

FEBRUARY 2026

WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



Testify!

SECRETS OF A JOYFUL MARRIAGE

THE GIFT OF BELONGING

BISHOP WALLACE PRATT, DMIN

MARRIAGE MADE IN THE PHILIPPINES

BISHOP ROGELIO D. JUSTINIANO AND
FLODELIZA R. JUSTINIANO

TESTIFY! THE MAKING OF A JOYFUL
MARRIAGE

BISHOP BENJAMIN MNISI

**+BISHOP
TIM COALTER**
PRESIDING BISHOP COGOP

**+BISHOP
CLAYTON MARTIN**
GENERAL PRESBYTER CARIBBEAN
AND ATLANTIC OCEAN ISLANDS

**+BISHOP
DANIEL FELIPE**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

**+BISHOP
GABRIEL VIDAL**
GENERAL PRESBYTER FOR
SOUTH AMERICA

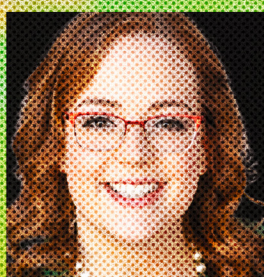
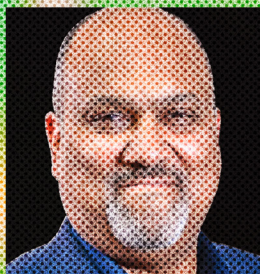
**+MINISTER
JOY HENSLEY-RIVAS**
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

+FEATURED GUEST SPEAKERS

**+MR.
GREG NETTLE**
PRESIDENT OF STADIA

**+MR.
LEIO MCLAREN**
CREATOR OF BIBLE.AI AND
SPIRIT NOTES

**+DR.
ROGER BALL**
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE PASTOR
OF FAMILY WORSHIP CENTER IN
THE BRONX NEW YORK



**+BISHOP
WOODLEY
THOMPSON**
HOST



BAHAMAS empowerment CONFERENCE

**MULTIPLYING
LEADERS
MOBILIZING
MISSION**

EQUIPPING FOR IMPACT

**MAR
11-15
2026**
Baha Mar
Nassau, Bahamas

REGISTRATION
NOW OPEN
SCAN HERE



WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Executive Editor/Publisher: Tim Coalter
Managing Editor: Marsha Robinson
Copy Editor: Katherine Osborn, DMin
Graphic Designer: Charlie Scruggs

About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshipping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

General Presbytery

Tim Coalter: Presiding Bishop
Brian Sutton: North America
Clayton Endecott: Wider Europe and the Middle East
Benjamin Feliz: Mexico/Central America/
Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
Clayton Martin: Caribbean/Atlantic Ocean Islands
James Kolawole: Africa
Tim McCaleb: Asia/Australia/Oceania
Gabriel E. Vidal: South America

White Wing Messenger (ISSN 0043-5007) (USPS 683-020) is published monthly as the official publication of the Church of God of Prophecy, 3720 Keith St. NW, Cleveland, TN. Send all materials for publication to Editorial Department; PO Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320-2910; email: editorial@cogop.org; fax: (423) 559-5151. For a free subscription, email www@cogop.org, visit whitewingmessenger.net, or call (423) 559-5540. Donations for the White Wing Messenger may be sent to the above address. All Scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated. POSTMASTER: Send address change to White Wing Messenger, PO Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320-2910. Please submit all material to the White Wing Messenger; Managing Editor; PO Box 2910; Cleveland, TN 37320-2910; phone (423) 559-5320; email us at editorial@cogop.org.

FEATURES

- 6 The Gift of Belonging**
Bishop Wallace Pratt, DMin
- 9 Marriage Made in the Philippines**
Bishop Rogelio D. Justiniano and Flordeliza R. Justiniano
- 12 In the Presence of Jesus: Grace for Successful Marriages**
Charlie Scruggs
- 14 Testify! The Making of a Joyful Marriage**
Bishop Benjamin Mnisi
- 16 Dābaq: A Marriage that Clings**
Tessa Dietze

COLUMNS

- 4 Facing Forward**
Bishop Tim Coalter
- 22 Ambassadors on Mission**
Honor, Covenant, and the Countercultural Witness of Christian Marriage: Is Marriage a Contract or a Covenant?
- 24 Pentecostal Perspective**
Messages in Tongues and Interpretation: A Pentecostal Perspective

DEPARTMENTS

- 26 Accredited Ministry Development**
Testify! Secrets of a Joyful Marriage
- 28 Global Communications**
Digital Tools that Strengthen Marriage Ministry in the Local Church
- 31 Global Missions Ministries**
Transportation Appeal
- 36 Global Missions Ministries**
One Child Fund: Christmas Thanks
- 38 Heritage Ministries**
Fields of the Wood
- 39 Heritage Ministries**
In His Presence

Visit us online—whitewingmessenger.net

The White Wing Messenger
is a member of the
Evangelical Press Association





Testify!

