

FOUNDATIONS FOR
FACING FORWARD

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FOUNDATIONS FOR FACING FORWARD

Introduction

The greatest days for the Kingdom of God are ahead. So the greatest days for the Church of God of Prophecy are ahead as well. From all that I know as a third-generation minister in this Church, I can say God has brought us to this point for such a time as this. From all that I know having spent the last 15 years traveling around the world observing, as well as reading about the work of God, I can say God is up to something. He is at work in this world in very special ways not seen before in Christian history. And the most wonderful part is, this Church has the tremendous opportunity to participate and contribute in significant ways during these last days.

I do not believe, however, that we should forget all we have experienced in the journey to this point, abandoning those things to run pell-mell into this great harvest. God has purpose for wilderness journeys, and the lessons learned there always prove useful for the achievements that lie ahead in one's promised land. The decades ahead will reveal the promised land God has intended for the Church of God of Prophecy, and we will maximize our effectiveness there by carrying with us the core truths that God has been working into this Movement for this very moment. They are not baggage to be discarded; they are now tools to aid us in accomplishing our destiny that has been in the mind of God since the foundations of eternity.

It is my conviction that God has given specific callings to every Movement and ministry that He has brought to birth. Like the parts of the body that each has different functions, the various parts of the body of Christ also have differing callings and purposes. And when each contributes these to the greater work of the family of God in the world, the advance of His glory is carried ahead

graciously on target and on time. Our challenge today, in the fellowship of the Church of God of Prophecy, is to embrace afresh our callings that have been sown into this Movement like DNA, which is present in the conception of a new being. To contribute to God's global work and to fulfill our destiny, we must embrace and engage our God-given purposes.

One objective of this material is to name many of those foundations that have been given to us by God. It is the foundation that predicts the building to come, and so our foundations project our ministry and contribution here at God's great last-day surge. Many names can be used for these elements, such as Strengths, Heritage, Foundations, Purposes, Callings, and DNA. All combined, they make up what we as a people have received from God and must now live out through commitment and obedience in ministry. They are our identity—who we are as a people.

In crime investigation today, the most accurate and lasting form of identification is DNA. So God has placed His future design into our Movement like DNA that forms our identity. Yes, in past decades, some of these elements of God's design may have been misunderstood and interpreted incorrectly, but that did not make the foundations wrong or useless to be discarded. They were given by God.

Today we have the great privilege of embracing these callings from God with new interpretations and applications, inspired by God for this day. And the grace that is released as we minister through these callings will move us over the threshold and into the Promised Land God has always intended for us. Our participation and contribution to the worldwide work of God is dependent on this understanding.

As the Spirit inspires, I invite pastors to meditate on the foundations and vision ideals found in this booklet. God may lead many to proclaim them in sermons to their people. I feel strongly about these inspirations; and as the Spirit carries these, they will help unite us all in our callings, purposes, and core values. With this in mind, we offer this material for reflection among all leaders of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Over the next two years, we, the international leaders of this Church, will be seeking God for how these foundations will

guide and support us into future ministry paths. Our callings must inform our vision. So in the later pages of this material, you will find the beginning applications of vision development for the International Offices. By the next Assembly, it is our hope that God will have given more clarity so that we can declare such vision ideals for the entire Church of God of Prophecy to affirm and apply.

As a small hint of that vision declaration, today the leaders of this Movement feel strongly that God has not removed the call to harvest that He placed upon us so strongly in the last decade. We believe if anything that God is reinforcing this call and seeking to empower greater harvesting than we have ever known before. We believe God is drawing all of His children toward a world harvest that could usher in His return. Harvest weighs heavily upon our hearts as we see the immense opportunities and sense this call even more surely.

—*R. E. Howard*

PART ONE:

FACING FORWARD
WHITE WING MESSENGER ARTICLES



FOUNDING MOMENTS

Our Church is blessed that those before us have honored and preserved the thoughts of our founders and of our founding moments. Wilfred McClay wrote that a founding is a unique moment that carries authority over the future of a Movement. A founding moment is an ongoing guide and even a presence in the life of a Movement.

This past January as we gathered once more near the First Assembly House and read the small Minutes from that meeting, we touched again what had stirred in the hearts of those pioneer men and women. The authority of our founding moment could be felt. Their passion for the lost, their hunger for Christ in all of His holiness, their deep longing for the Word to guide and teach them, their moving vision that these elements must be taken to the far corners of the earth, and their strong sense of calling that they should shoulder that responsibility personally were powerful motivations included in our founding.

Such is the blessing passed on through generations in the Church of God of Prophecy. Our foundations force us to think more deeply about who and what we are today. And certainly what is good in the past cannot be passed along mechanically to the next generation. Each rediscovers those things for themselves. Wilfrey McClay shares in the magazine *First Things** that often crisis causes individuals and Movements to renew themselves. In that same issue, Arnold Toynbee, writes that the dynamic of challenge and response is the chief source of civilization's greatness and renewal. He said civilizations die from suicide rather than murder, meaning they lack the will to respond vigorously to challenges that would otherwise make them stronger.

As in many God-called and God-graced Movements, the Church of God of Prophecy has a rich heritage from which to draw strength and guidance to set our sail and forge ahead toward our

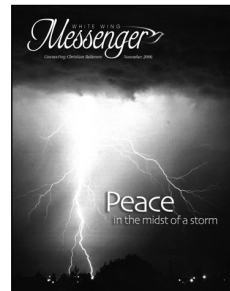
THE AWAKENING OF A MOVEMENT

destiny. From our foundations, we give serious consideration to past acts of the will, promises, covenants, resolutions, and sacrifices, which express resolve and binding principles that rise above the considerations of the moment. Founding moments give a Movement anchor points in the drifting tide of change, a compass in the shifting winds of what is in vogue.

McClay refers to philosophers from Aristotle and beyond that have insisted that republics must periodically recur to their first principles in order to adjust and renew themselves through a fresh encounter with their initiating vision. It is certainly true that our founding moments function as a kind of covenant entered into with understanding of a claim on the future. Therefore, a willingness to look back is required. Naturally, a Movement cannot move ahead while looking backward, but a constant interplay between founding ideals and current realities is vital.

As the Church of God of Prophecy faces forward into this new century and this amazing season of harvest, our founding moments provide wonderful reminders of our callings and destiny as a people. We draw from these to strategically aim for God's purposes planted within this body from those cold days in January in the mountains of North Carolina more than 100 years ago.

*Wilfred McClay, "The Founding of Nations," *First Things*, March 2006.



November 2006

HERITAGE OF HOLINESS

One great Christian anthem says the following:

Called unto holiness, church of our God, purchase of Jesus, redeemed by His blood; called from the world and its idols to flee, called from the bondage of sin to be free. Holiness unto the Lord is our watchword and song. . . . Sing it, shout it, loud and long, Holiness unto the Lord, now and forever.

It is interesting to note that this song was written in the year 1900 by Leila N. Morris. At that time, the Holiness Church at Camp Creek was going strong, flowing in the inspiration of the Holiness Camp Meeting age here in the United States. In only three years, A. J. Tomlinson would enter the scene, and the Movement we know as the Church of God would begin. Obviously, the Holiness fervor of the late 1800s and early 1900s was the seed bed for our beginnings and foundations.

Many may not know that we were of the Holiness Movement several years before we were initiated into the Pentecostal Movement. This was a stirring time of revival in the nation at the turn of the century. One account of the period notes as many as a dozen Movements with their beginnings coming during this season of Holiness revivals. It was a time of dissatisfaction over nominalism, religion without reality, and churches more interested in community influence than life transformation.

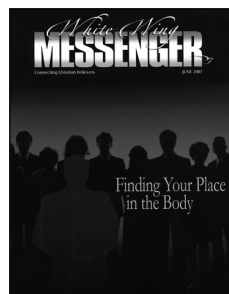
Thousands of believers began to hunger for a holiness that was genuine and demonstrable, visible if you will. Of course, we know that when God begins to stir up hunger in the hearts of people, then revival, renewal, and awakening are on the way. These hungry hearts were drawn to the fields in one of the early and large ecumenical works in this nation. Regardless of denominational ties, the Holiness Camp Meetings were attended

by people from many backgrounds, wanting more of God and His delivering, liberating victory over sin. The Holiness Church at Camp Creek was one such church swept along in this stream of God.

Today the message of holiness is needed as much, or more, than ever before. People are struggling over life-threatening issues, such as addictions, deep, personal calamities, family dissolutions, and more. God's promise of liberation and deliverance through His gracious work at Calvary can bring hope to the masses living without hope today. They are desperate for a faith that can bring transformation to their lives, often miraculously.

And inside the church, the time is now for a new application of holiness perfection, which can be seen in the Bible as LOVE! May a fresh dose of the love of God transform believers everywhere and bring the church into white-hot passion for one another and the lost world. May the same consuming desire for God that our founders felt be kindled again within us. It will motivate us to return to our foundations, loving God, seeking His presence, uniting with His children, zealous for His Gospel, hating evil, and living like Him.

With such a powerful foundation stone in our heritage, may we all be stirred to join that passionate song: "Holiness unto the Lord is our watchword and song. . . . Sing it, shout it, loud and long, Holiness unto the Lord, now and forever."



June 2007

HERITAGE OF HOLINESS REVISITED

It was mentioned in an earlier edition on this editorial page that the Holiness Camp Meeting Revival was a significant Movement in our nation at the turn of the 20th century. As with any revival season, passion for God had risen to peak levels. That passion included a consuming desire to be free from sin, the fallen nature, and carnality in general. This Movement was marked by preaching that emphasized Bible challenges such as crucifixion of the flesh (Galatians 2:20), death to sin (Romans 6:1–7), entire sanctification (Hebrews 12:13; 10:10), and perfection (Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 10:14).

