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Church of God **evangel**

JULY
2006



ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH
communion • footwashing • water baptism

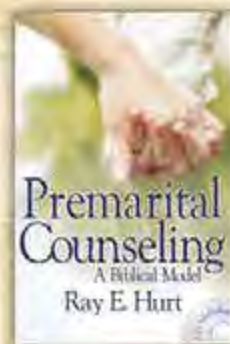
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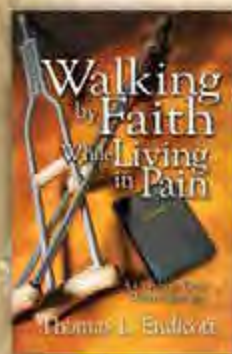
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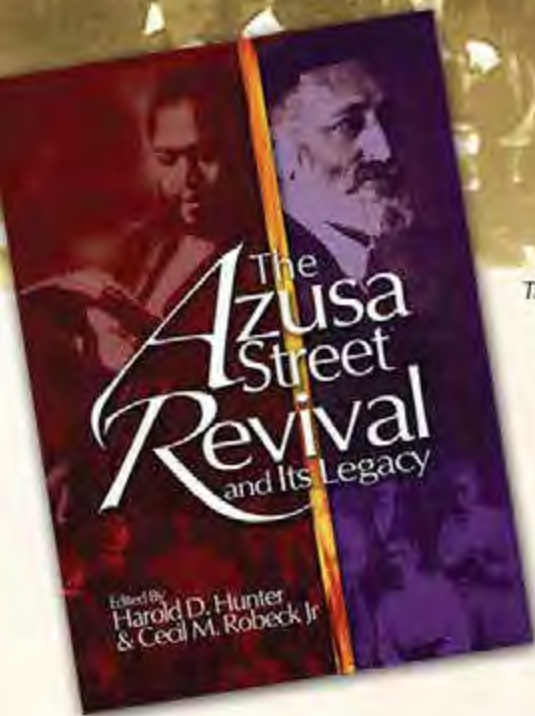
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Holiness: The Ground of Revival

I SENSE IN MY SPIRIT that God is up to something. In April I attended the Azusa Street Centennial Celebration in Los Angeles, and it has deeply influenced my life. Four months earlier, I celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Church of God General Assembly. That mountain cabin in the hills of North Carolina and the Azusa Street Mission are very similar. Both were humble and unassuming, and both were little noted at the start. But what happened at each location has shaken the world.

The Azusa experience brought home to me that what happened 100 years ago is the foundation of my life. I am a third-generation Pentecostal preacher. Pentecost is all I have ever known.

I have reflected many times on the little church where I grew up. My dad and mother were tentmaker pastors. We would often testify, "I'm saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire." Time has not changed me. I want you to know I'm saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost and fire. After the experience at the Azusa Centennial Celebration, I feel even more affirmed than ever. I will not and cannot exclude one word of that testimony to anyone who might try to explain away what I have personally experienced. They are too late to convince me otherwise. Only God could do what was done at Azusa. It's real! Thank God Almighty, it's real! I'm saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost and fire!

At the church where I grew up, outsiders viewed us with disdain. Others mocked us, but the oppressed, the broken, the emotionally wounded, alcoholics, ex-cons and the poor felt comfortable. After all, we could not ruin their reputation. But they never left like they

came. I watched the saints "pray them through." They would say, "Stay there . . . God will clean you up." "Pray on . . . the Holy Ghost will not dwell in an unclean temple."

They would also encourage the seeker to "hold on," "turn loose," "give up," "receive"—all at the same time. Yet, it all made sense to me. Some would collapse in the altar without being touched by a human. Later, sometimes much later, they would regain consciousness full of the Holy Ghost. Before they left the altar, they would give the report "I'm saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost and fire." I have been to Azusa, and now I know where these echoes came from.

Here is the obvious conclusion. You cannot have Pentecost without Calvary. Seymour, Bartleman and all of our forefathers in this Pentecostal revival would say salvation is the beginning of a discipleship process, that it ultimately culminates in a baptism of power that propels us into a life of service in the kingdom of God. You can't *talk the talk* and not *walk the walk*.

Now let's get closer to our roots. They were saved, but there was something more. It is obvious in their testimony, their writings, the churches they founded—it was holiness they desired. *Holiness* is a word that has been forgotten, denied, ridiculed, cheapened, compromised, hidden, laughed at and stigmatized. But it is Scripture: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). I didn't put it there; the Holy Ghost did.

In our first Assembly, 100 years ago, it is recorded that strong men wept. At Azusa, an unassuming preacher stood behind a homemade pulpit and

preached. There is the common thread—humble people wanting to be like Jesus.

- Holiness is not some legalistic nightmare.
- Holiness is not hardness of attitude.
- Holiness is not a denomination.
- Holiness is not some fanatic lifestyle.
- Holiness is not popular.

This is holiness—nothing more, nothing less:

- Holiness is purity of heart and mind, freedom from defilement and condemnation.
- Holiness is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.
- Holiness is God's nature.
- Holiness is separation from sin to God.
- Holiness is God's standard of living for His people.
- Holiness is commanded of God.

A hunger for holiness will make us forsake all and follow Jesus, endure persecution, and suffer for His name's sake. My prayer is, "O God, we need a revival of holiness. Forgive us for our gimmicks, our inflated egos, the manipulation of the poor, and our outlandish lifestyles."

If we bypass holiness, we will face the prophecy given 100 years ago by J. Swalgart during the Azusa Revival. He said that in the last days there would be an overemphasis on power rather than righteousness, there would be a greater emphasis on praise to a God they no longer pray to, it would become easier to celebrate than to agonize, and there would be a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the gifts rather than on the lordship of Jesus Christ.

I have a great desire for holiness. It is in our spiritual DNA . . . to be like Jesus.

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by **Daniel McEachin**



COMMUNION

Backward, Forward, Inward and Outward

IN 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29, Paul gave the earliest and most comprehensive account of the Lord's Supper: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Then he continued, "The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread," which is a painful reminder of how Communion and betrayal took place simultaneously.

Judas must have been truly cold and calloused to participate in the Lord's Supper with betrayal in his heart. Jesus must have been truly caring and compassionate to invite Judas to participate, knowing his true spiritual condition.

Paul's details of the Lord's Supper were to prevent Christians from repeating a simultaneous occurrence of Communion and spiritual betrayal. Every time we participate in the Lord's Supper we should look in four directions: backward, forward, inward and outward.

Looking Backward

"And when he had given thanks, he brake [the bread], and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (vv. 24, 25).

"In remembrance of me" occurs twice in two verses. The statement reveals the memorial aspect of Communion. A memorial is usually something we do or build to remind us of someone who has already passed away. If these instructions had been given to the people in the current Christian church to establish a memorial for Jesus, can't you just imagine that we would have had a great fund-raiser and built an elaborate monument, probably in Jerusalem—and Christians would have to travel to Israel to participate in the memorial services!

How fortunate we are that with a piece of broken bread and a cup of wine, Jesus established His own memorial prior to His death. No matter how poor Christians are or where they may gather, with a small piece of broken bread, they can remember His body that was broken for them, and with a cup of wine they can remember His blood that was shed for them. Every time we participate in Communion we should look backward—in remembrance of Jesus.

Looking Forward

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (v. 26). We are all familiar with the axiom "Actions speak louder than words." When we participate in Communion, we "shew the Lord's death." The word *shew* (or *show*)

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can also be translated “proclaim” or “announce.” Communion is a silent proclamation, a sermon without words, an illustration, proclaiming the death of Jesus Christ. We are to participate in Communion and thus proclaim His death until He comes.

According to Matthew (26:29) and Mark (14:25), after Jesus administered the cup, He promised the disciples, “I will not drink . . . of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” The Lord’s Supper is a message of anticipation and expectation of participation with Christ in His Father’s kingdom.

Looking Inward

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (vv. 27, 28).

Paul warns against participating in the Lord’s Supper “unworthily.” This warning causes many Christians concern and even prevents some from participating in Communion. The warning was not given to prevent participation, however, but as a time of preparation and repentance if necessary. In this time of self-examination, it is vitally important that we recognize and reverence the sacraments, the bread and the cup, for their proper worth.

In the early 1970s, I traveled to the island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean Sea just off the coast of Israel. I visited a cathedral dedicated to John Mark, who had evangelized the island with Paul. The interior ceiling was surrounded by a beautiful border carved with vines and grapes which were covered in gold leaf. The guide said, “The border reminds us of Communion. On this island before we participate in Communion, we fast and pray for three days, and if we have anything against anyone, we correct it or we don’t take Communion.” My heart was immediately convicted of how frequently we shuffle in, have Communion, and shuffle out without paying proper regard to the significance of the event or to our spiritual condition.

After the self-examination and recognition of the body and blood of Christ, the believer may then “eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (v. 28). The purpose of the introspection is not to exclude oneself from Communion, but to include oneself in a proper manner. After a good self-examination of our spiritual condition, especially with all of our faults and failures, who of us would feel worthy to participate in Holy Communion? After all, who is worthy of the broken body and shed blood of Christ? Prop-

er recognition of the significance of the Lord’s Supper combined with self-awareness of one’s true spiritual condition, including a sense of unworthiness, should be followed by participation in the sacred event.

Looking Outward

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (v. 29). The Corinthian believers were abusing the Lord’s Supper by dividing into small groups and discriminating against other believers. Communion should cause us to rise above our petty differences and help us realize we are all part of one body, the body of Christ. Communion should be a unifying act of worship in the church, as we recognize our place at the foot of the cross, where the body of Christ was broken and bled for us all.

Over the past 2,000 years, many churches, movements and denominations have come and gone, but for true believers in Christ, the broken body and shed blood of Christ has made us one



Communion should be a unifying act of worship in the church, as we recognize our place at the foot of the cross, where the body of Christ was broken and bled for us all.

in Him. Should Jesus tarry another 2,000 years, today’s churches and denominations—including our own—may become a chapter, an appendix, or possibly just a footnote in a church history book; but someone, somewhere, will take a small piece of broken bread and a small cup of wine and say, “This represents the body of my Lord, which was broken on my behalf, and this cup represents the blood of Jesus, which was shed for my sins.”

The Lord’s Supper should cause us to look backward in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, forward in anticipation of His return, inward in evaluation of ourselves, and outward in consideration of others. ¶



Daniel L. McEachin is the senior pastor of the Cornerstone Church of God in Columbus, Georgia.

by Daniel Tomberlin



FOOTWASHING

The Fellowship of the Towel

FOOTWASHING HAS BEEN observed by the church for centuries. Some early church fathers understood footwashing as a sacrament and associated it with water baptism. Others used the word *mystery* when speaking of footwashing, and presented it as a sacred rite independent of Communion and baptism. Today, churches representing Christian traditions from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal observe this sacred act.

