia. There are now 50 students enrolled there.

God is looking for men and women who will dare to dream and build as Benedito Arrais is doing. Praise God for what is being done in Rio Verde!—*Susan Anniskette*



Chas McBee, Cody Nailor, Josh Forakis, and Britain Mieth

LEE STUDENTS NOTCH ARTIST AWARD

Cleveland, TN—The Giant & The Tailor, a band of Lee University students, won ArtistSignal's Top Artist of the Month competition for November 2014. The victory was announced on December 1.

ArtistSignal is a social music platform that allows listeners to

vote for the top artist each month. At the end of each month, a grand prize of \$10,000 is awarded to the musician with the most votes.

The Giant & The Tailor is comprised of Lee students Josh Forakis, Chas McBee, Britain Mieth, and Cody Nailor. Their music



Letters to the EDITOR

Send your comments to the editor at lance_colkmire@pathwaypress.org

■ THE OCTOBER 2014 EDITION of the *Evangel* has been such a blessing for us at the Leadership Training Centre (Northampton, England).

We recently opened our Heritage Centre here. I have decided to frame and display the article by Rev. Mark Williams and the Viewpoints column [on our denomination's history] to complement our story of the denomination.

At our forthcoming conference for pastors and key leaders, we will be looking at our use of social media in ministry. I am encouraging our planning team to make use of the article "How Would Jesus Use Facebook?"—*Phyllis Thompson, education director*

■ THE *EVANGEL* IS VERY SPECIAL to me. My father used to lay the *Evangel* on us as a point of contact and pray for us when we were kids. He told us they were all prayed over. I'm almost 70 years old and I still remember hearing stories of healing and deliverance in our family back when my grandmother was alive.—*Carol Vander Wende*

DECEASED MINISTERS

■ **ANDERSON**, Carlton; 69; ordained bishop; Florida; Paul Anderson (son)

■ **BEVELL**, William Mack; 83; ordained bishop; South Carolina; Mildred Bevell (wife)

■ **BLACK**, Hubert; 88; ordained bishop; Florida; Ulna Black (wife)

■ **COLEMAN**, Larry Allen; 66; exhorter; South Carolina; Michael Wooten (pastor)

■ **DENTON**, Cardinal; 71; ordained bishop; New Jersey; Curdell Denton (wife)

■ **ELLIS**, Gloria; 79; ordained minister; Ontario, Canada; George Ellis (husband)

■ **LEE**, Dorothy Marie; 84; exhorter; Pennsylvania; Joyce Beddell (sister)

■ **MCINTYRE**, Lonnie G.; 82; ordained bishop; Alabama; Lois McIntyre (wife)

■ **MERCADO**, Luis; 85; ordained minister; Florida; Ana Mercado (wife)

■ **MORGAN**, David Lee; 72; ordained bishop; North Carolina; Hattie Morgan (wife)

■ **RHYMES**, Johnny L.; 64; ordained minister; Florida; Kimberly Martin (daughter)

■ **RICHIE**, Girdley; 86; ordained minister; Tennessee; Melinda Webster (daughter)

■ **ROACH**, Evelyn J.; 92; ordained minister; West Virginia; Mary Ann Crouch (contact)

■ **RUSH**, Charles Monroe; 79; ordained bishop; Alabama; Phillip Rush (son)

■ **WEST**, Vance Hugh, Jr.; 66; ordained minister; Florida; Sandy West (wife)

■ **WILLIAMS**, Milton T.; 84; ordained bishop; Florida; Louise "Kay" Williams (wife)

combines elements of alternative rock and hip-hop.

"I am stunned by the amount of support we received during our time in the competition," said Nailor. "There is nothing more encouraging than creating something and being backed by those you love. I am blown away by all the love and support we've received."

All four members of the band are involved on Lee's campus, serving with clubs and organizations such as Student Leadership Council, Lee Cru, and Symphonic Band.

The Giant & The Tailor plans on using the prize money from

the competition to fund the recording of an album, purchase new music equipment, and supplement travel costs for out-of-town concerts.

"For us, music is more than just a hobby; it's a way to live out our callings," said Mieth. "We hope to be able to use music as a platform to reach out to people and communicate with them on a more personal level. Our goal is to leave everything a little bit better than we found it—whether that be people or music."

For more information on The Giant & The Tailor, visit [facebook.com/thegiantandthetailor](https://www.facebook.com/thegiantandthetailor).

BY DAVID G. ROEBUCK

BISHOP WILLIE VAUGHN: PIONEER IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

FRIENDS, FAMILY, and church leaders recently gathered at the Beacon Avenue Church of God in Seattle, Washington, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Western Regional Pentecostal Fellowship and to honor the fellowship's first president, Bishop Willie Vaughn. Initially organized as the Northwest Pentecostal Fellowship, the association of black churches and pastors serves the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Bishop Vaughn and his family joined the Church of God in 1955. He had relocated from a farm in Arkansas to Vancouver, Washington, in the 1940s. Having grown up in a Baptist pastor's home, he joined the Church of God in Christ after marrying his wife, Minnie Mae, in 1945. The freedom of worship in the Pentecostal Movement

contrasted sharply with the strictness of his childhood, and he was attracted by the jubilant worship that included singing, shouting, dancing, and a variety of musical instruments.

After the Vaughns moved to Pasco, Washington, they began a home prayer meeting that grew into a church. Befriended by Church of God ministers in the area, they brought the African-American congregation into the Church of God and are believed to be the first Church of God persons of African descent in the Pacific Northwest.

Comfortable in the office of a deacon, at first Brother Vaughn resisted the call to preach. When a prophetess said God had told her he was to preach, Vaughn suggested she let God know he did not want to preach. Not long after, he experienced a trance in which the voice of the Lord said, "I called, but you didn't come. I sent my prophet to you, but you didn't come. I

family relocated to Seattle, where he pastored the Beacon Street congregation and began to establish black churches throughout the Pacific Northwest. In 1976, the International Department of Evangelism and Home Missions appointed him as a metropolitan evangelist.

Before leaving Pasco, Vaughn recognized that black youth in the Church of

God had few opportunities to fellowship with other black youth. He initially proposed the Northwest Pentecostal Fellowship to provide opportunities for young people. It soon became a gateway for minority congregations to join the Church of God. Following his tenure as president, Bishop Samuel M. Irving led the fellowship.


The current fellowship president, Bishop Calvin Ball, organized the recent service honoring Willie Vaughn and



came to see what is the matter. I want you to proclaim My Word."

Church of God leaders affirmed his call, credentialed him to the ministry, and appointed him as pastor of the congregation that had begun in his home.

While building a new church facility in Pasco, Bishop Vaughn became burdened for other cities and pioneered churches in Spokane and Seattle. In 1975, the state councils of Washington and Oregon established the office of director of Metro Ethnic Affairs for the two states and appointed Vaughn to that position. His

celebrating the fellowship's anniversary. The Church of God director of Multicultural Ministries, Dr. Ken Hill, paid tribute, and the former director of Black Ministries, Dr. C. C. Pratt, was the evening speaker. Regional Administrative Bishop Vaughn Mathews presented a special award recognizing Vaughn's 59 years of sacrificial labor, diligent work, and pioneering spirit. 

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