This passion for transformation that would be visible and victorious brought the new message of a second blessing to Christianity and anchored it for the decades to come. Many were seeking and experiencing this second blessing as they traveled to attend camp meeting revivals sprinkled across the land. Just what the second blessing brought was not clearly defined, at first, but the hunger of those seeking God was rewarded in finding deliverance from addictions, victory over plaguing lusts, new power to live a holy life, and daily, transforming grace.

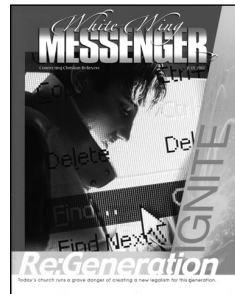
Manifestations were also frequent as these seekers received their second blessing. Some would roll on the floor, and so the label “holy rollers” came into existence. Some would weep, uncontrollably, in contrition for their sin and fleshly living. Some would shout aloud as their victory over besetting sins came. These meetings were marked by jumping, dancing, and joy as the death of the old man brought a resurrection of the new man (Christ) and release to victory over long-fought battlefields of the soul. Many claimed this second blessing was the fullness of the Holy Spirit, though the Pentecostal revival would soon explode on the scene with such meetings as the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles.

It was in this national environment of hunger for true life-transforming religion that the Church of God was born. We were born a revival Movement, hungry for God's dynamic presence and power. It is significant that from those very early moments of the second blessing, a wonderful national revival was sweeping the land; and with the outpouring of the Spirit soon to come, R. G. Spurling, pastor of the Holiness Church at Camp Creek, North Carolina, wrote *The Missing Link*. Holiness would cool and fight to survive against religious legalism over the coming decades, but from the beginning, Spurling led the Church in realizing the key to holiness was love—love for God and love for others.

A. J. Tomlinson wrote the following in *The Last Great Conflict*: "While without faith it is impossible to please God, and without hope all humanity would grope about in sad despair, yet beyond all, in the valley of humility, unexplored and unpossessed, is a silent force, a glorious virtue, a rich possession, a 'pearl of great price,' that human language can ne'er describe and human minds can never comprehend. This possession, this silent but all-powerful force, this 'pearl of great price' is Divine Love. . . . Tread softly, you are on holy ground. . . ."*

Church of God, it is on this holy ground we have a precious foundation stone of heritage. God has placed in our DNA the wonderful calling to holiness. We are called to be a people seeking the fullness of God's holiness, which will always be known in its display of LOVE.

*Quote from A. J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict*, p. 34.



July 2007

AN ALL-NATIONS CHURCH

This page has been focused for several issues on vital foundation points for the Church of God of Prophecy. This month, our call to be a Movement for “all nations” will be examined.

Like many Christian Movements, the Church of God of Prophecy has taken the Great Commission seriously since her formation. It is normal to find denominations and Christian organizations that want to contribute to carrying the Gospel to every nation and people. Certainly, this mandate has gripped us and our work through every season of our history.

But there is something more that settled upon this Church from our early days, from our foundations. It was the idea that God's church would be an all-nations church. Looking in the Word, our fathers felt strongly that God would build His church using people of every culture and language. They felt His church would become, in its maturity, a body made up of every people with clear participation and contribution from each.

This inspiration was quite different from being a Movement in North America that wanted to invest her energies in world outreach. It was more about working constantly to reflect an “all-nations” vision and to build toward this “all-nations” functionality, participating, and contributing together. Obviously, in the very early years of the 20th century, there were no models of this ideal in secular application, though later the United Nations would come along, and today multi-national organizations are plentiful.

Again, this came from biblical roots that had deep impact when taken seriously by our fathers, a group of dedicated pioneers wanting to understand how to erect what they clearly saw in the Bible as a church for “all nations.” From Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, the psalmist writing in Psalm 67, Isaiah writing in chapter 2, and even John the Revelator in his throne scene, the

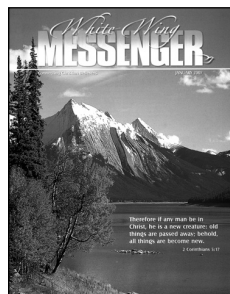
AN ALL-NATION'S MOVEMENT

vision has been cast forcefully that “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” God would build His church, making them “kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Today we can see that this passion for “all nations” has carried beyond ministering in more than 130 nations. It has led us to name indigenous leaders over the majority of those national ministries, to create the leadership body of General Presbyters, continental leaders uniting for universal vision, to constantly work for international voice and representation in our Assembly decision-making processes, to plan continental leadership conferences, and to place men of wisdom and insight on our significant Assembly Committees.

Many of these steps are not common in ministries and Christian organizations today. But there is a sense that God has placed this passion within the Church of God of Prophecy like a seed that must be nurtured until it brings forth the fruit God has always intended.

Certainly, as the world harvest has rapidly accelerated in this generation, this conviction has only grown stronger, and our opportunities to make application have multiplied. Though we do not know God’s full intentions, we do sense His providence has brought us this far in reflecting an “all-nations” ethic in our Movement. And we are determined to follow His guidance on this path until one day we realize His full purpose.



January 2007

AN ALL-NATIONS CHURCH REVISITED

On this Editorial Page in a previous issue, the theme of “An All-Nations Church” was discussed. That article came to a close with this thought: “There is a sense that God has placed this passion within the Church of God of Prophecy like a seed that must be nurtured until it brings forth the fruit God has always intended.”

Not only has this been a seed sown into the foundations of the church, it can also be seen today as a dramatic part of the worldwide work of God. God intends to build His Kingdom on strong support stones anchored, not in a few nations, but in all nations and all people.

In earlier eras of Christianity, it was possible that people felt God would draw people from every nation, but many felt the reality of this would be through small representations. It was hard in that time to believe that God would literally turn the Christian Movement, as it had been known to date, inside-out.

Today Christian missions can no longer be called western; they flow with force from every area of the world. God has driven deep and strong anchor points of faith into every continent, and from these, the Gospel is spreading to every nation and people. From observing this Movement of missions, it is obvious that building an “An All-Nations Church” is fixed in the heart of God.

Now today, like never before, the Gospel is being preached from every nation to every people. China and Korea are sending missionaries, as well as Brazil and Argentina, or Nigeria and South Africa. In this “All-Nations” mode, the Gospel is coming from so many different places and moving toward so many target people that it is impossible to track. Even the devil cannot keep up with it. No longer is there the uniform flow of the Gospel coming out of the West and moving into the world. It has been called “Spirit-Led Chaos” as every nation is called and contributing to complete the great unfinished task of world evangelization.

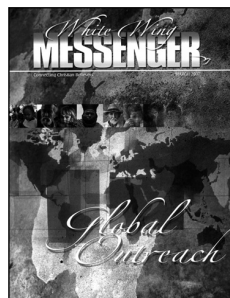
AN ALL-NATION'S MOVEMENT

And as one observes this glorious phenomenon, another realization surfaces. These nations seem to each have a gifting that they bring to the mission. Like the various parts of the body, each nation contributes a quality of ministry that is graced by God as the church in that culture rises up.

Just as the body of Christ needs all the parts to be whole and complete, it becomes clear that the worldwide Kingdom of God needs all the peoples expressing their Christian faith to be complete and empowered to finish the work. There is purpose for God's "All-Nations Church" ideal.

As we observe the Kingdom of God shifting into a new All-Nations "overdrive" gear, the ultimate goal of gathering people of every kindred around the throne comes into view. The passion we have long felt for this "All-Nations Church" ideal seems to make more sense.

God has intended that the throne scene will not be complete until every nation comes, joins in the adoration, and contributes to the whole. God's passion for every people will not be satisfied until every nation reaches out to every unreached people and ultimately all nations, kindreds, tribes, and tongues complete the whole of His body, worshipping around the throne.



March 2007

TILL WE ALL COME ...

Often, our foundations have been drawn from significant scriptures God has used to form our Movement from our beginnings. One scripture with such significance that could be considered a signature scripture for the Church of God of Prophecy would certainly be Ephesians 4:13: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The motivation of this passage seemed to grip the heart of this Church forcefully that God would bring unity and holiness in such dimensions that by the end of the age, Christ would clearly be manifested among His people, the church, His body right here on earth. One of the powerful, motivating factors in this inspiration was that when Christ was seen among His people, the world in mass would be drawn to Him as if drawn out of their darkness into His marvelous light.

No doubt, one reason this scripture touched our Movement so deeply was the fact that when its truth was realized, world evangelization would accelerate beyond anything known before. Because passion for reaching the world was a foundational part of our DNA, dating back to our inception, this truth became a natural, complementary theme. In the most simple form, it is true—when a believer best reflects Christ in his individual life, he activates a most potent attraction drawing the lost.

The evangelistic zeal flowing from this scripture was heightened for our fathers by the mention of Christian union. Not only could an individual or a local church increase evangelistic effectiveness by becoming more and more like Christ, all believers and all Movements could do this as we entered into and grew in unity. Christ makes the same claim in the Gospel of John: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). The amazing promise is that through the unity

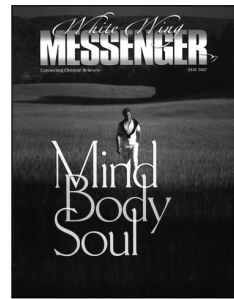
of believers seen in every community and all around the world, Christ will be manifested and will draw the lost to Himself.

For a Movement determined to live out aggressive evangelism on a worldwide scale, these precepts were too engaging to ignore. Our fathers believed these twin evangelistic truths and wove them into the fabric of our foundations: 1) the more we become like Christ, the more effective we will attract the attention of the lost; and 2) the more we approach unity with the people of God, the more Christ will be manifested to a blinded world.

Today we continue to stand on these fundamentals, quite possibly with even more clarity as God's last days grow nearer. May our zeal be as strong as that of former generations to enhance the Gospel spread through dramatic emulation of Christ and through contagious passion for Christian union. The first certainly informs our heritage of holiness, and the latter is clearly an affirmation of our Christian union passions.