Footwashing has been adopted by various renewal movements as a protest against abuses of ecclesiastical hierarchy. Because early Pentecostals understood themselves to be a renewal of the “church of the Bible,” the practice of footwashing was embraced. Every member was encouraged to observe this sacred act on the basis of fidelity to the Bible and the unity of the church. Today, some have begun to question the validity of footwashing. However, there are many Biblical reasons we should observe footwashing regularly.

Footwashing witnesses to the descent of the eternal Word

John declared that the eternal Word descended from glory and power to assume human nature (John 1:1, 14). This is a common theme in the New Testament. Peter also spoke of the descent of our Lord when He “made proclamation to the spirits now in

prison” (1 Peter 3:19, *NASB*). In a beautiful early hymn of the church, Paul relates to us the heart of this Christology: “Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself [Greek, *kenosis*], taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8, *NASB*).

The apostolic tradition interprets the Incarnation in terms denoting humility and service. The image of Jesus rising from the table, laying aside His garments, taking a towel, pouring water into a basin, bowing before His disciples and washing their feet incorporates into one sacred action the significance of the Incarnation. In Christ’s own self-emptying, He has revealed to us the glory of God.

Christians, too, are called to empty themselves through self-denial (Matthew 10:39; 16:24, 25; 19:21; Mark 8:34, 35; 10:21; Luke 9:23, 24; 17:33; 18:22; John 12:26; Acts 2:45; 4:34-37; Philippians 2:3-5; 3:7, 8). This is the spirituality of footwashing—the fellowship of the towel. “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14, 15). This is a difficult spirituality for Christians

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who live in a culture of affluence, where spirituality is defined in terms of prosperity and success. One who wishes to enter into “the fellowship of the towel” must first experience the *kenosis*, the emptying of one’s self. Footwashing is more than a sacred act of worship; it is also a way of life.

Footwashing interprets Christ’s sacrificial death

Jesus’ washing of His disciples’ feet interprets the Cross as the climax of the Son’s descent. Footwashing is presented in terms of Christ’s redemptive love and sacrificial death (John 13:1). Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet symbolizes a spiritual transformation—their cleansing and placement into fellowship with Him (vv. 8-10). Unless the disciples allowed Jesus to wash their feet, they could have “no part” with Him. Footwashing thus became a matter of salvation. Cleansing and salvation go hand in hand.

Further, Jesus commanded His disciples to wash one another’s feet. By doing so, they affirmed each other as fellow believers.

feet of each one and commanded that they wash one another’s feet. Footwashing reminds us that the church is a community of grace in which sinners are to be welcomed and restored.

Footwashing exemplifies authentic Christian ministry

Footwashing among the disciples was to be performed in the context of their apostolic mission. Jesus is the divine servant; the disciples are servants of the Divine and, as such, are servants to the world. The apostle Paul twice referred to “feet” in speaking of the proclamation of the gospel (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15).

The first-century Corinthian church suffered from schism and turmoil, and many within it challenged and rejected Paul’s apostolic ministry. Although Paul’s ministry was characterized by the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1), some in the Corinthian church classified him as “unimpressive” (v. 10, *NIV*).

Keenly aware of his divine call from Christ, Paul countered their accusation by affirming that he was “not at all inferior to the



Unless the disciples allowed Jesus to wash their feet, they could have “no part” with Him. Footwashing thus became a matter of salvation. Cleansing and salvation go hand in hand.


Footwashing interprets the Cross as Jesus’ having laid down His life for His disciples. Likewise, He commanded His disciples to wash one another’s feet.

Footwashing offers an opportunity for the sinful to confess their offenses and receive forgiveness

James wrote, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (5:16). Too often, we have viewed confession of sin as a private matter, a matter only between the sinner and the Lord. However, confession and forgiveness of sin takes place within the community of faith. The sinner must seek forgiveness from and reconciliation with those he has offended (Matthew 5:23, 24).

Within the community of Jesus’ disciples, there had been a clash of egos and many examples of failure (Matthew 16:22, 23; 26:47-49, 69-75; Mark 9:17-19; 10:35-41). But Jesus washed the

most eminent apostles” (11:5, *NKJV*). He was fearful that some who called themselves apostles would deceive the Corinthian believers so that they would believe “a different gospel” from the one he had preached to them (vv. 3, 4, *NKJV*). He told the Corinthians that those who preached “another Jesus” or “a different gospel” from the one he himself had preached to them were “false apostles” (vv. 13-15).

Authentic Christian ministry is not necessarily defined in terms of bold charismatic leadership, anyway, but in the willingness to lay aside one’s own prideful ambitions and take up the towel and basin to wash the feet of God’s people. 



Daniel Tomberlin serves as pastor of the Bainbridge Church of God in Bainbridge, Georgia. His book The Sacraments in Pentecostal Worship will be published later this year.

by **S.D.L. Jenkins**



WATER BAPTISM

Death, Burial and Resurrection

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE those who believe in Jesus? The simplest thing we might say is that both Matthew and Mark place the command to do so in the mouth of Jesus himself. The passage from Matthew 28:18-20 is often called "The Great Commission." Jesus charged His disciples to preach to all the world and baptize those who believe. We also find these instructions in Mark 16:15-18.

Baptism Commanded

Baptism's importance is underscored when we delve further to provide a comprehensive Scriptural warrant and look at the preaching of the early church. Baptism is an obligatory part of the gospel. The requirement to be baptized is always wrapped up in the presentation of the redemptive story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

This is the case in the first Christian proclamation recorded in Acts 2 (Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost) and Paul's account

of his own conversion at the hands of Ananias (ch. 22). Between these two "conversion accounts," which in my mind serve as bookends of gospel proclamation, we have the preaching to the Samaritans by Philip (ch. 8), Cornelius the Centurion by Peter (ch. 10), Lydia by Paul (ch. 16), and the Philippian jailer by Paul and Silas (ch. 16). In each, the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the injunction to be baptized are irrevocably connected.

The account of Philip's meeting with the eunuch in chapter 8, which stands directly between Peter's sermon at Pentecost and Paul's preaching to the jailer, furthers this thesis. The eunuch admitted to Philip his confusion over Isaiah 53: Who was this "suffering servant"? Philip took this occasion to tell him the good news of Jesus. The eunuch responded, "There's some water! Why can't I be baptized now?" (Acts 8:36, *NLT*). Isn't it obvious that this individual, who knew nothing about Christ prior to meeting Philip, was instructed that baptism was an integral part of the gospel? It seems that for the early church, baptism was not simply a good idea but as necessary as belief and repentance.

When thinking of baptism, our first instinct is to proclaim it an external sign of an inward work. Yet if we stop here, we seem to suggest, contrary to the practice of the apostolic church, that

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baptism is optional, that the inward work is all that really matters. We glean understanding from the ministry of John the Baptist, from whom Christians most likely adopted (with revision) the practice.

Vertical and Horizontal Aspects of Baptism

For John, baptism served not only as signification of the inward work, vertical interaction between God and the human, but also as a way of identification, a horizontal consequence of the vertical interaction.

Being baptized was not only a sign of repentance, it was also testimony of the expectation of the coming kingdom of God. This set one apart from those who were not anticipating the Kingdom. Simply put, Christians were not the only group baptizing. When submitting to baptism, a person was both signifying something (repentance) and identifying themselves with a certain group, its beliefs and its lifestyle.

Four references in the Book of Acts (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5) describe instances of those who believed in the disciples' preaching being baptized "in the name of Jesus." In the Great Commission of Matthew 28, we find instructions to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When we appreciate baptism's importance as an act of identification, the apparent contradiction between baptizing "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" in Matthew and baptizing "in the name of Jesus" in Acts is understood.

Have you been baptized in the name of Jesus? is a question of identity clarification. *Do you expect the coming of the Kingdom* (John's baptism), *or do you believe that God's kingdom has broken into this world right now with the resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit* (Christian baptism)?

This same twofold function (signification and identification), coupled with the two important dimensions (vertical and horizontal), needs to be underscored in our own contemporary practice of baptism. It should signify the vertical interchange between the individual and God—repentance through the Spirit and death in the Son, resurrection with the Son and reconciliation to the Father. This is a purely Trinitarian notion of salvation. We pick it up in Paul's argument in Romans 6:1-10, and it is what we normally understand as baptism's importance.




Baptism's Symbolism

The fact that we do not baptize ourselves signifies that we cannot save ourselves; we cannot make ourselves holy and acceptable. Our submersion under the water signifies entrance into the very death and resurrection of Jesus. Imagine a pastor dunking a candidate and keeping him under the water. What would happen to the candidate? He would die; we cannot live under the water. Upon coming out of the water, what does the candidate do? He takes a breath, signifying the new breath of life that has been granted to us through the resurrection of Jesus.

We should also appreciate the presentation of baptism in the Book of Acts. There, baptism has a horizontal dimension—namely, the identification of the baptized person with a particular community (church), a particular set of teachings (that of the apostles), and a particular lifestyle (love of God and love of neighbor). The individual is entering a group that understands itself to be the body of Christ. This group is identified with Jesus Christ, who saves from wretchedness, who calls all men and women to follow

In baptism, the individual is identified with that community whose members submit themselves to one another in Christ, who commit themselves to one another for Christ, and who admit to one another their burdens and sins.

Him to the Cross, and who can make us all sons and daughters of the Father.

Thus, baptism should be a testimony to others that we have abandoned our attempts to save ourselves, to follow our own paths, to be self-made people. In baptism, the individual is identified with that community whose members submit themselves to one another in Christ, who commit themselves to one another for Christ, and who admit to one another their burdens and sins. Baptism is our stand against a culture that demands our conformity to rampant individualism, our minds to godless ideals, and our lives to hopeless isolation. We are not our own; we belong to Christ and to one another in Christ. All other gods must yield. 



S.D.L. Jenkins is assistant professor of historical theology at Lee University School of Religion.

PRAYER COVERING for the

AT THE 2004 General Assembly, the Church of God adopted prayer as the first of seven core values.

We commit ourselves to making prayer the highest priority in the church, demonstrated by . . .

- Every local church becoming a house of prayer for all nations
- Emphasizing communication with God as the highest privilege and the greatest responsibility of every member
- Modeling by all church leadership of an active and effective prayer life
- Uniting with other believers in corporate and intercessory prayer.

General Overseer G. Dennis McGuire is calling for prayer support for this Assembly at a level that may be unprecedented. Quoting E. Stanley Jones, he recently reminded the church that it is “in prayer that we align ourselves with the purposes and the power of God, and He is able to do things through us that could not otherwise be done!” He also

challenged church leaders, “The issues before us at this Assembly as well as both the challenges and the opportunities we face as a denomination demand unprecedented prayer mobilization.”