Facing forward, these eternal precepts from the Word and anchored in our heritage now bring fresh motivation to cooperate, collaborate, fellowship, and build bridges with believing groups passionate for advancing God's Kingdom in this world. Also, we are stirred afresh to proclaim the noble objective to emulate Christ and literally become like Him, so that lost and hurting souls will be attracted to His light and love.

"Till we all come" hints at the hope the apostle Paul had that these two forces for world outreach will be realized in God's people. As we in the Church of God of Prophecy give ourselves to living out these truths, we help further this hope. And we join with God in bringing His prophetic Word into being for the sake of the lost.



May 2007

CHRISTIAN UNION

When sharing about the Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia, Senior Pastor Brian Houston shares that they have several signature scriptures that have become pillars for the vision and ministries flowing out of that awesome Church. There, in secular-minded Australia where evangelical Christianity has struggled to spread for decades, the Hillsong Church has been a flagship of a wonderful revival and harvest in the nation.

The concept of signature scriptures is an interesting idea. One wonders, if there were signature scriptures given for the mission and vision of the Church of God of Prophecy through the years, it is almost certain that Christian Union would be one theme with several well-worn scriptures supporting. Memory immediately goes to Isaiah 60:1–5: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth . . . but the LORD shall arise upon thee . . . And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings . . . Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together . . . Then thou shalt see, and flow together. . . .”

Certainly, this scripture has been a classic “Church” scripture over time. Christian Union permeates the passage as the ideal of “flowing together,” which is richly described by the prophet Isaiah. It is obvious Isaiah is speaking of a special time and of a wonderful drawing together activated by God. Naturally, another scripture comes to mind, which is John 10:16: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

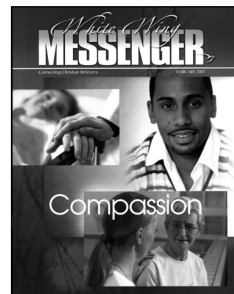
Again, we have a prophecy of Christian Union to come. Jesus is declaring that “there shall be one” (unity). When Christ emphatically declares in His Word something will take place, an eternal commitment is created. Our fathers were inspired by this and felt drawn to join in proclaiming this eternal commitment that would bring about Christian Union, present and visible in

the world one day. They realized this was an eschatological event, one that would occur in the last days before Christ's return in glory. They realized that this was a harvesting event, where the visible unity of believers would turn the lost to Christ in mass (John 17). They realized that this would be a miraculous event since the work of Christ had only known division since its inception two thousand years ago.

So with passion and fervor, our fathers declared the truth of Christian Union as an ideal to be anticipated and attained in this age. Of course, history records that the enemy is always working to turn valid and glorious truths into dogma that thwarts God's plans. His scheme here was to turn the power of Christian Union inward, distracting attention from the uniting element, which will always be Christ and His Gospel.

With that correction in place today, we in the Church of God of Prophecy have another wonderful foundation stone of heritage—Christian Union. In our day, we can see God at work, uniting believers in so many unique, diverse, and God-honoring avenues. We can sense walls falling down that have risen to compartmentalize the precious body of Christ so long. Today is the day of Christian Union as God's Spirit initiates unity as miraculously as when the animals were drawn toward Noah's ark.

And for our ministries, perhaps it is the day to pull out these signature scriptures, dust them off, and declare them with passion now with a new clarity. Christ is the unifying factor. Christ is the bridge from all peoples to Himself. Christ is the Savior, Head of the body, and Lord of all for all time. As we have learned, the more we emphasize and focus on Christ, the closer we draw to Him and the closer we draw to all who are also drawn to Him. From that perspective, Christ and Christian Union are synonymous. Jesus said it best: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).



February 2007

THE UPPER ROOM ELEMENT

Many have heard the story of the Texas cowboy that struck it rich. He immediately decided he was going to buy the longest and most expensive car available. Soon, he could be seen moving through the one-street town with his hands behind his head, smoking a huge cigar, his feet propped up on the dash, smiling grandly. He had it made.

Someone might ask how this cowboy could drive through the town in that position. Well, he had his team of long-horn steers hooked up to the front of the car, pulling it along. This cowboy did not realize that he had the power of 400 horses under the hood of that car, and so he was satisfied to parade along behind his cows.

So it has been through the centuries for the Christian Church. Many times, the people of God have not realized just what they had in the Gospel, the Word, grace, and the Holy Spirit. Like the cowboy, they had all that God had appropriated for them, but they did not know how to access it. As the Church of God of Prophecy faces forward into our future, it might be important for us to remember this concept as well. The Upper Room prior to the Day of Pentecost illustrates this crucial lesson.

Jesus had given the fledgling church His Gospel. He had breathed on them and commanded them to receive a measure of His Spirit. He had purchased salvation for them as John watched from the foot of the Cross. His Word was burning in their hearts.

Yet Jesus knew these individuals were not ready. They were not ready to launch their world-shaking Gospel campaign. They were not ready to go and impact every corner of the world. So Jesus sent them to the Upper Room to pray.

We see this repeatedly in our own world and time. How often has a local church or a worldwide Movement received a genuine

inspiration from heaven? And with enthusiasm bursting, they rush to carry out the vision without an Upper Room passage.

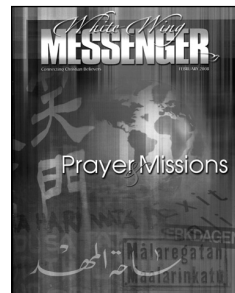
The 120 disciples may not have understood fully the “what and why” of Jesus’ command, but, thank God, they obeyed. They had everything God was going to give them through Jesus Christ, and yet they suspended operations for their Upper Room passage.

I love what Michael Green says in his book, *First Things Last*: “It is through prayer that God is free to reach and use us. If we do things for God without praying, He cannot afford the risk of allowing us to succeed. For we would get proud and would be hardened in our conviction that activism, not dependence on God, is the way for Christians to serve the Lord.”*

I am glad to report that the story turns out all right for the worried Martha’s among us. The Holy Spirit fell, bringing power and guidance to the new church. They launched boldly to preach Jesus and His salvation. And within their lifetime, the record says they turned their world upside-down.

And so we are reminded this mighty thrust came not out of the ascension, nor even the Resurrection, but from prayer in their Upper Room passage.

*Michael Green, *First Things Last* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1979), p. 91.



February 2008

WORD ENLIGHTENED

“Facing Forward” has been devoted for many months to looking backward at our heritage, formation, and founding moments. The proverb holds some truth that says, “It is only when we know our history, that we can clearly plot the course to our future.”

In that vein, we have considered our most fundamental values that God dropped into our DNA at the birth of our Movement—values such as Holiness, the Holy Spirit, being Christ-Centered, our All-Nations Ethic, Mission Motivation, and Eschatological Passion. With this article, the series on foundations will close, and we will turn to more direct thoughts of “Facing Forward.”

A few words of wisdom from the psalmist declare, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

This Movement has consistently demonstrated a heart to be guided by the light of God’s Word. On the evening of June 13, 1903, a group from the Holiness Church at Camp Creek, in the mountains of North Carolina, had gathered to study the Word. Our Church history text, *Upon This Rock*, reports that “questions were asked and Bible answers were given” as the group searched the Word. It was at that very meeting that the first recorded use of what we now call our covenant was enacted as A. J. Tomlinson and others took this covenant, uniting with that small Holiness band. It simply stated, “Will you take this as the Word of God, believe and practice it, obey its precepts, and walk in the light as God is in the light?” From that study group and that simple commitment, this Movement was anchored to passionate search for guidance in the Scriptures for the decades to come (Vol. 1, p. 314).

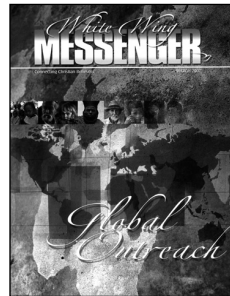
Still, Bible students know that this was not the first account of such fundamental enlightenment from God’s Word. We can recall Josiah finding the long-lost Book of Law and restoring the nation to order under its guidance. Moses received the Law of God on the mount, and the Hebrew culture was founded on its

instructions. Ezra once more recovered the Law in his day, restoring Israel by its wisdom. And it was Jesus Himself that prayed to the Father declaring that He had given the disciples God's Word as a sacred trust that would form His church. So this small band of Bible-seekers were really only acting under the same impulse that had moved so many other sincere seekers to lift up the vital, central place of the Word as our guide.

It is interesting to read in the Minutes of the first Assembly seven months after that small Bible study. The introductory note is emphatic in demonstrating their ongoing passion for allowing the Bible to light their path forward. They stated, "Our articles of faith are inspired and given us by the Holy Apostles and written in the New Testament, which is our only rule of faith and practice." Most "old-timers" can recall the ongoing practical application of this as, Assembly after Assembly, the passion for following biblical guidance has been prominent.

As we understand this facet of our heritage, immediate urgency rises in the heart. We now live in a post-Christian culture where the authority of the Word of God is challenged and the practicality of its wisdom is spurned. We also realize we live in one of the most Bible-illiterate times this society has known. Once the foundation of learning and the motivation for launching educational institutions, the Bible today has been evicted from public schools and most of public life.

What will our response be? May the passion of our heritage, the centrality of God's Word as culture's guiding light, rise with fresh motivation. In a world that will no longer read God's Word, may this Movement become God's Word translated into flesh that a blinded world may see. And in a culture deteriorating from within, may our passion for the Eternal Word spread to restore order and moral conviction.



August 2007

SPIRIT-DRIVEN WAS ON TARGET

The theme of the 94th Assembly, *Spirit-Driven*, surely was on target for many reasons. Of course, it was the 100-year anniversary of the Azusa Street Revival, which catapulted the unheard of experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit onto the world scene. Since that time, those who live in this blessing have made an undeniable mark on world evangelism and the Kingdom of God.