It is the desire of the church’s leaders to see the 2006 General Assembly in Indianapolis covered with prayer support. On Sunday, July 23, a pre-Assembly Prayer Rally will call a thousand prayer partners together at the Convention Center at 4 p.m. Pastors, laypersons, prayer leaders and intercessors from the surrounding five states are being asked to come together to give the gift of prayer to the General Assembly and to the city of Indianapolis. This special prayer rally will focus on prayer for the evangelization of the world, prayer for the city of Indianapolis, and prayer for the business meetings and worship services of the Assembly. Various leaders of the church will guide the prayer session. Reports of revival around the world will also be

shared, and prayer and praise will be interspersed.

After the Prayer Rally, hundreds will quietly prayer-walk downtown Indianapolis, concluding at Monument Circle, the heart of the city, to pray a prayer of blessing on the city. A coalition of more than 20 denominations from Indianapolis will engage in a simultaneous prayer-walk in behalf of the city.

At 9 p.m., Church of God leaders will be called together for a prayer and Communion service led by the general overseer. Every committee is being asked to be first a prayer committee. This meeting will be open to all delegates to the Assembly. In the weeks leading up to the General Assembly, prayer support is being rallied across the nation and around the world. Eight bulletin inserts are being made available as downloads from *Faith News* to provide prayer cues for the world, for the General Assembly, and for a great awakening. Each church is being asked to take time in their Wednesday night service to pray for this Assembly. Each state/region is being asked to declare a day of prayer for the Assembly.

Special prayer gatherings are anticipated at the International Offices, the North Cleveland Prayer Tower, and among divisional and departmental leaders. In the week prior to the Assembly, every church around the world is being asked to call its people to stop and pray at noon each day. This amounts to 24-hour prayer, every hour, for a week prior to the Assembly.

In addition, a multidenominational coalition of churches in Indianapolis, including Church of God congregations, has launched a 40-day prayer initiative in behalf of their city. That prayer effort climaxes the week of the Assembly. All over Indianapolis, in seven sectors of the city, hundreds of churches will be blessing the



International General Assembly

city of Indianapolis. Dave Lorency of Operation Compassion is collaborating with this effort and resourcing it. As our Assembly concludes on Saturday, people of Indianapolis will conclude their week of collaborative prayer and care. They will gather in the Conseco Field House in downtown Indianapolis for a rally anticipated to draw as many as 10,000 people. Operation Compassion will be present with inflatables for the kids, hotdogs for everyone, and service to the mission of the “Faith, Hope and Love!” group in that city.

This year, with the help of special teams and the participation of The Mission, prayer and care will be wrapped together in a more intentional way. On Monday, “prayer ambassador teams” will be deployed throughout the city to give the “gift of prayer” with a focus on downtown merchants. In behalf of the Church of God, these teams will bless those who will serve us during the week. They will hand-carry a letter from our general overseer, along with inspirational materials, and information about the denomination. They will offer the gift of prayer. Intercessors will again sweep the city, the arena and meeting rooms in prayer. The Prayerborne Luncheon will be conducted on Friday at noon at the Westin Hotel.

The early morning prayer service, always a special feature at any Assembly, is being given additional room this year. Some have described their time in the prayer room each morning as the highlight of the General Assembly. Every pastor and delegate is urged to drop by the prayer room and begin the day in prayer. The General Assembly is about prayer! Expect to see small groups of intercessors praying in various locations in

the Convention Center inviting God to dwell among us.

It is the desire of General Overseer Dennis McGuire and the other members of the International Executive Committee to create what one great prayer leader calls “God room!” Prayer invites God. Prayer entertains His presence and breaks barrenness. In prayer, He whispers to His prophets secrets. In prayer, He strategically places us between Himself and the nations.


All business sessions and worship services will be covered with

prayer. Special simultaneous intercession teams will begin a vigil of prayer in the morning and pray without ceasing until the end of the evening session. Each speaker will be assigned a personal PIT crew—a Personal Intercessory Team.

Leaders of the city will be greeted by prayer teams in behalf of the many thousands of delegates that will gather. We want to give the “gift of prayer” to Indianapolis and leave behind a blessing!

We approach this General Assembly on the heels of the 100th anniversary of Azusa Street. Over 40,000 people gathered in Los Angeles recently to reflect on the impact of the modern outpouring of the Holy Spirit and to pray for a fresh Pentecost. Indianapolis was one of the flash points in the years following Azusa Street. It is estimated that as many as 20 million people were impacted in the years following Azusa Street. Our generation has not seen a “great awakening.”

Awakening is more than a revival. It is a sovereign coming of God to a city or a nation. It is the cloud of God’s presence settling on a community in a convicting and liberating manner. It is personal encounters with the risen Christ by the evident power of the Holy Spirit. The result is also radically transformed lives and measurable cultural change. It is as unstoppable as a rainstorm. It is as pervasive as the morning dew. It is God come to town!

Let’s not go to Indianapolis just for a General Assembly. Let’s go to Indianapolis expecting a spiritual awakening. 



God cannot do evil. He cannot be unjust. Whatever He does, He does according to who He is.—D. James Kennedy

HIGH ATOP THE Kaaterskill Falls one fateful Sunday afternoon, Gary Rankin had no idea that soon he would be a crumpled heap lying 50 feet below. The pastor of Middletown Alliance Church of upstate New York admits that prayer and faith were the bridge that “carried me over death’s abyss.”

Atheists and skeptics may question Rankin’s explanation for his miraculous recovery. Christians who prayed for him believe prayer played a major role. Like Rankin, they believe that God exists and prayer is no senseless chatter.

God’s Unfathomable Ways

Doctrinal differences do not separate Rankin from some of his fellow believers, but the seeming conflict between prayer and sovereign will does. Unlike Rankin, numerous Christians have discovered that God does not always answer prayer as they expect.

No wonder we’re confused. Sometimes sovereign will seems more like “sovereign whim.”

In my own life I’ve sampled God’s seeming arbitrariness.

- I was a member of a local assembly for several years before the church began to experience a major membership meltdown. Over a period of time, the membership was reduced to a faithful few praying earnestly for God to bring restoration. Nothing changed.

- During a visit to her doctor, my mother was told the unexpected news that she had ovarian cancer. One of her favorite chapters was Psalm 91. She believed “pestilence” and “plague” referred to in the psalm were synonymous with cancer and held to the promise inherent in that chapter. Confronted with the news and bewildered by a promise she could no longer claim, she slipped into weeks of uncharacteristic depression. Despite the earnest prayers of many, she died on Valentine’s Day 1986.

Don’t Give Up on ‘Unanswered’ Prayer

by Lillian
Rhoades

Scattered among the pages of our life experiences are similar stories: the young couple grieving over the death of an infant son . . . parents losing the battle for the life of the sole survivor of four children who perished in a fire . . . the widow unable to save her home from foreclosure . . . the pastor whose son succumbed to an incurable disease.

Consolation in Scripture

The Bible contains parallel stories of numerous occasions when God did not answer prayer as the person would have liked. Paul's prayer for removal of his "thorn in the flesh," Elijah's prayer to die in the wilderness, Job's anguished plea for answers to family tragedy and physical suffering, and even Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane received no welcome reply.

Christians find hope and comfort in the Biblical accounts of those who overcame the seeming failure of God to answer their prayer. Still, according to a 1997 *Newsweek* article, 18 percent of those who believed in God turned away from Him when their prayers went "unanswered."

Most of us who have had similar experiences of "unanswered" prayer identify with their struggle. Yet, however difficult our struggle, we *must* continue to guard against the tendency to turn away from God.

There will be times when our faith will weaken and we'll let down our guard, unable to silence the voice of doubt or buttress our faith against the forces of disappointments and uncertainty. In those times, we often respond to God's failure to answer our prayers with the question "Why?" We long for the One who appears to have not answered our prayer to answer our question.

Unshakable Trust

"Why?" was on my mind the day we buried my 28-year-old nephew who died unexpectedly. As I gazed into his casket, his grandmother joined me. Her weathered face belied a firm and wrinkle-free faith. Sensing my grief, she softly chided me with Job-like certainty: "We cannot

question God," she said, shaking her head in a gentle rebuke.

Was she correct? Is questioning God's apparent unresponsiveness to our grief or personal tragedy a sign of eroding faith? Can we question God and still avoid the pitfalls of doubt and cynicism? Job addressed the seeming conflict between faith, trust and "unanswered" prayer. "I know," he said, "that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You" (Job 42:2, NKJV).

I don't recall the author of the following statement, but what he said stayed with me: *Prayer is not the purpose of our heart toward God; it is the purpose of God's heart toward us.* Pastor Chuck Swindoll

puts it this way: "Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases, whenever He pleases. After all, isn't that part of our definition of God?" Their statements mirror Job's conclusion that the fundamental purpose of prayer is to put us in line with the sovereign purpose and plan of God, who responds to our prayers with His purpose for us uppermost in His mind.

That purpose may mean an immediate yes to our prayers. Or it may mean, "No, I have something else in mind for you," as was the case of those whose stories we well know.

Another Plan

After months in a Nazi concentration camp, Corrie ten Boom saw people die despite her prayers. Joni Eareckson Tada remains wheelchair-bound after a swimming accident as a teenager despite the many prayers that were made on her behalf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hung for his faith after spending two years in a Nazi camp despite the many friends who prayed for his release. After serving 16 years with her husband as missionaries to Japan and China, Charles Cowman's wife spent six more tough years caring for her ill husband before he died.

While confined, Corrie ten Boom touched the lives of hundreds of prisoners with the gospel of Jesus Christ, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *The Cost of Discipleship*, and Mrs. Cowman wrote *Streams in the Desert*—now classics in Christian literature. Joni Eareckson Tada's worldwide ministry reaches an underevangelized disabled population. She is one of God's chosen vessels of honor who lives out the message that quadriplegia need not be the end of the story.

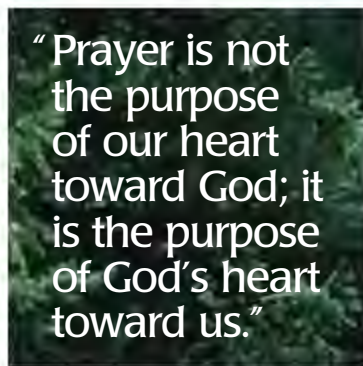
On James Dobson's *Focus on the Family*, Joni talked about her visit to Israel, where she visited the Pool of Bethesda. She had often imagined Jesus stopping by her bedside to heal her, she said, just as

He had healed the crippled man at this pool centuries ago. But despite her earnest prayers, she was never able to "rise up and walk." Now, many years later, as she sat in her wheelchair gazing at the place where Jesus performed His miracle (and she had fancied hers),

tears of thankfulness flowed down her cheeks and she was able to do what she couldn't have done years before—she found herself thanking God for saying no.