The exponential growth of Spirit-filled people alone has been astounding. In the 1940s, there were approximately 16 million Spirit-filled saints in the world. For five decades thereafter, the number of Spirit-filled believers doubled or more than doubled each decade. Today there are more than 600 million Spirit-filled Christians in the world, and they are among the most active in evangelism and world mission.*

Living in this age, the prophecy given by Peter on the Day of Pentecost rings more clearly than at any other time. He declared, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . ." (Acts 2:17). Today we can obviously say that the Spirit is falling all over the world, and God's last-days work has begun.

Trying to think from God's perspective, we can see how natural this outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be. God intends that before the end, His Gospel would be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations (Matthew 24:14). The empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is God's means for this to be accomplished. Jesus Himself shared this just before He ascended: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

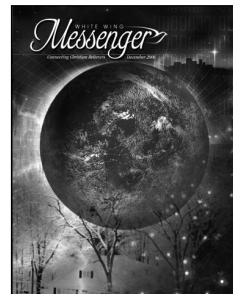
If we took the time to look at every completed task that God has declared for His last days, we would find the Holy Spirit as the facilitating agent. Consider love. The love of God is spread

abroad by the Spirit (Romans 5:5). And by love, all men will know that Jesus is the Christ (John 13:35). Consider unity, signs, revelation of the Word, the glory of the Lord, and more. Each of these are activated by the work of the Spirit and are indicators of God's last days. So from God's perspective, it is no surprise that now in this age, He is sending His Holy Spirit Baptism to the four corners of the earth abundantly.

From our earliest moments, the Church of God of Prophecy was an eschatological Movement. What did you say? The Church has been motivated from our beginning days by a driving passion for God's last days. This thread is so obvious through the generations of our history. We worked to reach every nation so that God's glorious end would come. We worked to perfect the Church so that God could return in glory to receive her. We gave and sacrificed so that the name of Christ would fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and then the end would come.

Before we were a Pentecostal church, we were a church passionate for God's return. Yes, soon in those early years, we became a Pentecostal Movement, and that fact has never been more important than today. Today God has chosen to send His Holy Spirit over all the earth as the facilitating agent to activate His last-day prophecies. And today two of our foundation anchors in the Church of God of Prophecy are merging and rising to be more vital than ever before—our passion for God's return (eschatology) and our passion for power to get the work done (Holy Spirit Baptism). There has never been a better time to declare our intentions to be a "Spirit-Driven" Movement.

*Grant McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond* (Orlando, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 2005).



December 2006

PREACHING CHRIST

Paul said to the Galatian saints, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

The *Facing Forward* editorial has been used of late to touch foundations stones of the Church of God of Prophecy, reminding us of our calling and heritage. For this Easter issue, there is one sure foundation stone to be mentioned dating back much further than our own calling as a Movement. It is the call to preach Christ!

Paul said to his friends in Philippi, “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will . . . What then? . . . Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (1:15, 18). Paul found the key was not for people to agree with him. The key was not for everyone to drink his new wine. Yes, he had the newest word from God. But he knew that was not even the greatest key. He knew some were not even preaching seriously and purely. But it did not distract Paul because he knew the preaching of Christ was the key. He said, “Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

Let the Church of God always persist in preaching Christ! Don’t let anything distract us from this one objective. The polls tell us that generally people are skeptical about churches, skeptical about Christians, skeptical about ministers, skeptical about religion, skeptical about absolutes, and skeptical about moral rules, but they love Jesus.

Jesus said of the cross, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). And since that moment, wherever Christ is lifted up, people have been drawn to Him through the centuries, over the continents, in any language.

The *Jesus* film stands as the greatest evangelistic testimony of what happens when Christ is preached. It has been seen by more than five billion people, and more than 200 million have made decisions for Christ from viewing the film; it is translated into 944 languages. It is true: “If I be lifted up. . . .”

Jesus did not promise to draw people if our ministry practices were lifted up and exalted. He did not promise to draw people if our doctrines were lifted up and exalted. He did not promise to draw people if our rules and regulations were lifted up and exalted. He did not promise to draw people if our worship preferences were lifted up and exalted.

But show me a church that is dedicated to lifting up Christ Jesus, the Savior and Lord, and I will show you a church that attracts people. If there is a church where Jesus can be felt, where He can be heard, where He can be seen through the body of Christ and through the Spirit of God, then that is a church where people will be drawn.

The Gospels are emphatic about this. Look at the first few chapters of the Gospel of Mark where Jesus' ministry is introduced.

Observe the phrases Mark uses to describe the attraction force of Christ:

- They were all amazed.
- His fame spread abroad throughout all the region.
- They brought unto him all that were diseased.
- All men seek for thee.
- They came to him from every quarter.
- There was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door.
- They could not come nigh unto him for the press.
- And all the multitude resorted unto unto him.
- A great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude.



April 2007

THE CROSS IS THE CORE

The old song says, “On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame. . . .” Yes, Easter reminds us of that precious Cross where our Savior died, as well as of the tomb left empty after the resurrection of Christ. It is Easter, more than any other Christian holiday, that holds the core of our faith and our calling. Easter defines our Gospel.

Paul begins the familiar 15th chapter of his letter to the saints at Corinth with these words: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved. . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (vv. 1–4).

These words of Paul quickly became a kernel of truth, like significant other passages, to be memorized and hid away in the hearts of the saints as a core belief of the new life the early church was experiencing.

Without the New Testament, early believers memorized the most crucial aspects of the faith taken from Epistles, such as Paul wrote. They would recite them often to affirm these truths and their faith. Indeed, the Cross was at the core of faith from these first “kerygma” memory chips. (“Kerygma” is a word used to focus on the primary Gospel points of Christ’s life.)

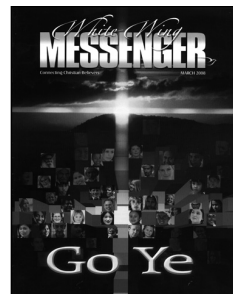
Perhaps, it would do us all well to have a few memory points ready to share in testimony of our faith and our Savior’s gift on the Cross. For early believers, the faith was new and not well understood by the public. Often, it was perceived as a new cult and attacked as being strange and radical. There were tensions with traditional Jewish leaders that this faith was heretical. So

early Christians used pieces of truth as talking points in sharing their new faith with friends.

Even more so during the Easter season, perhaps we should be reminded that the Cross and the message of Easter ought to be the core of our message at all times.

Most know the well-worn focus of Billy Graham's sermons. He said he would start with his message text and run directly to the Cross. The church of Jesus Christ has been sent to tell the story of the Cross in every corner of the globe. Local churches endeavor to share the power of the Cross that transforms lives, families, and communities. And individual believers are living martyrs, giving their lives for the world as they carry their crosses daily and follow Christ.

So as the Church of God of Prophecy faces forward, one thing is clear this Easter—the Cross is our emblem of purpose and passion. During this season, we will sing, "So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross Till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old rugged Cross, And exchange it some day for a crown."



March 2008

BIRTHING IS LIFE

When a child is born into a good, healthy, loving home, it is a wonderful and divine event. That father and mother are drawn together by love through God's design for marriage and procreation. As an expression of their love, conception occurs, and a new life form begins to grow in that home even before birth. When this new creation is discovered, the entire household and family network goes into a spin of excitement and preparation.

The focal point becomes the delivery and bringing a newborn home. On that day, all energies shift and take on the new focus of nurture so that this new baby will grow and develop through all the small stages, and later large stages, of life. Even today in our developed societies, childbirth calls us back to the heart of life.

It may be the genius in God's scheme of design that the heart of life for culture is also the heart of life for the family of God. Evangelism is the means of procreation for God's Kingdom when one soul is born into eternal life. Rachel may have known this as she wept, saying, "Give me children, or I perish" (Genesis 30:1 paraphrased). The future of the Kingdom and its force on earth depends on each distinct act of bringing new souls into the family of God.

Agrarian cultures knew this well, so they prioritized childbirth. With each new child, the strength of the family was increasing. The ability to farm and produce grew as children were born and came of age. Modern thought might see this as primitive, yet massive abortions over the decades have demonstrated how the void of birth can shrink a nation's productivity, drain its economy, undermine its service sector, and threaten its posterity. Birth remains the heart of life.

Perhaps, it is past time for the church of the West to wake up to the vital importance of bringing new souls to life. As church attendance declines, moral values wane, evil advances, and Christianity is pushed further from the core of culture, the body of Christ must recognize they have failed to birth.

The test of success for a church is not how large the building may be, nor how large their budget is, nor even how many people come to the services. All of this can be achieved without our key ingredient. The test of success for any body of believers must be how many souls are being birthed from darkness to light.

May all believing families of faith return to the simple yet profoundly transforming vision of the family/couple described here. Out of love, they conceived new life. Surely this is the greatest motivation for evangelism, love for God, and love for fellowman. Their excitement prioritized extensive preparations. What could be a higher priority for the church in any day? The delivery brought fulfillment and lasting purpose to that home—raising a child. Yes, birthing new souls is the fulfillment that the body of Christ yearns for today. And raising those converts to fruitfulness is the purpose that must be restored.

So the loving couple multiplied their love into the generations to come. May evangelism be our heart to life for the church today.



August 2008

EVANGELIZATION

A Christian leader exclaimed with some emotion, “I have come to decide that I am not so interested in evangelism as I am in evangelization.” At first glance, that statement carried little meaning for me and seemed to approach some kind of “double talk.” But as the meaning was unfolded, it became obvious there was some profound insight encased in those words.

The Christian world has been satisfied to allow an evolution of understanding in the call of the Great Commission. Over time and particularly in our culture, the Commission has become synonymous with evangelism.

Of course, included in the idea of evangelism has been preaching the Gospel of Christ, bringing people to salvation, confessing of sins, and receiving the gift of eternal life. And certainly many methods were available to achieve these ends as believers set about to do evangelism.