We may not all grab the world's attention with stories of dead-end prayers that turned into unforeseen blessings; but if we search, we can find them, evidence of God's sovereign will. We don't all have a Gary Rankin experience, and we are often left wondering why God says yes to some and no to others. But He will not leave us clueless forever. He simply asks that we trust Him, believing that in every "unanswered" prayer, there is God's unalterable purpose. When we can say yes to His no, we too find ourselves thanking God for "unanswered" prayer. *†*

Lillian Rhoades, member of the Church of God in New Windsor, New York, continues her conversations with God, even when He does not answer her requests the way she has in mind.



IT ALL BEGAN with a high school fund-raiser for a senior class trip for Mexico Academy's class of '99. Joshua Russell, son of Dr. Ron Russell, pastor of the Lighthouse Church of God in Mexico, New York, a village 30 miles north of Syracuse, approached his dad and asked if he would be willing to buy a brick for his senior class trip.

When his father asked the price, Joshua told him they were \$30 per brick

my and Central School community."

The complainer didn't give up, so the bricks were removed and relocated under the bushes alongside the walk, where they would be hidden from view. Still not satisfied, the complainer contacted the senator's office and the ACLU. The school, caving in to the individual's demands, removed and destroyed the bricks with the name of Jesus on them. It's called being "politically correct," posits Pastor Russell, "or separation of

bly be a five-to-eight-year battle. He told them that although there were two other churches with individuals whose bricks had been removed because of the name of Jesus, they shouldn't be surprised if they were the last one standing when the battle started to heat up. "I was half right," he said. One of the two other individuals gave up the fight, but Robert Kiesinger hung in there with him. Attorney Thomas Marcelle filed the suit on their behalf, claiming the removal of the



The LONG FIGHT
for a FEW
BRICKS
by Wilma Amison

and went on to explain, "And you can have whatever you want inscribed on them, except no cussing or love messages, like 'Ronnie loves Susie.'" Says Pastor Russell, "Being the supportive father that I am, I bought five." The messages he chose were "Jesus Saves," "Jesus Christ, the Only Way," "Jesus Loves You," "Jesus Christ Is Lord," and "You Must Be Born Again."

Not until about a year after the bricks were in place in a walkway leading up to the high school were there any complaints about the inscriptions. Four other bricks, purchased by other Christians, bearing the name of Jesus were also targeted. After the first complaint, the school installed a large sign with the following disclaimer: "The messages on this walk are personal expressions and contributions of individuals of Mexico Acade-

church and state." Other bricks whose inscriptions referred to God, including one purchased by a Catholic priest that said "God Bless You," were not removed.

The school sent the pastor a letter offering to refund his money or allow him to choose other inscriptions. Perhaps others would have thought the best thing to do—in the name of keeping the peace—would be to drop the whole issue, Dr. Russell says. But, he added, he would rather be Biblically correct than politically correct, and he strongly believes Jesus' words recorded in Luke 9:26: "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory" (NIV). So he called a meeting of the church's lay ministers and explained the course of action he believed they had to take—a federal law suit.

He warned his people it would proba-

bricks violated their rights to free speech and freedom of religion. The claim was filed in February 2000.

The ACLU claimed that the wording of the bricks bearing the name of Jesus constituted public school endorsement of Christianity, thus violating the so-called separation of church and state. The case went to the U.S. District Court in Syracuse, then to the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Manhattan. It was sent back to U.S. District Court with instructions to gather more information. A request for summary judgment was filed in 2004.

Finally, at the end of March this year, U.S. District Judge Norman Mordue, in a 31-page ruling, said the bricks carrying a message about Jesus do not endorse a particular religious view by the district and that removing them violated the rights of the people who paid for them.



Dr. Ron Russell on the "Walk of Fame" at Mexico Academy

Mordue found the walkway constituted "a limited public forum" open to public expression, that it was clearly a secular project and that the nine bricks, out of the 1,736, did not violate the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, which prohibits the government from favoring one religion over another. He cited a 2001 Supreme Court ruling that speech on otherwise permissible subjects "cannot be excluded . . . on the ground that the subject is discussed from a religious viewpoint." The judge ordered the public high school to return the bricks to the walkway.

"To me, it's a bottom-line case," Marcelle said. "From the very beginning, we've said you can't discriminate by literally chiseling out certain religious expressions and allowing other religious expressions to remain."

Pro-family attorney John Whitehead, president of The Rutherford Institute, the civil liberties and human rights defense organization that represented the Christian plaintiffs in the lawsuit, argued that the school's censorship violated rights guaranteed to citizens by the First and 14th Amendments as well as by the New


York Constitution. He is pleased with the court's ruling and says it is consistent with the outcomes of many similar suits in which his legal group has been involved.

"We've won several of these cases in this area," Whitehead notes. "It's called viewpoint discrimination. You can't discriminate against the religious viewpoint, and the judge said that's what happened here. It violates the First Amendment."

The court ruled in accordance with the Constitution this time, but Whitehead believes such cases will continue to arise. Although The Rutherford Institute has won cases, he believes that people's rights to free religious expression will continue to face challenges. He encourages Christians to be vigilant and not be afraid to "get in there and really fight" for their viewpoint and the right to express it—even in the public schools.

Whitehead says he is pleased with the outcome of this case—that for at least one county in New York, Christians' equal right to express their religious viewpoint along with others' private expressions has been upheld. The Rutherford Institute called it "a great victory for free speech."

Pastor Russell says he was in Israel when he heard the news of Judge Mordue's ruling in their favor. He had just visited the empty tomb where Jesus lay and was presently visiting Megiddo, where a future battle will take place—"and all over the name of Jesus."

News of the outcome of the battle for the bricks bearing the name of Jesus to be allowed in the public school's walkway was, of course, read in the local newspapers, as well as broadcast and televised. Beyond that, however, newspapers from all over the United States carried the story of the controversy that had caused such a stir in the little Upper New York town—from Boston to Los Angeles, from Chicago to Saint Louis, from Seattle to Chattanooga, as well as *USA Today*. The name of Jesus was going to be allowed to return to the walkway that Pastor Russell says is now referred to as the "Walk of Fame." 



Wilma Amison is managing editor of the Church of God Evangel.

AS A CHURCH OF GOD minister's son, Paul Parker is no stranger to miracles. As a child, he saw people instantly healed as goiters vanished before his eyes. "I was 6 years old when my daddy pastored the church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee—a community that was 90 percent Catholic. During a revival held by the Reverend A.J. Rouse, one of the members, Virgil Littel, was injured while working at Swift and Company in Lawrenceburg when a 500-pound block of green cheese dropped on his foot and broke it. Two days after the accident, Virgil came to church. While Brother Rouse was ministering, he

interrupted his message to say, 'There's someone here who has come to be healed tonight.' Virgil came out of his seat and went to the front. With his pocket knife, he broke the two-day-old cast off his foot, and danced all over that house."

Bad Diagnosis

These miracles of healing are still vivid in Paul's memory. Through the years he has relied on them to sustain his own faith. But on July 3, 2002, when his doctor told him he had inoperable colon cancer and could do no more for him, Paul needed more than a memory—he needed his own miracle!

After diagnostic tests in his hometown of Cleveland, Tennessee, he was sent to a doctor in Knoxville who had developed a colonoscopy that used water instead of air, which could determine how far the cancer had eaten through the bowel wall. Paul was more concerned about his wife, Virgie, than himself. He told his doctor in Knoxville, "I have already been advised that my cancer is inoperable, and I'm not worried about it. I've made my preparations to leave this world, but I don't want my wife to worry about it."

The Knoxville doctor told him, "Mr. Parker, your chances are 55/45, in your

by Wanda Griffith

Pathway to a Miracle

Though doctors said his cancer was inoperable, Paul Parker never stopped trusting the Healer.

favor . . . providing this is the only cancer you have.” Paul had already had four other biopsies on other locations on his colon. He was not told all of them were cancerous, but the one that was hemorrhaging was definitely cancer . . . and inoperable.

Growing Worse

Paul’s physical condition grew worse, and his kidneys began to shut down. That’s when his sister told him about an evangelist, Donna Powers, who was preaching at a small church in the city. Paul did not know the evangelist, but he believed in the gift of healing. “When she prayed for me, she held up 10 fingers and said, ‘Without a miracle from God, your days are limited . . . but tonight is your night.’

“When Donna Powers prayed for me, the strangest thing she said was, ‘You’re going to feel like fire.’ I didn’t feel anything, but I still knew God had healed me. The woman standing behind me told me later that when she put her hands on my back, she felt like she was burning up. And Virgie, who was also standing behind me, said it looked like a shield of rain surrounded my entire body.”

In 2004, after being told that all his vital signs were perfect for a new type of chemotherapy, Paul and Virgie consented to his having 25 radiation treatments and 14 chemotherapy treatments. When the oncologist asked why he had waited so long, he explained that two doctors had already told him his cancer was inoperable, and he really wasn’t worried about it. “I never lost one minute’s sleep,” he said. “I knew that if it was the Lord’s will for me to be healed, I would be healed; and if it wasn’t, I was ready to go.”

The Healing Began

“I’ve never accepted anything except that God did the healing. I know God healed me. The doctors even told me it



Paul Parker

wasn’t their treatments . . . that God had done it.”

Although Paul is not completely over the side effects of the treatments, his cancer is gone, his strength has returned, his kidneys are functioning normally, and his faith is stronger than ever. The four doctors who have treated Paul for the past few years recognize his miracle. One doctor told him, “I know who the Healer is. Doctors are just instruments to be used in His hands.”

Still Trusting

Looking back, Paul questions whether he should have undergone the treatments. “The most horrible part was the radiation treatments that burned me so badly I could hardly walk. That’s the reason I’m still suffering today. Taking the treatments showed a vast weakness in my determination to trust God. But I believe the Bible teaches that we should do all we can and then trust God with the results. And that’s what I did. The doctor told me it would take two to three years to completely get over the radiation treatment because of the intensity of the radiation they were giving me.”

Earlier on two separate occasions, God had healed him. While driving down Interstate 75 to meet his son for lunch, Paul lost consciousness. When he came to, he was on the outside of his truck, bathing his face in the rainwater of a thunderstorm. The diagnosis that time was a brain stem aneurism.

God performed another miracle for Paul before he had chemo and radiation therapy, by healing his eyes. “In 2003, my pastor, Jerry Millwood, commissioned the congregation at the Hopewell Church of God to read through the Bible at least once. After reading three or four verses of Scripture, my eyes would just dance, and the words would all run together. Two of the

members from church came by one day and asked, ‘Brother Parker, how are you coming on your Bible reading?’ I responded, ‘I can’t read. The letters just all dance together after just three or four verses.’ They said, ‘Well, let’s just pray about it right here.’ So we started praying.

“There was a boy about 12 or 13 years old in the backseat of their vehicle. ‘Wait a minute,’ I said, ‘we’re going about this all wrong. The Bible says God will honor that child. Let’s stack his hands in here with ours, and then we’ll all pray.’