Success in evangelism became the ability to confirm and report that any number of people had heard the Gospel and had indeed received new life in Christ Jesus. After all, Mark’s Gospel clearly states the Commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . .” (16:15, 16). On this foundation, the people of God, for many decades and in many cultures, have felt assured that they were fulfilling the Great Commission.

Obviously, it is well-known that there are several places in the Bible where the Commission of Christ is given. It is also commonly known that the Commission in the Gospel of Matthew gives more attention to detail than any other and is the one we refer to as the “Great Commission.” It reads, “Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (28:19, 20).

A simple reading of this Commission in Matthew quickly

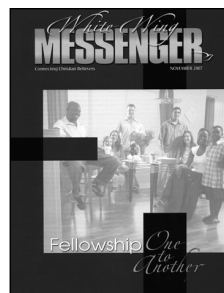
reveals much more is involved than evangelism as it has been defined here. Making disciples is prominent, and teaching is given priority. It may have been this tension between simple evangelism and the more complex call of the Great Commission that has led many individuals to begin using a similar but different word—evangelization.

In this light, evangelization describes the entire process of saturating a community with the Gospel so that a) individuals are saved, discipled, equipped, and sent; b) a church is planted and challenged to birth other churches; and c) the community is impacted with the direct influence of Christian compassion to relieve social needs of the hurting and oppressed.

When evangelization is the goal for success, quite obviously the Kingdom of God advances greatly in that community, the people of God are mobilized to make an impact, and the darkness must recede behind the light of God that penetrates through.

Surely this scenario comes close to accounts we read of the New Testament church where not only lost people were saved, but community transformation took place as the Kingdom of God entered and took root in that location.

More and more testimonies are ringing out that communities, some wider areas, and even nations are experiencing the wonderful impact of evangelization. As the Church of God of Prophecy aims at the core values of Harvest and Leadership Development, we are passionate to increase our involvement in evangelization around the world.



November 2007

HARVEST LESSONS FROM WATER BUFFALO

Recently, my Internet provider pointed me to a video someone had placed on YouTube.com. It was surely one of the most amazing video clips I had ever seen. A baby water buffalo had been taken down by about six lions, as the adults ran away in terror. While the lions began to devour the small water buffalo, it seemed all hope was gone. But then, to my surprise, the entire herd of water buffalo entered the picture, possibly 30 strong. They had joined forces to return and retrieve their baby.

One by one, they picked off the lions, intimidating them with their united force, until the baby water buffalo walked free into the safety of the herd. I had never seen anything like it. Those water buffalo working together clearly demonstrated the power of unity. The strongest bull could have never saved the baby alone, but together, as a united herd, they easily intimidated the fierce and hungry lions to win back their calf.

As the video closed, I realized this is exactly what we are called to do as the body of Christ. The baby water buffalo was defenseless against his captors, a pride of six hungry lions. It was a pitiful sight to see them on top of and surrounding this helpless victim, beginning their long meal.

Today our world is full of captives, who are surrounded by evils and darkness that aim to steal their life flow gradually as they are preyed upon. These victims have become defenseless through deception and the descent into gradual bondage. The outcome cannot be avoided as the poison of their sin trap will certainly and slowly sap their life.

Like the herd of water buffalo, the body of Christ in any community feels that intrinsic yearning to go and rescue their brothers held in captivity. Yes, they are free and safe from the

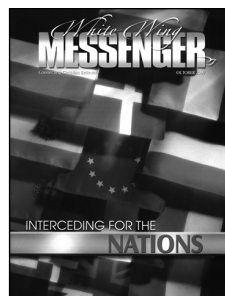
danger of the lions, but the call of love is strong enough to move them from safety to risk everything. The call of Christ who yearns to seek and find the one lost lamb has been placed in the DNA of His body for such a need as this.

Now, even the strongest bull water buffalo knows he is at risk alone with a full pride of lions. Even united together as a large herd, the instinctive fear is obvious in their anxious Movements. But the only hope to rescue the small baby in the teeth of the lions is to unite. It is in this united stand that the lions are set back on their haunches, knowing the power of many horns and many hooves have proven deadly so often in the past.

Quite likely, one moment before the crisis, there were bulls squaring off over turf or cows bickering over calves. Unity is rarely a constant even in the body of Christ. But at the moment of alarm when those adult water buffalo ran into the herd announcing the attack, all division was set aside. Rescue for the endangered baby outweighed every other influence.

Today the words of Peter are more true than ever before: “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

It is time for the alarm to sound throughout the body, uniting us all against one common foe. It is time for that inherent stirring of the soul to call us out of comfort to go and rescue the captive. It is time to send the enemy back on his haunches at the sight of our united force. It is time that captives come free under the liberating march of the body of Christ.



October 2007

THE HEART IS HARVEST

As children, we all had moments where we were intrigued by the sound of our heart and the sense of Movement as we felt the flow of blood, our pulse, under our finger. Of course, the power of media has enhanced these early discoveries so that we know the familiar sound of the heart pumping, and we are aware that each pulse is really a two-beat action.

More than 100,000 times each day, this rhythmic “thump-thump” is the indicator that life is flowing through our bodies.

For the Church of God of Prophecy, the heart of our calling and mission is the harvest. God has demonstrated this purpose generally through His Word and specifically many times through our history. Certainly God’s call to “Turn to the Harvest” in 1994 was one more recent moment of heavenly inspiration refreshing this specific purpose in our Movement.

And just as our pulse flows with a two-beat action to carry life blood from the heart, so we sense a two-beat action flowing out of the heart of our purpose, the harvest.

The first beat is the outreach that naturally flows from our harvest commitment. This may take different forms at any level or location throughout our Church, but all outreach activity is aimed at the process of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, winning the lost, bringing new converts into the loving family of God, and nurturing them until they become mature and reproducing believers themselves.

Since 1994, as the Church of God of Prophecy has worked to respond to God’s call to “Turn to the Harvest,” God has allowed us to reap abundantly. Our worldwide membership had tripled as we prioritized proclaiming the Gospel and planting new churches for the harvest of new believers. This surge of growth has brought our Movement to see more forcefully what is the second beat from the “Heart of Harvest.” That is Leadership Development.

CORE VALUES

Using Africa as an illustration, the need for Leadership Development becomes obvious. Since 1994, our ministry on the continent of Africa has exploded from 40,000 members to more than 500,000 members. In our largest nation there, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our overseer testifies that, at times, he is actually obliged to select the most mature new convert to place as a pastor over new churches formed from new field evangelism. We literally do not have enough pastors to supply the new growth coming from God's great harvest season today.

We are certain God has called us to place the harvest at the heart of our Movement. It is clear God has opened wide the doors for harvest all over the world. And we have found that the need for Leadership Development is our critical challenge in this special day of world evangelization.

Please join with me and leaders of this Movement to pray that God will fill us with grace to flow in the two-beat pulse of life that is coming from heaven for this day, great harvest and intense Leadership Development.



September 2007

MAKING DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLES

The phrase “Making Disciple-Making Disciples” sounds like a tongue-twister. And perhaps that is really what it is as preachers and writers seem to always be looking for catchy ways to title their thoughts. Perhaps, we could even go so far as to call it the MDMD principle. So what would this principle be?

Discipleship is one of those Christian terms that has been in use for so long that the fundamental meaning might get lost in our familiarity. We know that several newer translations of the Bible use this term in our “prime directive,” the Great Commission: “Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:19 paraphrased).

That Jesus would mention this concept in one of the core precepts of the Gospels surely places discipleship at the highest level of priority. Obviously given in the “marching orders” for Christ’s church is this command about discipleship. No wonder the phrase is used so often in Christian circles.

But what did Jesus actually do about discipleship Himself? Of course, the Gospel accounts are full of illustrations of this, but Mark 3 gives us a good look. That is the well-known chapter where Jesus called His disciples up into the mountain (v. 13), where He would ordain them, making it official that He had chosen the 12 for special attention and development.

Look at the verses before that activity. Verses 7–12 speak about the crowds that were gathering around Jesus during those days. “Great multitude” is used in verses 7 and 8. Verse 9 mentions precautions so the “multitude” would not throng Him. Verse 10 says they “pressed” on Him in order to touch Him. Obviously, Jesus was at the height of His popularity.

So what did Jesus do at that moment? It is interesting to see that

He turned and left the multitude, the masses of interested people, and went up into the mountain to ordain His 12 chosen disciples. What? That is correct. Read it again. He got away from the crowds pressing to hear, see, and touch Him, so that He could officially launch His discipleship ministry with the 12.

Jesus was not only saying to go make disciples; He demonstrated this with a courage to reject ministry to temporarily interested seekers and to make space for quality personal ministry time with those He chose to pour His entire life and vision into. Wow! There is too much to unpack in that example for this short space.

Jesus was making a calculated decision about His approach to ministry. He was demonstrating a clear strategy about how to impact the world. And it is especially challenging for our day that His choice about ministry included leaving the seekers for the moment, to spend intense and personal time with men who had come to the point of commitment for life. In his actions, Jesus was saying that the way to impact the world is through making disciple-making disciples.

Paul helps flesh that out with his words to Timothy sometime later: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). He was commissioning Timothy to go and do exactly what Paul had done for him—“Make Disciple-Making Disciples.”

How will we impact our world as individuals or as a Movement called the Church of God of Prophecy?

It just might be that Jesus has something here in the MDMD principle.



January 2008

PRIORITY FOCUS: YOUTH

As the Church of God of Prophecy faces forward, I have a strong conviction that we should focus on our greatest priorities wherever possible. This is a common conviction, whether the topic is sports, politics, or business. In sports, a good team knows its strengths and places focus there. A politician knows the strong points of his agenda and will bring every question back to those. A businessman knows where he can maximize his profits, and he will consistently focus there.

And so in the Church of God of Prophecy, we have been talking for some time about the priorities of Harvest and Leadership Development for greater focus.