“We stacked our hands one on top of the other and prayed. From that day till this, I have read the Bible from lid to lid. As much as 13 hours a day, I read the Bible. Why the Lord has brought me through all this, I’ll never know. On second thought, I will. One day, He’ll tell me. Whatever pathway God chooses, I’m still looking to Him for the completion of my healing.” ☞



Wanda Griffith is book editor at the Church of God Publishing House and editor of Youth and Christian Education Leadership.

30 YARDS

by Brian Aird

WITH A HEAVY HEART, the young sailor ascended the ladder that led to the flight deck of the helicopter carrier. As he opened the hatch, the cool night air that rushed in did little to deter him from his mission. Walking out onto the steel-plated deck, he paused, looked briefly around, and breathed in the darkness of the night sky.

The red glow from the lights that outlined the superstructure of the ship and the vast galaxies of stars would be the only visible witnesses of the carrying out of his plans. This small floating city of 2,000 sailors and marines had been his home away from home for the last four months. It had been the first deployment for this young man and was replete with many exotic ports of call. Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong . . . all exciting places to visit.


Everything had gone well, with the exception of that one ugly night when he gave in to his loneliness. The turmoil,

shame and anguish raging within was reflected in his slow and deliberate death trek across the flight deck. He had failed—he had betrayed his two boys, his wife and himself miserably. There was no excuse for what he had done, and he could not see beyond the thick veil of his transgression.

Unable to rationalize his behavior, and distraught with the unbearable pain he was experiencing, he began to walk the last 30 yards of his life. He planned to soon be engulfed by the cold Pacific Ocean. Approaching the end of the safety of the ship, memories of his family poured over him, but he quickly convinced himself that this was the best way. How could he be a part of their lives? How could he ever look into their eyes? “O God, I am truly sorry. I am a failure! Forgive me,” he cried.

Then the miracle took place—the miracle of Calvary. Deep within the recesses of his tormented soul, a divine voice spoke tenderly.

The sailor later testified that when those desperate words were uttered, asking God for forgiveness, God in turn whispered to his heart—not words of condemnation, judgment, anger or rebuke. Those words would have only verified what he already felt and knew only too well to be true. They would have simply confirmed his own judgments of what he was. Instead, the words spoken into the darkness of his soul were powerful words of acceptance and release.

The love that brushed across his penitent heart washed away his sinful betrayal. God, in His great mercy and with unfathomable grace, whispered, “I love you.” Those regenerative words, empowered by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, melted, washed, forgave, accepted and made all things new. A sailor was found by his Savior. 

Brian Aird sends this true story from Modesto, California.

THE KEYS TO ETERNAL LIFE

CHRIST PAID for our salvation with His death on the cross, but for us to accept this gift is as simple as using these keys to unlock the door:



Acknowledge you have sinned

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). * “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).



Believe in Jesus

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).



Confess and renounce your sin

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

*Scriptures are from the *New International Version*.

COOPERATIVE COMMUNIQUE



Billy Wilson

Prayer Retreat in the Pacific Northwest

Recently, pastors and their spouses from the Pacific Northwest met in Portland, Oregon, for the Church of God's annual Prayer Retreat for ministers and their spouses. Administrative Bishop James Cossey hosted this wonderful time of prayer, praise and renewal.

Pastors and administrators of the Church of God of Prophecy from Tennessee and Alaska joined the meetings held at the Red Lion Hotel overlooking the vast expanse of the Columbia River.

Guest speakers at the event included Billy Wilson, international minister of outreach; Dr. Orville Hagan, second assistant general overseer for the Church of God; and Dr. Donald Knoblich, state overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy for Alaska and Washington.

In his Wednesday evening message, Brother Wilson challenged the leaders to



turn their "Bruises Into Blessings." Recognizing that bruises are inevitable, he reminded them that pressure brings tasty juice from the orange, beautiful diamonds from coal, and healing oil from the olive. Learning to bless those who bruise us can turn those bruises into birthplaces of blessings, preventing them from becoming bastions of bitterness.

On Thursday morning, Brother Wilson shared "Six Lessons" from the Azusa Street Revival—humility, holiness, harmony, harvest, Holy Spirit and hunger. Dr. Knoblich shared a devotional to open the Thursday evening service, and Dr. Orville Hagan brought the evening message, "The Challenge of 2006." Brother Hagan reminded the ministers that while John Travolta may be pushing the Church of Scientology, and Madonna the Jewish mysticism of the Kabbalah, Scripture tells us, "He who comes from above is above all" (John 3:31, NKJV).

An air of expectancy was evident among the Pacific Northwest leadership. Ministers and their spouses shared that they had experienced a new stirring of the Holy Spirit. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful grace as we came together, focusing on unity, prayer, and evangelizing a region of our nation that is relatively unchurched. —*Tim Cowdell, Church of God Ordained Minister*



NOTICE OF PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE BYLAWS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

PREAMBLE

The 70th International General Assembly of the Church of God gave several assignments to the incoming International Executive Council and the International Executive Committee in 2004. They were charged with . . .

- defining or developing strategies for internationalization
- formulating a possible structure for a U.S.A. National Assembly
- studying the possibility of a group health insurance program
- holding discussion forums
- revising the mission statement
- making an in-depth study of the financial system.

In order to fulfill the 90-day notice required by the *Minutes* for bylaw changes, enclosed are three items for consideration before the International General Council agenda is distributed. (The remaining items on the agenda should be completed by May 1, 2006 and mailed shortly thereafter.)

1. The first proposal offers a revision of the mission statement. This item was listed as an item of previous notice on the 2004 International General Council Agenda.
2. The proposal for a quadrennial General Assembly is offered in response to the regional forums as a significant cost-saving measure. Currently, the cost of the International General Assembly to the tithe fund at the International Offices exceeds \$2.2 million every two years. This does not count the impact on local churches, state offices and departments. Cities that host the Assembly estimate a \$25-\$30 million impact on the local economy.
3. Another item discussed in the forums dealt with elected departmental leaders. This motion is also offered as an option for cutting costs. If the directors of World Missions, Evangelism and Home Missions, and the Youth and Christian Education Department were to be recommended by the International Executive Committee to the International Executive Council for ratification, and assistant directors were to be replaced with administrative assistants, a significant savings could be achieved.

The International Executive Council herein gives notice that it is recommending to the 2006 International General Council the following changes in the Bylaws of the Church of God.

PROPOSAL 1

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The 70th International General Assembly adopted seven Commitments to Our Mission and Vision that reflect the items to be deleted in this motion. The purpose of this motion is to give the church a succinct, easy-to-remember mission statement.

We recommend:

That we amend the Bylaws, page 118, Article IV, Mission Statement, by substituting the following for the current paragraph:

The mission of the Church of God is to communicate the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20) in the Spirit and power of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 13-18).

CURRENT READING:

Page 118, Bylaws, Article IV, Mission Statement:

The mission of the Church of God is to perpetuate the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20), in the Spirit and power of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 13-18), through specific attention to and emphasis upon the centrality of God's Word, world evangelization, ministerial development, Christian discipleship, lay ministry, Biblical stewardship, church growth, church planting, family enrichment, and servant leadership.

PROPOSAL 2

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

Beginning in 1906, the Church of God General Assembly convened annually. In 1946, the 41st General Assembly adopted the motion that the General Assembly convene biennially with the general organization of the church "adjusted to this set-up." A review of the motion and rationale by the Supreme Council (Executive Council) August 13-18, 1946, stated three primary reasons: first, the aggregate cost to the

church and constituency; second, inadequate time for full implementation of “policy items” and decisions of the General Assembly; and third, “from two to four months of efficient service before and after the Assembly are lost.”

Now more than five decades later we are faced with the same general conditions. The cost for General Assemblies is ever increasing. It now costs the tithing fund budget over \$2.2 million every two years, which doesn't include the cost to departments, state offices or local churches. Cities that host the International General Assembly estimate a \$25-\$30 million impact on the local economy. In addition to the increasing financial impact of the General Assembly, the implementation of ministry initiatives and policies do not achieve their full potential due to time constraints, and the continual transition of leadership at all levels of the church minimizes ministry effectiveness.

The Executive Council believes that a quadrennial International General Assembly period could help to accomplish our mission more effectively, provide a sense of momentum, embrace positive change, and help realize a preferred future.

We recommend:

- 1) That we amend page 119, Bylaws, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 1. International General Assembly, Meeting, by striking the word “biennially” and inserting the word “quadrennially.” (Effective 2008)**

CURRENT READING:

Page 119, Bylaws, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 1. International General Assembly, Meeting:

The International General Assembly shall meet biennially to consider all recommendations from the International General Council.

That we amend page 120, Bylaws, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 2. International General Council, Agenda, paragraph 1, by striking the word “biennially” and inserting the word “quadrennially.” (Effective 2008)

CURRENT READING:

Page 120, Bylaws, Article VI, Governing Bodies, 2. International General Council, Agenda, paragraph 1:

1. The International General Council shall meet biennially to consider all recommendations from the International Executive Council.

That the tenured offices in the *Minutes* be changed to reflect these motions and the Executive Council be authorized to resolve any conflicts or questions regarding terms of office in the *Minutes* in implementing the above motions reflecting a quadrennial International General Assembly.

PROPOSAL 3

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

The day-to-day development and implementation of ministries are carried out primarily at the departmental level. Currently three of the department directors and their assistants are elected by the International General Assembly. The rest (29) are appointed by the International Executive Committee. Some feel that the International Executive Committee should be allowed to choose their administrative staff; much like the local pastor does in the local church.

In order to provide sharper focus on our mission, greater accountability, continuity of leadership and a shared vision, all departmental leaders should be chosen in the same manner. This would make the filling of all positions consistent and also facilitate the implementation of the divisional structure. Those ministries that have experienced longevity in the top leadership positions have shown remarkable stability and progress.

The Executive Council will be proposing that beginning at the International General Assembly in 2012, the positions of general director of Youth and Christian Education, general director of Evangelism and Home Missions, and general director of World Missions be filled by individuals submitting applications to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee could process the applications and present names for each position to the Executive Council with recommendation, with the choices to fill these positions being ratified by the Executive Council. The individuals appointed to these positions could also be allowed to choose their own administrative assistant, rather than appointing assistant directors. This could be a significant cost-saving measure. The Executive Council will also be proposing that this process be reevaluated by the International General Council and General Assembly in 2020.

We recommend:

- 1. That we amend page 119, S2. Bylaws of the Church of God, Article VI. Governing Bodies, 1. International General Assembly, Elections, by striking all the words following “secretary general” so as to read:**

The International General Assembly shall elect the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, [and] the secretary general. (*Effective International General Assembly 2012 and reviewed by the General Council/Assembly in 2020*)

CURRENT READING:

Page 119, S2. Bylaws of the Church of God, Article VI. Governing Bodies, 1. International General Assembly, Elections:

The International General Assembly shall elect the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, the secretary general, the general Youth and Christian Education director, the assistant general Youth and Christian Education director, the Evangelism and Home Missions director, the assistant Evangelism and Home Missions director, the director of World Missions, and the assistant director of World Missions.

2. That we amend page 121, S2. Bylaws of the Church of God, Article VI. Governing Bodies, 2. International General Council, Agenda, paragraph 5, by striking all the words following “secretary general” so as to read:

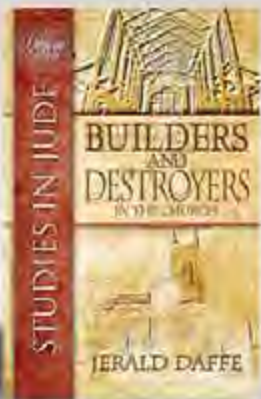
The International General Council shall nominate to the International General Assembly the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, [and] the secretary general. *(Effective International General Assembly 2012 and reviewed by the General Council/Assembly in 2020)*

CURRENT READING:

Page 121, S2. Bylaws of the Church of God, Article VI. Governing Bodies, 2. International General Council, Agenda, paragraph 5:

The International General Council shall nominate to the International General Assembly the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, the secretary general, the general Youth and Christian Education director, the assistant general Youth and Christian Education director, the Evangelism and Home Missions director, the assistant Evangelism and Home Missions director, the director of World Missions, and the assistant director of World Missions.

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You Choose the Colors

by Judy Weston

WHEN ONE OF my sons was in kindergarten, I was summoned to school one day by his teacher. Wondering what the little fellow could have done wrong, I was surprised when she showed me a picture he had colored. Frowning, she remarked, "I'm really concerned about your son." She went on to explain, "You see, he colors everything black."

Puzzled, I commented, "Well, I'm sure I provided him with a box of 24 colored crayons according to your instructions—lots of different colors."

"Oh, he still has the rest," she assured me, "but he only uses the black one. Could he be depressed or sad about something?"

Privately thinking the teacher was overreacting, I replied, "Well, I haven't noticed anything like that, but I'll talk to him about it and let you know."

Sure enough, when I questioned my son, already an independent thinker and nonconformist at age 5, he just shrugged his shoulders and explained, "I like black best, Mom—it's my favorite color." He grew to manhood perfectly normal and adjusted and is today a successful business-

man. When he bought his first car, it was black, but since then he has owned others of different colors—red, gray, white.

As I matured, I have developed a liking for purple. My car is purple, and I wear purple so often that my grown children joke, "Let's buy Mom a new dress for Christmas—but please, no more purple!"

Just as we can choose the colors for our decor or for adorning ourselves, so we can choose the hues that color our lives. A grief-stricken woman was sharing her feelings about a tragic experience. A friend said sympathetically, "Sorrow does color our lives, doesn't it?"

"Yes," the woman agreed, and then added, "but I intend to choose the colors."


The prophet Habakkuk expressed the same resolve. Facing the possible loss of crops and livestock, he declared, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:18).

His decision to rejoice was not a denial of the pain, but a decision to trust God no matter what. Did he wear blinders or special glasses to make everything look OK? No, he saw clearly, but he kept his eyes fixed on God.

A missionary friend, though afflicted with severe health problems that caused him to retire early, was asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Better than I deserve," he responded.

When I am tempted to complain about my sore feet, I think of the saying, "I cried because I had no shoes, and then I met a man who had no feet." One woman who experienced an unusual amount of trials was one of the most cheerful people around. When asked the secret of her optimistic disposition, her somewhat humorous reply was, "Well, you see, it's like this. The Bible says often, 'It came to pass.' It never says, 'It came to stay.' So I assume this cloudy episode will pass too!"

Loss and pain do color our lives, but we can choose the color—JOY! 

Judy Weston leads a colorful life in Chicago, Illinois.



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B UDDY ANDERSON always loved sports. He learned to throw a baseball before he learned to read. Growing up in Alabama, where football is a religion, he loved sports before he ever thought about loving God.

Buddy also loved to compete. Whatever his older brother did, he wanted to do better. When the famous evangelist R.G. Lee ran a revival at his local church, 9-year-old Buddy beat his brother to the altar during the invitation, not to get saved but to get there first.

Age 11 was a major turning point in Buddy's life. Attending another revival at his church, Buddy realized he was responsible for his own sinful actions and that

God had considered Buddy's love for sports and his strong competitive spirit and chosen the perfect place for him to serve. "Thank You, God," Buddy replied, with an emotional sigh of relief and gratitude.

In the fall of 1968, Buddy entered Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, to prepare for his noble calling. During his senior year, Buddy began to wonder where God might use him. Engaged to a beautiful brunette named Linda Moore, whom he met at college, he wanted the means to support her and a family. During his speech class that fall, the Reverend Billy Harris, a bi-vocational pastor, said, "Two or three years from now you will be able to look back and see

viewed at several other places, Buddy says this interview was unlike any other. "He talked about my father and how their philosophies were very similar. That was the kind of legacy I wanted to leave—the Christian influence my father had with his players while I was growing up."

Coach Reynolds pressed, "Do you love working with young people? Do you plan to be in this career 15 to 20 years from now?" He never asked Buddy how much he knew about offense or defense, or what he knew about the technical points of the game.

"God has called me to be a coach, and it will be my life profession."

WINNING FOR ETERNITY

This coach wants his players to be winners, not only for life but for eternity.

without Jesus Christ in his life he'd never make it to heaven. He gave his heart to Jesus and meant it this time.

His mother said, "Buddy, you love sports so much. Maybe God has a plan for you in sports."

"Well, I'm a second baseman and Bobby Richardson is a second baseman for the New York Yankees. Maybe God wants me to take Bobby Richardson's place someday." Bobby Richardson was Buddy's hero, not only for his baseball record, but also for sharing his faith.

Impatient for a Call

At age 14 Buddy impatiently prayed, "Dear God, I want to know what You have planned for me, and I want to know now." But God was silent.

God's answer came three years later on January 12, 1968. As Buddy climbed into his daddy's old truck leaving a basketball game, he clearly heard God speak, though not in an audible voice, "I want you to be a Christian coach."

how God has moved you to where He wanted you to be."

In December 1971, Buddy married Linda. In the spring of 1972, preparing to graduate, he began feverishly sending out résumés and received several interviews for coaching.

Doors shut right and left. People either didn't want him or they didn't have a job. Discouraged but not defeated, Buddy decided to go on to graduate school and get his master's degree. One day, sitting in the Financial Aid office, he talked with one of his former teammates.

"Well, have you tried up there at Vestavia? You remember, that's where the three coaches were killed in a car accident last fall."

"No, I haven't, but I need to call."

An Unusual Placement Interview

Buddy was interviewed by Coach Reynolds, head coach and athletic director at Vestavia High. After being inter-

"Well, you're just the person I want to hire."

Buddy cried all the way back to the apartment where he and Linda lived. "You'll be able to look back two or three years from now and see how the Lord has led you to where He wanted you to be," his professor's words echoed.

Buddy commenced his first full year of student teaching at Vestavia in 1972. He remembers, "Those were tough times. Coach Reynolds was so affected by the wreck of his three previous coaches that some days he appeared enthused and other times his mind was somewhere else. After that year, he gave up coaching and went into administration."

"In January 1978 I was frustrated because I had been coaching six years and had been under five different head coaches. Also, more than 40 other coaches came through Vestavia in that short period of time. I remembered the continuity of my father's 31 years at one place and the impact it had on his players."

God Moves

One morning in the school gym, Buddy prayed, "Dear God, there must be something else You want me to do. Everywhere I turn there is nothing but frustration." Buddy left his quiet time and walked downstairs where he met Coach Bressler in the hall.

"I need to talk to you, Buddy. I'm resigning effective this week to go into business."

Buddy says, "Two weeks later I was named head coach at Vestavia by a 3-2 vote. Some said I would never be head coach because I was a Christian. We started the next season with only three starters back out of 22. We had gone 3-7. We started to work and had our first win against Hewitt-Trussville on September 15, 1978. We went 10-4 that first season, second in the state. The kids worked hard, the coaches worked hard, but God did it!"

Buddy Anderson, head football coach of Vestavia Hills High School, has been coaching and winning for over 33 years. On November 10, 2001, against Austin 21-7 in a Class 6A first-round play-off game, he achieved a milestone, his 200th career victory. Today he is known as the "winningest" coach in Class 6A in the Birmingham area.

The Opportunity to Influence

Coach Anderson believes, however, that football is about much more than winning. He says, "Football allows young men to learn about sacrifice, teamwork, being prepared, fellowship, pulling your own weight, counting your blessings, sportsmanship, giving more than you've got, and never giving up, even if you meet one of the best teams in the state after a 6-4 season. I love to win, but in the right way."

Martin Maners, a standout linebacker for the Vestavia Rebels in 1983, 1984 and 1985, and now a successful Birmingham businessman, remembers Coach Ander-

son and his staff's ability to transform a bunch of kids with usually average to below-average size, speed and strength into overachievers who believed they could conquer any Goliath.

Maners says, "I have come to realize Coach Anderson and his staff are not there to accumulate victories so they can move up to the collegiate or pro coaching level, nor are they there for the money. They are there for the *kids*. These coaches who disciplined us, ran us, pushed us and demanded much from us were also the first ones to put their arms around us and

Anderson is to know what it means to be a father and a husband, to walk humbly, to know one of the meek who will inherit the earth, and to know what it means to take God's call to servanthood seriously."

A Vestavia High School parent said, "Many people ask us why we allow our son to play football, considering the time it takes away from his studies and the toll it takes on his body. We respond that our son is not only taught football but also lessons in life and living."

One of the means Coach Anderson uses to make a difference in the life of his




Buddy Anderson with his wife and daughters after his 200th win

support us in time of trouble (in school and out) and pick us back up in defeat."

Jay Waggoner, proud member of the '88 and '89 teams, says, "Coach Buddy Anderson is and always will be the heart of Vestavia football. To outsiders, Vestavia football means state championship runs, well-prepared teams that hit and play harder than everyone else, and regularly win games. As a football coach, Coach Anderson has the unique gift of making a group of young men believe the impossible is possible.

"Insiders know the Vestavia football program is one that truly impacts and changes lives. Coach Anderson is the primary reason for this, not so much for the words he says, but because of the way he carries himself each day. To know Coach

athletes has been the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Buddy has been the FCA huddle sponsor at his school for over 30 years. He consistently takes an average of 10 athletes to FCA camp every summer. Coach Anderson says, "FCA is a tool that allows me to minister to my athletes and introduce them to Jesus Christ."

As a longtime member of Metropolitan Church of God, Coach Buddy Anderson wants his players to be winners, not only for life but for eternity. 