Recently, I attended a conference where focus on the harvest was fine-tuned even more, and I would like to pass that on to our readers here. Many know the name of Ron Luce, the founder of “Teen Mania” and “Acquire the Fire.” Ron shared in this conference a deep urgency that is on his heart. He gave data describing the well-known reality that before the age of 20, 85 percent of the Christian world received salvation, and after 20, only six percent will come to faith.

Ron then told of a newer statistic that only four percent of the Millennial Generation (teens today) believe that the Bible is the Word of God. That compares with 16 percent among Generation X and 25 percent among Baby Boomers. The decline in this generation of teens is remarkable.

Ron showed data revealing that the bulk of the Millennial Generation is only five years from passing the threshold of age 20. The conclusion is simple, yet shocking for the people of God. If we do not reach this generation, the Millennial Generation, in the next five years, it will be more than ten times more difficult to reach them as they quickly move to become the leaders of our world without any godly convictions and standards.

The challenge is clear: the people of God must drop all that we are doing and focus our strength on reaching youth now while they are receptive to hear.

Actually, Ron Luce is encouraging us to take the easiest course of action. If we can throw our resources into an all-out, five-year surge to win youth, the culture will be impacted and the Millennial Generation will ultimately bring our society back to Godly standards, truth, and morality. It is much easier to win these youth now and to bring a culture back today.

On the other hand, if we wait, the culture will quickly turn more secular, displaying more post-Christian characteristics, and building a deep resistance to Christian tolerance and truth.

Please pray with me about this call to priority focus in outreach and ministry. Please remember that we are called to transform our culture with God's grace and truth. Please consider that reaching youth represents our aim to invest in the next generation and to prepare them for bringing cultural transformation. Please let the Spirit stir this urgent call into your heart today.



April 2008

PRIORITY FOCUS: CHILDREN

As the Church of God of Prophecy faces forward, focus on priorities is vital. In the March 2008 issue, I shared an urgent call to focus our efforts on the priority of reaching youth before they cross the age of 20. Founder of the ministry “Teen Mania,” Ron Luce shared this call in a recent conference for pastors.

The following is a quote from that March issue as we touch this urgent priority again: “The conclusion is simple, yet shocking for the people of God. If we do not reach this generation, the Millennial Generation, in the next five years, it will be more than ten times more difficult to reach them as they quickly move to become the leaders of our world without any godly convictions and standards.

The challenge is clear: the people of God must drop all that we are doing and focus our strength on reaching youth now while they are receptive to hear!”

In that same conference for pastors, where world-renowned leaders spoke each day, an amazing incident occurred. Personally, I had never heard Children’s Ministry proclaimed in a pastors’ conference as an immediate and strategic ministry for which all churches should give priority. Yet in this conference, on one day, two world-class leaders shared their passion and conviction that Children’s Ministry should be the priority focus of every local church.

Dr. Ed Young is the long-time pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, and Dr. Wes Stafford is the President of Compassion International. So it was even more intriguing to see that these two leaders, coming from such different ministry points, would feel the same urgency to call pastors to reconsider their focus and priority for reaching and ministering to children.

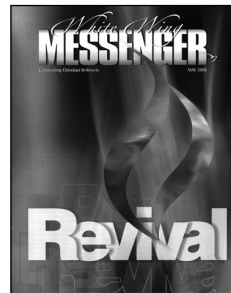
Dr. Stafford shared that if we are not planning to reach children as we harvest, we are demonstrating that we do not know what the harvest looks like. He shared that in the harvest of the world,

every other individual will be a child—more than 50 percent. Dr. Ed Young called every pastor to make their church a place that loves children since Jesus clearly showed His love for these little ones. Both gave the challenge that ignoring ministry to children was the “Great Omission” of our generation. And in the spirit of Robert Rakes, who began Sunday school in England, a passion for reaching children was one of the keys to transforming that nation.

May we remember that children are the most receptive element of the harvest. As we reach out to children, we are sowing seed for the godly future of our culture. In an ungodly culture, ministry to children is still an open door often endorsed by godless parents. Satan is aggressively attacking our children and youth, so let the church rise up to call for a Gospel counterattack. So often, churches that win children also win the hearts of the parents in time.

Dr. Stafford shared the story of Moody returning from an evangelistic service and reporting that two-and-one-half had been saved. His wife smiled and asked how young the child was. Moody corrected her and said, “No, it was two children and one adult. The children have all of their lives to give for Christ.”

Every church can prioritize the easiest to reach—those who can give the most life to Christ and those who will impact the future most significantly. We can have the heart of Christ and focus to win the children.



May 2008

THE YOUNG HARVEST

This issue of the *White Wing Messenger* is devoted to reaching the young harvest, so we will conclude this third segment of “Facing Forward” on the same theme.

In the first segment, we spoke of the urgent call of Ron Luce, Founder of Acquire the Fire Ministry, to reach the millennial generation before they cross the 20-year-old barrier.

The second segment referred to Dr. Ed Young, Pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, calling for churches to focus on children to reach out and grow. Obviously, God is stirring a passion for the young harvest among many people.

Many have known the Catholic philosophy of generations: “Give us your child until age five, and we will have a Catholic for life.” The architect of that strategy understood full well the power of reaching a young harvest for the growth of a ministry into the future. We are also familiar with the maxim that “our youth are the church of tomorrow.” And many have adjusted that to say, “The youth are actually the church of today.” Regardless of which proverb you may favor, the truth stands sure that the young harvest is vital for the success of a Movement.

Now, add to this crucial reality above an evaluation of the situation we face in much of the western world where faith has declined. One important question might be, “How do we win back the culture?” Most would submit to the data showing nearly every faith indicator has slipped in the last few decades.

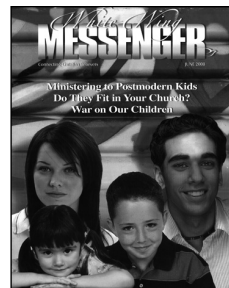
Even Christian history points to the fact that when society drifts into darkness, the circumstances are prime for an Awakening. Or to use the words of Isaiah, we could say, “. . . When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

So where would the Awakening begin? Where would the Spirit find entrance against the flood tide of the enemy? Radical cultural

transformations from history tell us the young harvest has been a critical component.

John Wesley began to preach to young, even under-age, workers—going to their arduous labor in the mines. Both the Indian and Chinese revival records report young, receptive hearts fanned the flames of radical renewal. And these reports are repeated often through the centuries.

May we keep in mind that ministry to our youth and children is not an out-of-sanctuary, secondary priority. If we take serious the call to light the darkness of communities and cultures, we will have to take seriously the call to impact the young harvest.



June 2008

LIFE FLOWS THROUGH VISION

Every great work and every great person came under the influence of a vision that changed them and, therefore, changed others. John F. Kennedy gave America the vision to place a man on the moon in that decade in spite of the technological impossibility at the time.

We often reflect on passages in the Bible that lift up the benefit of vision. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he." First Chronicles 12:32 is well-known for pointing to the children of Issachar, who were "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

Scanning the pages of Bible history, we see numerous visionaries. Moses said, "Let my people go" (Exodus 10:3); Abraham was "look[ing] for a city" (Hebrews 11:10); Daniel said, "we will not be defiled" (Daniel 1:8); the three Hebrews said, "we will not bow" (Daniel 3:12); Esther said, "I am come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14); Caleb said, "give me this mountain" (Joshua 14:12); David said, "Is there not a cause" (1 Samuel 17:29); Paul saw the man of his vision saying, "come over and help us" (Acts 16:9); Nehemiah was moved to build the wall; Ezra was called to rebuild the temple; Joshua said, "we are well able to possess the land" (Joshua 1:11); and Jesus declared, "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15) or "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11).

As we simply state these diverse visions or callings, something comes over us. It is absolutely powerful to be given over to a dream or a purpose bigger than ourselves. That has been the testimony of our journey in the Church of God of Prophecy.

Through the years, many in this Church have been gripped by passion, knowing God had a destiny for this Movement as well as for them as individuals devoted to that cause. The chemistry of a Movement on a mission is undeniable and often unshakable.

Vision is positively powerful. And we can multiply that effect when it is heaven-sent. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Those folks who succeed remain enthusiastic longer than those who fail. Every great and commanding Movement in the annals of the world has been a triumph of enthusiasm.”

Robert Dale, in his book *Keeping the Dream Alive*, has said, “Visionaries are nicked by thorns but still smell the roses; visionaries get sand in their shoes, but they still hear the ocean surf; visionaries get soaked in the rain, but they still look for the rainbow; visionaries see ordinary believers, and they still sense the Kingdom of God is arriving through them.”

Vision brings people through hard times. It was Isaiah who wrote in the year that King Uzziah died—a dark day for Israel. But he wrote of an enduring vision that transcended the loss of a great leader. Winston Churchill was able to instill vision in England when Hitler’s alliance was invading and bombs were falling. He rode through London with a megaphone, declaring, “This is England’s finest hour!” We will carry this battle to the enemy. We will fight on land, on sea, in the air, in the villages, and in the cities. We will not stop until we have conquered this foe.

Of course, the opposite is true as well. There is the curse of lack of vision. Without a vision to bring focus, leaders often fight brushfires, move from crisis to crisis, live solving problems, become church referees, follow fads—the quest for all things new, careen from each successive new idea to the next, and repeat the past—tied to tradition, paralyzed to embark on the journey of vision, feeling comfort from the same programs and the same routines.

Vision embraces God’s forward moving call to His people. Consider such calls as “Go ye into all the world” (Mark 16:15) or “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God” (Revelation 11:15) or “The gates of hell shall not prevail against them” (Matthew 16:18).

Dr. David Livingstone quoted the words of Moffet the African missionary’s vision: “I stand and see the fires of 1,000 villages never touched by the Gospel.”

Vision invites participation. In 1 Samuel 14, Jonathan had a vision to move aggressively when all of Israel was in the passive mode. His armor-bearer caught the vision and actively participated in the realization of that day's victory. "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6).