Jackie Britton serves as administrative assistant at Metropolitan Church of God in Birmingham, Alabama.

Not Batting the Air

by Rich Maffeo



LIVE LONG ENOUGH and you'll discover life can pitch a mean curveball. Just when you think you know what the next one will look like, it slices past the radar gun at 110 and all you end up doing is batting air. Or worse.

Serious illness. Financial ruin. Divorce. Any number of pitches can break toward us and send us diving for safety. But of all the hardest pitches life might fire at us, rejection has to be right up there with the worst.

I understand rejection. When I was 5, my father left my mom for another woman. He seldom bothered to contact us afterward. When I met briefly with him 13 years later, I asked why he left my sister and me. Today, after 50 years swinging the bat, I still remember his answer: "Because I wanted to."

I'm sometimes surprised that good has come from that memory. My father's rejection helps me empathize with others who never knew love and acceptance from those closest to them.

Remember the story of Leah, who lived in the shadow of her younger sister's beauty? When Jacob visited the family, Rachel's beauty captured him. I suppose it's fair to say her beauty consumed him—so much so that he agreed to work on the family's farm for seven years in

exchange for the right to marry her. But on the eve of the seventh anniversary, Rachel's family pulled a classic bait and switch. When the new groom awakened the next morning, he found himself lying next to Leah instead of Rachel. If Jacob still wanted Rachel, he'd have to work another seven years—which he did.

It isn't difficult, however, to imagine how Leah felt—unloved, unattractive, unwanted, knowing her family had to trick Jacob into marrying her. Yet the story grows even more poignant. Scripture tells us: "When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb . . . and [she] gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, 'It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now'" (Genesis 29:31, 32, *NIV*).

I can almost hear the wistful yearning in her voice: "Now my husband will love me." Leah was not the only woman to hope, *If I have his child, he will love me*. But that's not the way love works, and it didn't work for Leah. It didn't work for my mom. It won't work for anyone.

Ever the optimist, though, Leah conceived again. And again. "Now at last my husband will become attached to me," she said, "because I have borne him three sons."

Yet even after six sons, it was Rachel who remained the light in Jacob's eyes. Leah hungered for her husband's embrace. She longed for his touch, a kind word, and to know in the core of her being she was loved. But Jacob was deaf to her heartache, and blind to her sorrow.

God, however, knew it all—and that is the wonderful message of this story.

I've read this chapter in Genesis dozens of times, but this time my eyes froze at the list of Leah's sons, and then refocused on two—Levi and Judah.

Not only was Leah unaware that God was with her in Rachel's shadow, but she also didn't know eternity would measure life and death through her offspring, not Rachel's.

Levi and Judah—ancestors of Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Ezra, Ezekiel, Zechariah. All Israel's religious and political leaders would spring from her womb. All of them—including Jesus the Messiah.

The apostle Paul tells us the things written in Scripture are for our benefit, that through the encouragement of God's Word we might have hope (Romans 15:4). And that's what Leah's story is all about—great, ineffable hope. It's about God being with us in our shadows, about God who never rejects us and who can turn the rejection of others into something of eternal value for a world longing to be touched by God's love.

"For I know the plans I have for you," God tells us through Jeremiah, another of Leah's descendants, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11, *NIV*).

Hope and purpose. That's what God teaches us through Leah. Unloved and unwanted though any of us might be, our "Jacobs" don't have to smother our hope and purpose. Through Jesus Christ who loves us, who intimately knows our heartache, rejections and failures, we can victoriously face any of life's pitches. **✝**



Rich Maffeo writes from Gig Harbor, Washington.



TOP: Ambassador Bakdal (second from right) witnesses the solar pump's efficiency along with Bishop Mambo (right).

ABOVE: The children rejoice that their days of hand-pumping are over.

Orphanage Receives Solar Power

NYAMPHANDE, Zambia—Bishop John Mambo, president of Nyamphande Orphanage and Community School, rejoices over a gift to the school and orphanage from Orla Bakdal, Royal Danish ambassador to Zambia. It came in the form of solar power and tank to furnish water for the grounds.

"It came at a much-needed time," Bishop Mambo explains. "This gift allows the children more time to be in class instead of spending hours using the hand method to supply water for the orphanage, although we still

need more underground piping to enable the water to reach the kitchen." But he is optimistic that too will come with time. God has been so faithful through His children and friends of the orphanage to supply so many of their needs.

"This gift will ensure that the orphanage community will have clean drinking water, besides supplying the necessary water to keep the vegetable garden productive, and that means growing enough food for the 741 orphans and vulnerable children in the school's care," he added.

New Idea for Evangelism

HOBART, Ind.—Pastor Dale Combs and Evangelism Director Jim Barbarosa of the Jubilee Worship Center Church of God are excitedly promoting what they see as a unique tool to get their members involved in personal evangelism. They asked members of the church to write their testimonies to be included in a book titled *Real Life Stories*. The book, which contains the true stories of 114 of Jubilee's members, is now published.

When 20,000 copies of the book were delivered to the Worship Center a few weeks ago, members were asked during the morning worship service to accept a prepackaged bag of seven books—to be given away one a day for the following week. Of the 220 in attendance, 180 accepted a package of books.

"That's 80 percent," an awed Barbarosa exclaimed.

The leaders then challenged those who had agreed to give away the seven books to make their giveaway a daily practice, receiving another seven books each subsequent Sunday.

Barbarosa says their church would like to see other churches take advantage of this simple tool to engage their members to become evangelistic witnesses. He even offers a free copy of the book, as an example of what can be done, to any senior pastor expressing an interest. He can be reached at 219-762-7589. For more information: www.jubileeworshipcenter.com or www.step-by-step.org.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

With the blowing of the shofar, Jim Barbarosa will open an international conference, "Preparing the Way of the Lord," hosted by Jubilee Worship Center Church of God. The conference is scheduled for September 20-23.

According to Barbarosa, the conference will be of special interest to "God's worldwide end-time army of shofar blowers, dancers, flag bearers, worshipers, and prayer intercessors" as well as "God's worldwide end-time army of laborers (harvesters, workers, witnesses, ministers and evangelists)."

Conference topics include shofar, dance and flag ministries; worship teaching; church growth; ministry of reconciliation; sharing the faith; reaching the lost; and gift of the evangelist. For more information and to register, visit www.step-by-step.org or www.theshofarman.com, or call 219-787-9933.

Newsline Notes

Secretary Recognized for 41 Years

CLEVELAND, Tenn.—Hazel Taylor received recognition from the Bancroft Church of God, where she has served for 41 years as secretary. Pastor William Curtis presented her with a plaque. In addition to the honor she received from the church, Sheriff Dan Gilley (left, with Hazel Taylor) of the Bradley County Sheriff's Department, Chief Deputy Bill Griffith, and Captain Eddie Scoggins named her "special deputy."



'Women Alone' Sunday School Class

WILLISTON, Fla.—The members of the "Women Alone" Sunday school class at the Williston Church of God consider their class unique . . . because it is designed specifically for those women who have found themselves in circumstances they didn't ask to be in. They agree, however, that God has been faithful to walk with them through their aloneness.

Barely a year old, the class functions to meet the needs of these "women alone" both spiritually and socially. Most Sundays after church they can be found together at a local restaurant or at the home of one of the members, enjoying food and fellowship.



Lee to Launch Online Program

CLEVELAND, Tenn.—Lee University will launch its first online degree-completion program in August, offering students the opportunity to complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree in Christian Leadership entirely through the Internet.

The program will last between 15 and 27 months, as classes will be offered in an accelerated five-week delivery format. Students must have completed 60 hours in transferable college credits to apply for the online program, which is designed for those with an associate's degree or its equivalent to pursue their education from home. The online format enables enrollees to get their studies done at a time and place that's convenient for them, while still being in a cohort and interacting with faculty and other students taking the courses.

For more information, contact the Center for Adult and Professional Studies at 1-800-256-5916 or caps@leeuniversity.edu.



Church Building Along the Amazon

SANTARÉM, Brazil—Santarém, in the Amazon Basin, was the site of a missionary work team from four churches in the United States. The team worked on two churches and repainted buildings on the mission compound.

Participants on this working mission were Bill Abbott, Stewart Emely, Tim McDorman and Karl Walter, from the Church of God in Crisfield, Maryland; Richard Warwick, from the Crossroads Church of God in Fruitland, Maryland; Dale and Alise Cannon, Dee Townsend and Pastor Philip Morris Jr., from the Parkway Church of God in Sevierville, Tennessee; and Pastor Tim

Shawyer, Blaine Guard and Chip Oakley, from the Walker Memorial Church of God in Princess Anne, Maryland.

Under the direction of the MWOA and World Missions, the trip was coordinated by Donald Johnson, of Tennessee, and Francisco de Paula da Silva, Amazon regional overseer for the Church of God.

Several of the group are planning a longer trip to Brazil so they can build a church in Prainha, where 30 to 40 people are already meeting in the open air. Funds have already been raised, and the property has already been purchased.

Indiana Walk Raises Funds

LAWRENCE, Ind.—Bob Kern, a leading layman in the Lawrence Church of God, began in June last year to walk across the state to raise \$10,000 to benefit the Smoky Mountain Children's Home and the Aged Ministers and Widows fund. Ted Lich, a Lawrence firefighter, felt a calling to join Bob on his trek across the state. Wyatt, Ted's son, joined his father and Bob for 22 miles of their journey.

Bob and Ted, taking vacation time from work, started their walk on June 6, 2005, and completed it on June 11 at the Illinois state line. They stopped at a local congregation in Richmond to spread the word about their efforts—reminding

their listeners of the admonition in James 1:27 to take care of "the fatherless and widows." The two walked 27 miles a day until the last day, when 17 miles completed their journey.

"The first few days were real, real tough weatherwise," offered Ted. "We drank lots of Gatorade and water to stay hydrated." Bob said, "When I got down, Ted was there to encourage me, to keep me going."



(l-r) Ted Lich and Bob Kern

Ministrial Training in Chad

N'DJAMENA, Chad—More than 60 ministers received certificates from the intensive training seminars conducted in Chad in the spring. Coordinating the meetings was Offiong Ibok, regional educational coordinator of West Africa. Peter Thomas, educational director of Africa, taught on "The Gifts of the Spirit," and Dr. Douglas LeRoy, assistant director of World Missions, lectured on "Spiritual Leadership."

Says Dr. LeRoy, "Although the temperature exceeded 130 degrees, the interest and interaction of the students created an atmosphere for learning and sharing."

The Church of God in Chad, organized in 1964, now has 96 churches, 18 missions, almost 7,000 members and over 18,000 attendees, making it one of the largest Protestant groups in this country that is 75 percent Muslim.



Lifebuilders in the Bahamas

NASSAU, Bahamas—A group from Lifebuilders Bahamas, a branch of the Church of God Lifebuilders men's ministry headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee, traveled over the Easter weekend to Long Island (Bahamas) "to proclaim Christ's resurrection," says Andrew Wong, of Family of Faith International and a faithful participant in the Lifebuilders annual march.

On Good Friday, the men paraded through the settlement of Miller's, carrying the cross. Following the parade, the Reverend Felix Miller, missions director of the Church of God, and Evangelist Martin Davis, of Oasis of Love Ministries, proclaimed Christ at a rally at the softball field. In response to a special move of God, several individuals came forward for special prayers.



DECEASED MINISTERS and COMPANIONS

BAKER, Robert Lynn; 78; ordained bishop; South Carolina; Ruby Baker (wife)

BOYD, Elmer Earl; 93; ordained minister; California; Ellis E. Boyd (son)

BROWNLOW, Hewitt Lamar; 61; ordained bishop; Waned S. Brownlow (wife)

DEVORE, Ruth; 79; wife of ordained bishop Joseph E. DeVore; Northern Ohio

DILLARD, Henry; 73; ordained minister; South Carolina; Kate Dillard (wife)

GRAVELEY, Larry Joe; 57; ordained minister; South Carolina; Joyce Graveley (wife)

HAN, Yung-Chul; 69; ordained bishop; Seoul, Korea; Chong-Im Cho Han (wife)

HANDE, Russel David; 41; ordained bishop; North Carolina/Massachusetts; Bethany Hande (wife)

JACKSON, Robert Rufus; 76; ordained bishop; North Carolina; Marion Jackson (wife)

KEYT, Charles Dawson; 91; exhorter; Tennessee; Faye Keyt (wife)

McPHERSON, Robert B.; 83; ordained bishop; Virginia; Greta McPherson (wife)

MATHAI, Cherian P.; 67; exhorter; death date 12/18/05; New York; Elizabeth Mathai (wife)

MOLINA, Lola Mae; 85; ordained minister; Texas; Joy Hall (daughter)

NEWBERNE, Blondean; 90; ordained minister; Georgia; Van Williams (daughter)

RAYFIELD, Inez Ingram; 85; death date 2/3/05; Tennessee; Melba Farris (daughter)

SMITH, Joseph G.; 51; exhorter; Ohio; Rebekah Smith (wife)

THOMAS, P.V.; 89; ordained bishop; New York; Benjamin Thomas (son)

WHITLEY, Stephen Price; 49; ordained minister; Kentucky; Amy Whitley (wife)

The *Evangel* has previously published addresses of survivors, but regretfully we report that inappropriate letters were sometimes sent to them. If you wish to write a letter of condolence or remembrance, you may address it to the family member and send it to *Church of God Evangel*, P.O. Box 2250, Cleveland, TN 37320-2250 and your letter will be forwarded.

On Saturday morning, the group traveled to McKaan's for a Resurrection Breakfast for men and boys at Washington's Restaurant. Powerful testimonies were given by men who had received deliverance from drugs and alcohol—some who had even dealt drugs. Special speaker

was Troy Hanna, of Greater Chippingham Church of God.

Lifebuilders Bahamas is interdenominational in its reach. "Our goal is to take the gospel to every family island in the Bahamas," says Philip Kemp, of Faith Temple Ministries, who is director for the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos.



ASK THE DOCTOR

by Dr. James Marcum

JAMES L. MARCUM, M.D., FACC, is a practicing cardiologist with The Chattanooga Heart Institute. His book *Heartwise* from Pathway Press is available at www.heartwise.cc. Send your health-related questions to Ask the Doctor, 1080 Montgomery Ave., Cleveland, TN 37311, or to editor@pathwaypress.org.

Q My friend recently started taking mangosteen for his arthritic knees. Does this stuff really work? I am always skeptical about products like this. Can you shed any light about this new product?

A FIRST OF ALL, this product has not been approved by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). This does not mean the product does not work or does not help. It has just not been tested. Its effectiveness has not been proven. Many products make great claims but do not work. Others might work, but no data exists to praise their effectiveness and safety.

To prove a substance is safe and works takes a considerable amount of time and money. Developing a randomized double-blind study with enough participants to reach a definitive conclusion is a daunting and expensive undertaking. In today's world, usually the pharmaceutical industry is the one doing such research on their products.

The theory behind mangosteen is that this fruit has powerful antioxidants called flavones. These flavones fight free radicals in the body, which damage the cardiovascular system. Flavones also have an anti-inflammatory agent which helps fight inflammation, thus treating arthritis and other conditions.

It is well known that taking antioxidants is helpful in the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Whether mangosteen works better than other antioxidants is unknown. Again, this has not been studied in large trials. Another difficulty is the fact that one in five persons will improve with a placebo.

What is the answer? It is unknown to me, but many of my patients have bene-

fited from mangosteen. It might work as a placebo, an antioxidant, or as an anti-inflammatory. Other than hurting the wallet, no harm has been done by taking this product.

There are many products out there that could help people live better. Unfortunately, there are probably more that are of no benefit. The theory behind mangosteen makes sense to me, but unless a large pharmaceutical company gets behind the product and does a large study, we will never know for sure.

Sorting through claims can be difficult if not impossible. Conflicting data often coexist. I would give mangosteen a try for arthritis, as I believe there are many natural substances which help the body, and these can change the chemical environment just as medications do. Mangosteen might be one of these, and if you think it is helping you, perhaps this is enough to make this product worth the expense.

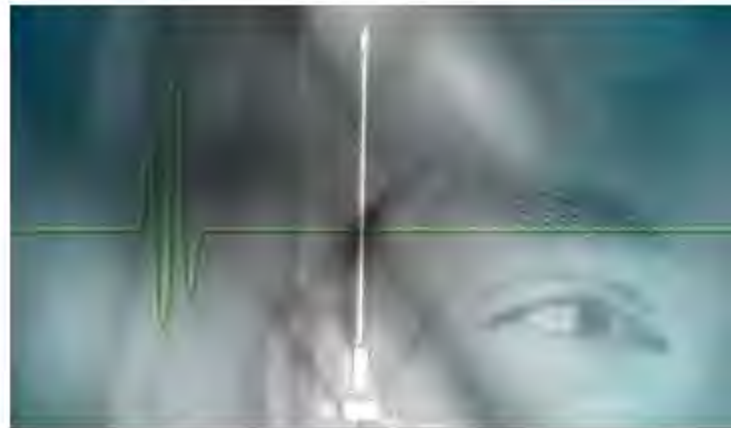
Q My doctor told me I have a sick sinus syndrome. What does this mean?

A THIS SINUS does not refer to the sinuses in the head. There is a group of cells in the heart called the sinus node. It is the "battery" of the heart and fires electrical impulses which cause the heart to contract. A regular impulse is generated between 60 and 100 times a minute.

In a sick sinus syndrome, this electric generator basically wears out and signals are not generated. The heart might be too

slow, which might cause an insufficient amount of blood to the brain and could cause a person to get dizzy or even pass out. When the sinus node gets sick, it sometimes fires too fast as well.

We can learn about the sinus node by placing a monitor that records every beat, as well as watching what the heart does in response to exercise (it should speed



up). Sometimes a specialized cardiologist called an electrophysiologist is needed to run special tests on the sinus node.

The treatment for a sick sinus is avoidance of medications that can alter the function of the sinus node, and if symptoms develop, a pacemaker can be placed. Pacemaker implantation is a relatively safe procedure and does not require a lengthy recovery. Hopefully you will not need a pacemaker, but your body will need to be monitored to see if symptoms develop or if the heart is going too slow. :f

The information contained in these questions and answers is not a substitute for personal medical advice from a professional. Ask your physician or other health professional about any matter concerning your health. These answers are not intended for individual medical diagnosis or treatment.

Wisdom for Women

by Dr. Elizabeth Sikes

Q Recently our 7-year-old grandson was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Even though the entire family is deep in grief, our major concern is related to how we can help our 5-year-old grandson deal with the loss of his brother. Any suggestions you can give will be greatly appreciated.


A THERE ARE NO easy answers to this most important question. However, you can do more than you may first think is possible to help this hurting child. Never underestimate the good you can do for him with the Lord's help. Do not hesitate to give him a reassuring touch or hug when the need arises.

It is vital to listen carefully to what the child is saying about the loss of his brother. Understand that he may find it difficult to express his feelings. You must, nevertheless, provide him with reliable and honest answers that may sometimes seem too frank for one so young. Remember, however, that it is important to deal with death from a Christian viewpoint even with a child.

Following are some factors I believe we should *never* tell a child in regard to death. Younger children, especially preschool children, tend to take things quite literally. For this reason, never tell him his brother is just sleeping. He may conclude that since his brother is only sleeping, he will wake up soon. But if he sees his brother placed into what he perceives to be a box and lowered into the ground for burial, he may become afraid that the same thing will happen to him while he is asleep at night. This, then, has the potential of causing him to be afraid to go to sleep.

One should never tell a child that his loved one is not *really* dead. After all, death is a reality that we all must confront and deal with on a spiritual as well as a psychological level. Help the child express his feelings regarding this death instead of denying it has happened. Death and its accompanying sense of loss must be taken seriously and never glossed over with pious platitudes. As Christians we accept the reality of death, but we also affirm the reality of the resurrection. People of all ages must be allowed to face the reality of death and express their emotional response to it. Spiritual, psychological and physical problems can easily result if this right is denied.

God should never be blamed for something that is a natural part of life. Death came about because of man's sin and rebellion against God. Death was not part of God's original plan for man, and it will not be in His final plan for us. God is not our enemy. He loves us so much that He has prepared a place for us to live with Him eternally. Thus, we must diligently try to help children understand that God can be their greatest source of comfort.

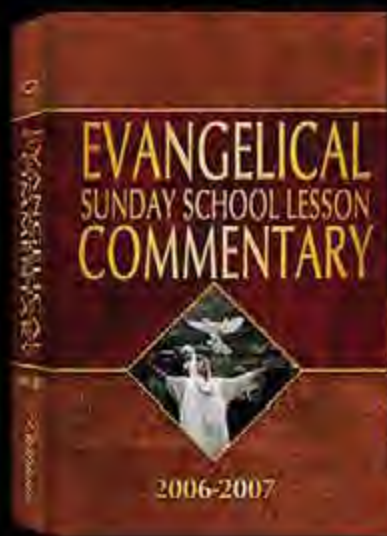
The need for applying the healing power of the Word is never greater than when the heart of a small child has been broken because of the death of a loved one. May God grant you wisdom and the strength needed to help your grandchild cope with the most overwhelming enemy of all—death. 



DR. ELIZABETH SIKES is an ordained minister, minister's wife, registered nurse and educator. She and her husband, Daniel, reside in Kingsland, Georgia, and are currently actively engaged in evangelistic ministry. They have one son, one daughter and three grandchildren.



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