Vision replaces old routines. Vision is the difference between a monument and ministry. A monument is built to reminisce and reflect. It is historical, passive, reflective, not contemporary, active, or engaging. It is like the difference between a building and a body. A building can house a body, but a body is much more than a building. A building is the end result, often a monument: a body uses a building as a beginning of ministry, reproduction, and impacting lives.

Valuable visions build on the past, speak to needs, challenge people, provide guidance, attract people, unite efforts, give energy, bring change, and move ministry forward.

Robert Dale noted in his book, *Keeping the Dream Alive*, that any organization steps through cycles. The early group is seized with a "cause," which becomes the motivation for all that is done. This cause brings a surge of energy expressed as passion and attracts even more adherents. The Movement is launched and rockets upward quickly. As the growth continues, there come needs for organization, structure, and policies. The growth level of the Movement gradually slows as more and more energy is consumed internally. If momentum continues to fade, plateau comes, followed by stagnation, and then declines.

The cure for Movements that find themselves in the stages from plateau on through decline is to recapture the "cause" that once ignited the birth and life of the Movement originally. If drifting from the "cause" saps life, then restoration of the "cause" brings renewal and life again. The Church of God of Prophecy is in such a stage of vision restoration currently. Our return to the harvest has begun to restore the force of life to our ministry and Movement.

VISION

Today this Church is aligning itself more and more to the call of harvest and worldwide Kingdom expansion. We are building on our foundation in Christ—His Gospel call, deep holiness convictions, the Pentecostal experience, world mission compassion, “all nations” unity, and hunger for Christian union.

What God placed within us as divine DNA more than one century ago is being renewed by the Holy Spirit in this significant hour. Our destiny lies ahead as we join our Savior in the greatest age of reaping this world has ever known. Only we can do our part.

May every outpost of ministry through the world network of this Church arise to the “cause and call” of our Lord and King! And may the song on our hearts ring out “to God be the Glory, both now and forever more.”



July 2008

PART TWO:

**STATE OF THE
CHURCH MESSAGES**



This section was compiled from “*State of the Church*” messages given by General Overseer Randall Howard in joint meetings of the General Presbyters, International Offices Leaders, and various Assembly Committees, during their 2006 and 2007 annual October meetings.

VISION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

HARVEST: OUR CORE VALUE

I believe the call to the harvest has been a divine call for this Church, but not for us only. The Spirit has been calling all the people of God that would hear and respond in these last days to prioritize the harvest. God is doing a work of world significance and even end-times significance. Those who will respond to this call will move out with God to reap the great harvest that He is opening all over the world.

The Church of God of Prophecy has responded to this call over the last decade, and we have experienced outreach progress like we have never known before.

Let me say that this has had nothing to do with the skill of our network or the expertise of Gospel work we have contributed. This is a marvelous season of God, and all who will engage and participate are reaping as if we are the boat that cannot contain the catch of fish after simply following the Master's instructions. Clearly, this is about God and what He is doing far more than this is about us and what we have done.

Now, we have been participating by reaping for some time with God's Movement in the world. We are stretched to bare minimums. We are a youth Movement in the nations. We are not only young in ministers, we are young in new churches, we are young in new nations, and we are young in national polity and our support systems.

It is time to teach, mature, implement structures to support, develop leaders, and provide for longevity in this harvest-time. We are strong in so many ways. These young leaders, churches, and nations sense that we are a part of a moving, flourishing work of God. Most of them are seeing God at work, and this affirms that our tack as a Movement has been breathed from God.

We have a world network that is rare among international organizations today. Again, this is not ours to boast, but a testimony

of what God has placed within us from our foundations and has nurtured along through the journey. This factor took a great step forward as we decided to implement the General Presbyters' level of leadership. This leadership has made it possible for us to work in the explosive harvest environment as well as we have. Without this, we would have been spread so thin in world administration that we could not have managed what we have seen God bring to us.

Even as we testify of how God has used this leadership level, we must look back over the last ten years and look into the next ten years to say that this level must keep progressing, developing, and growing in its ability to administer reaping, guide into maturity, and prepare more leaders. In many respects, we are at the same place we were 12 years ago. Then, we stepped into a new structure of world leadership, and we see the benefit. Now, as this level comes to clear focus on some key areas, we can participate even further in what God is doing over the earth.

Harvest is the highest value. I define harvest for the Church of God of Prophecy as a) planting churches or b) nurturing harvest in current churches.

Dr. Lamar Vest, former General Overseer of the Church of God, said in a meeting I attended once, "I am not so much for evangelism, I am for evangelization." This was a moment of illumination. I translate this for the Church of God of Prophecy by saying that we are a saturation church-planting Movement. Others may strategically target unreached people groups, others may proclaim the Gospel in massive projects, and others may be involved in a multitude of wonderful Gospel ministries. I appreciate all of these while at the same time understand what our strength is, what God has used in us most effectively—that being simple church-planting that spills out from where we are to where we find opportunity to be.

Our growth in the world is happening where we are planting churches. On the average, the Church of God of Prophecy will have a new mission penetrating a new field for every four churches. That means we are constantly birthing. That is healthy. An organism must be constantly reproducing itself. The most basic building

block of life teaches this simple precept of life. Cells reproduce. So it is with the Church of God of Prophecy—our life is to plant churches everywhere we can.

This is the intention in stating that harvest is the number-one priority. Surely, there is more that can be said about supporting this need, such as the 3,000 churches with no building. Still, the point is well-taken that harvest through church-planting and nurturing current churches is our mandate.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: OUR CORE VALUE

Because the harvest has been so abundant, our second priority may very well be our first priority. That is how vital leadership development is for the Church of God of Prophecy in the next ten years. We must raise up leaders to maintain the rate of our participation with God in His worldwide, Gospel spread.

At this point, the saying may apply to us in some places—a mile-wide but an inch-deep. I do not say this to condemn or depreciate what has been done in the harvest. I only say this to describe how fast we have grown and to name a high priority that we must respond to as a Church.

In a conversation with David Bryan, Director of Global Outreach, Annette Taylor, Director of Harvest Partners Ministry, and with Ntambwe Beya, of Democratic Republic of the Congo, a key factor was touched. Bishop Beya stated that when they send out an evangelistic team, they know that there will be at least one new church planted, often more. I then asked him, “Who do they place as a pastor over this new church?” He responded that there are times when they simply place the most mature believer from the outreach as the pastor.

This is not a new phenomenon since the story is told by missionaries that in the great revival of China, new converts often are forced into service as pastors. Also, it is prevalent that young men and often young women are leaders of regions of churches, where all of the churches are only months old, and the pastors

may be younger than the young, regional leader. In the Church of God of Prophecy, we face these conditions in a few locations as well. On the one hand, it means we are in an incredible harvest zone, and we give God praise for the privilege. On the other hand, this means we are called to do all we can to facilitate and lead advances to support these new churches with training for their pastors.

Let me point to two more illustrations from our own ranks to underscore this great challenge. Our second greatest harvest area in the world is the former Soviet area. In 12 years, they have grown to a membership of more than 100,000. It was no coincidence that we heard the report that in the last two years, they have launched four ministry training centers—Bible Colleges. In some areas, they have the same testimony that we have heard from Democratic Republic of the Congo and from China. They have felt this pressure, and they are responding by faith, in the best way they can, to meet the need by the grace of God. Can we do any less as we consider mission, values, vision, and resource allocation?

One final illustration would be the story of Indonesia and Peringatan Zebua's passion and vision to train church-planting pastors. Brother Zebua launched a training network to produce church-planter evangelistic teams. The central center has now spawned four centers on four island groups of Indonesia. The central center is the model as they have . . .

- planted a church through their evangelism training practice;
- established a noodle restaurant, bread selling, and pig farm to fund their mission;
- established a child care center aimed at planting a second church;
- established a Bible College for further accredited training;
- recruited non-church young talent to this visionary training opportunity; and
- built a young and talented leadership team through this ministry.

The point is that we need this in Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a host of other African nations where the growth is

great, the leadership need is great, and young leaders languish under harsh, economic realities. Many African leaders are stretching every dollar to train leaders because they are on the ground where they see how great the need is to supply the leaders that will establish this reaping for the decades to come.

Most realize this season of God's harvest will continue for several more decades. Phase one is coming to a close where totally unprepared evangelists have reaped massively as the hunger for Christ has swelled. As I visited with Bishop James Kolawole on the streets of what I call the largest and greatest Christian city in the world, Lagos, Nigeria, I heard his cry that we now must have pastors that can lead these believers into well-established local ministries, we must have buildings and move out of the mud paths to the streets and highways, we must step up to respond by giving what we can by faith, acting with purpose and not for survival, and, finally, trusting God to come through.

So in heart and spirit, Leadership Development joins Harvest as the great twin mandates for this age in the Church of God of Prophecy. These two are our life and breath. They are our highest values. Interestingly enough, if you look back through our journey, it is easy to see where these have held priority quite often in spite of distracting factors.

HARVEST MOTIVATION

Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white . . . (John 4:35).

The harvest is the call of the Lord today for His people (world). For me, this is the principle that stirs my heart. It is the primary value. Over the years, I realized that we were a) very blessed to have a part to play in this great season of reaping and b) not able to reap all that was right there to be gleaned. Now, that sounds amazing for a small organization of 320,000 worldwide in 1994 that 14 years later would reach beyond one million.

But it is true we have not reaped all that we could have, amazingly. Someone might ask, "Why?" God might ask. Perhaps, it was

because in spite of all that was done, this entire body was not entirely devoted to the harvest and answering the opportunities with supply.

What would that have looked like? Every local church hearing that we can reap hundreds of thousands of souls now if we only band together and deliver the goods to get it done. It might be reminiscent of our World War eras when every community was overwhelmed with one objective—our men were over there fighting, and we needed to do everything we could in support. Women ran the factories, recycled tires and everything else possible, making do with very little, buying U.S. bonds with their own money, and more. Why? They did that to support the desperate effort of the World War.

The World War model is extreme, of course. The biblical precept supports, saying, “Give, and it shall be given unto you . . .” (Luke 6:38) or “. . . I will . . . open . . . the windows of heaven . . .” (Malachi 3:10). Our response to what God is doing will only bring His blessing over us swiftly. When we join Him in any venture, it is always untold blessing.

And how does God see it? He has opened the nations like as never been seen before. He has prepared this day of opportunity for His Gospel to spread more rapidly than ever. He has poured out His Spirit to empower His people as they go. He has torn down walls of division so His Kingdom could harvest harmoniously. He has done all of this and more to make certain we will reap this harvest for His glory.

So how does God see our growth? Could He be saying, “I hope they will respond like the World War era, turning all energies toward the obvious Movement I have generated on the earth because the harvest will be beyond their imagination”?

If Jesus were here, and He knew that God had orchestrated this season to be the greatest single era of Gospel spread ever known, what would Jesus do? We know John 5:19 says that He would run join His Father in the harvest.

Yes, harvest-reaping is the highest value. Actually, there is no other value. Leadership development only becomes a value as we

see it as a) equipping leaders to make disciples as we win the lost, and b) it is forced upon us by the great reaping with no shepherds.

The Great Commission is full-orbed, including winning, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching all things. New Testament equipping has no anchor point if it is not attached to reaping, and reaching the lost. Without that, it then becomes what discipleship has been allowed to become over the last 1,000 years—teaching and training ourselves. But with the anchor point of evangelization, discipleship becomes meaningful and vital. More troops are needed, so we must turn the babies into warriors and send them to the front.

- Harvest is the call.
- Proclaim Christ as Savior and Lord!
- Cooperate with all that believe in the power of the Gospel!
- Do not become distracted with lesser issues!
- Focus all energies and resources for the cause!
- These are the last days!

A former General Overseer Billy Murray loved the harvest metaphor. The farmer does so many things. He runs and fixes big machinery, welding, etc. He builds buildings, barns, sheds, chicken houses, etc. He plants crops, fertilizes, irrigates, and digs irrigation canals. He sells on the market, ships, loads, contracts. He raises livestock, understands and cares for, becomes a veterinarian. He is an accountant keeping the books, recording, paying, and billing. He is a supervisor, hiring, firing, directing, and planning. He is a weather man, observing, studying, and predicting. But when the harvest comes, he focuses on one thing—getting those crops in!

It is only under this motivation that resource allocation comes into question. A friend of mine told me budget is not the driving factor of the harvest value. Thank you for reminding me because I searched my passion, and that was exactly right. The driving passion for me has nothing to do with budget. If we had 100 million dollars, the harvest call would demand we appropriate a lion's share to harvest.

So in the environment of the great work of God, our marvelous privilege is to to be a participant, how do we allocate our resources accordingly? In the following pages, we will wrestle with this question.

INTERNATIONAL OFFICES ENVIRONMENT

Office Financial Limitations

All who work around the International Offices know that we have felt the challenge of ministering in an environment of financial limitations. This is not new to Christian ministries, of course. Through the last five years, budgets have remained nearly the same while wages and other costs continue to rise. It has been said by several that we are approaching a time when we will only be able to pay wages of our staffs, maintain the buildings, and keep the offices open. That may be somewhat extreme, but there is certainly an element of reality there that has been experienced by most ministry leaders. No doubt, this has caused ministry leaders to react in several ways.

Entrenchment was where ground troops in World War I would dig into their fox holes and trenches of defense to hold their position in the face of difficult circumstances, possibly waiting for the allies to send in more troops. This has possibly been one attitude at the International Offices as we might hope for greater funds to come to supply greater ministry activity.

Fall-back might be another war term that could be used to describe our situation. A few ministry leaders might have decided that the scope of ministry previously carried out was too heavy for this resource-limited environment, and so they have cut back on services, finding a level of activity that would be sustainable until a change comes in the financial picture.

War bonds might be another war term that could be used to say fund-raising has been an approach chosen where ministry leaders make connections to the field. This was done in an attempt to raise funds, thereby supporting additional ministry plans. We need to give these credit for being most proactive, though to date this has not answered the needs.

Along with these, emotions involved in working in this environment have made an obvious impact on morale. This is only natural when limitations beyond one's control force changes in behavior. Frustration would be common, as would be defensiveness toward one's ministry, passiveness flowing from a hint of hopelessness, and territorialism as each ministry tries to preserve what they do. All of these emotions are normal, but we all would agree that they are not healthy for the International Offices as a whole, nor for the ministries individually.

In summary, we face an environment of limited finance, which has brought not only decreased capability to perform but has also brought psychological and emotional impact to our performances as ministry leaders. Again, this is normal, and no condemnation is intended toward any ministry or leader. Yet we would all agree that we cannot remain the same if this environment of financial limitation is to persist.

Restructuring last done in 1996–97

How often should the activities of any organization be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness? The International Offices were reviewed and restructured to some extent in 1996–97. That was ten years ago. We are all aware that dramatic changes come along in the course of ten years in our world.

In the document prepared for the 1996 General Assembly, "International Offices Official Leadership Restructuring—We Are Changing . . . We Are Still the Same," the following statement was issued in the Introduction: "It has been recognized and officially stated in 1989 that there was a need to restructure the central leadership of the Church in order to more accurately reflect the global nature of the Church and to be faithful stewards of the resources with which God has entrusted us." The document also stated, "We desire to function within the leadership principles found in the New Testament. Therefore, we desire to operate flexibly, in response to the Holy Spirit, and with an understanding of the times. We are committed to the ongoing evaluation of our relevance and effectiveness and to the possibility of adapting our functions

as needed in order to best serve the Church.”

Obviously, after a decade, evaluation and streamlining for the International Offices would help bring about updating and re-alignment to our core values.

Harvest, North America

The International Offices are not the only ones feeling the financial limitations, of course. State offices in North America have felt restricted and less capable of funding ministry leadership and, more important, less capable of funding outreach, new field work, and church-planting. Church-planting has been shown to be the best growth vehicle for any Movement; and in the Church of God of Prophecy, our historical data shows that where we have planted new churches, we have grown. The converse is true as well. Our ability to fund new growth has been impacted, and this must be addressed.

Most recently, North America has shown good signs of growth, and for this we praise the Lord. This positive turn has not negated the need for funds; if anything, it has stirred up those feelings again as overseers who had become accustomed to little funds and little opportunity now see good opportunities but the little funding.

In both 1998 and 2000, the Administrative Committee took action to infuse church-planting grants back into North America. This was, in part, due to the cry for help to support outreach. This was possibly the first time in decades that such an infusion was directed to North America for so specific a need as church-planting. The results were positive, and more has been planned this year. The General Leadership of the Church stands responsible to consider such needs as a part of their mandate to steward the funds available toward our callings and values.

Harvest, Nations of the World

Historically, the world mission outreach of the Church has been a support responsibility of the International Offices. Our Finance Office did some research and came back with data to show that our support for the harvest had increased by five percent over ten years, while the outreach has increased by 275 percent.

Much could be said about the need for support among the nations of the Church of God of Prophecy, but I believe most would agree that the need is real. And, once more, the General Leadership of the Church is responsible to consider such needs as a part of their mandate to steward the funds available toward our callings and values.

These factors make up the environment in which we live in the Church of God of Prophecy and, most specifically, in the International Offices today. More depth of study could be done, and more factors could be identified; we would welcome that kind of information. As I reflect on this, it seems obvious that the funds flowing into the International Offices today bear the burden to some extent of all three entities we have mentioned: Ministries of the International Offices in this financially limited time, Outreach in the Nations, and Outreach in North America.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

What about the environment of the International Offices? Can we maintain as we are long enough to see ample support arrive? Is it good stewardship to believe that we should simply maintain as we wait for better days ahead? Can we survive the emotional, psychological, and spiritual traumas while maintaining in this environment? Will we be effective and relevant with a mindset of maintenance? Does it sound dangerous to put inspiration on hold until funds come through? Should we review and evaluate now after ten years? Could we name our purpose for being and focus our efforts more effectively? Are there things we could do with limited resources if we decided to act strategically with the little we have?

We face the challenge of shifting from a small organization to a large, multinational ministry, from a North America-based organization to a world-functioning organization, and from a North American-supported operation to a world-supported operation. We face the opportunity of clearly stating our values and visions and effectively pursuing them and supporting them.

We are at a marvelous threshold, an age of opportunity for the

Church of God of Prophecy. We can choose to move forward. We will move forward more effectively by uniting in vision, embracing a common cause, choosing to lay down our individual tracks, and embracing a unity of purpose together. We can lay aside individualism and work with synergy and sacrifice for a common good. We can mature from a collection of ministries surviving to a cooperative effort united. We can shift from self-reliance propelling our ministries to participating on a team with a specific mission to fulfill. We can choose teamwork, communication, and cooperation—the enemies of individualism, but the allies of the greater whole.

Vision needs strategy to carry out its work—like the body needs bones and a skeleton to provide the frame for movement. Without the skeleton, a body would not be able to function. So these offices need strategy to carry out our vision. Strategy frees the Church to move toward vision as bones enable the body to move.

Today we have the opportunity to take another step. We have the opportunity to name our mission, list our core values, and cast our vision-setting goals for the next six to ten years, allocating our limited resources in ways they can be maximized for the harvest and, therefore, the glory of God.

Here at the International Offices, we are adopting the following nine philosophies to help guide our efforts in serving more effectively:

- Focus Efforts on Harvest
- Focus Efforts on Leadership Development as a Means of Harvest Enhancement
- Exercise Plurality
- Focus on Service to the Field as Primary
- Focus on Developing Leaders Rather Than Laity
- Prioritize Ministries by Values
- Give Back to the Field
- Synergism to Maximize Effectiveness
- Demonstrate Deep Love for This Movement