SECRETS OF A JOYFUL MARRIAGE

When I stood at the altar on my wedding day, I offered a simple prayer: “Lord, thank You for my treasure.” I did not yet understand how prophetic that prayer would become. Forty-five years, five months, and one day later—after walking with my wife through joy and sorrow, family and ministry, sacrifice and laughter, the changing seasons of life, and finally cancer—I stood before my grandchildren and told them, “This casket is really a treasure chest. Inside it is our treasure.”

That is my testimony. And testimony matters.

Of all the descriptive words that could characterize our marriage, it was most certainly a joyful union. It was so joyful, in fact, that I would gladly do it all over again. For that reason, I find it perplexing—even troubling—to imagine a joyless marriage. Yet, all too often I encounter married couples, even within our own fellowship, who after years together still seem unsettled as

to whether they truly want to be married to one another. How sad.

The good news is this: Marriage can and should be “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I am glad to share a few of the “secrets” that brought such joy to our marriage. Perhaps you will find them helpful as well.

First, we both witnessed joyful marriages in our homes growing up. My parents had been married nearly 63 years when my father passed away, and Kelly’s parents had been married well over 50 years before her father’s passing. But it was more than the longevity of their marriages that caught our attention; it was the atmosphere of joy and the air of contentment that filled their homes.

For those of us with children and grandchildren, an important question follows: *Can they readily see and hear the testimony of a joyful marriage in us?* Are we leaving them a godly example to emulate—one they might even surpass?

Second, shortly after we were married, Kelly and I were walking out of church one Sunday morning when a senior minister stopped me and said, “Son, don’t ever stop courting her. What it took to get her will be what it takes to keep her.”

The word *courting* may sound old-fashioned to some of our younger readers, but the principle remains timeless. Courting involves intentional pursuit—kindness, attention, listening, laughter, meaningful conversation, shared dreams, and thoughtful gestures. That season was one of great joy for us. The wisdom shared with me that day was simple and profound: Never stop doing what created joy in the first place. What it took to cultivate that joy is what it takes to sustain it.

Third, allow me to take you back briefly to the birth of Jesus. The wise men saw the star and followed it until it came to rest over the place where the Christ child was. Scripture tells us, “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” Do not miss the connection—joy followed their arrival at the place where Jesus was.

This, I believe, is *the* central secret to a joyful marriage—take your marriage to where Jesus is and keep it there. “*In Your presence is fullness of joy*” (Psalm 16:11 NASB).

Finally, this last secret is like the grand finale of a fireworks display—many beautiful things all at once. Be kind to one another. Extend grace freely. Never humiliate, belittle, or embarrass your spouse in public; such actions will never foster joy. Be considerate. Express honor and value often. Continue to share intimate moments—not only physically, but through simple gestures like holding hands, walking together, lingering conversations, and unhurried time with one another.

The secrets of a joyful marriage are not really secrets at all. So, I challenge you: Let a joyful marriage be your testimony.

In Scripture, testimony is not merely personal storytelling; it is sacred witness. “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11 KJV). In a time when marriage is often reduced to convenience, compatibility, or contractual obligation, the Church must once again testify—to the beauty, resilience, and joy God intended for this sacred institution.

THE GIFT OF Belonging

BISHOP WALLACE PRATT, DMIN

Upon being asked to write this article, I felt immediate appreciation for my wife and closest friend. Without Judy's godly faith, abiding love, and constant friendship that have saturated our relationship with trust and companionship, all the ministry and guidance given to others would never have been possible. While I have been a marriage counselor for over 40 years and have been blessed to share in many premarital counseling settings, it is the hours spent counseling married couples that causes me to emphasize something many never find or develop in their relationship. The author Ed Wheat, a physician and marriage therapist, wrote an insightful and powerful book with Gloria Okes Perkins called *Love Life for Every Married Couple*. In one chapter, Wheat shares the beautiful truth of what he and his wife, Gaye, learned about marriage:

"You might call what developed between us *a sense of belonging*. We had decided right from the start that it was us against the world—two people forming a majority of one. So whatever happened, or however much we clashed in private, we stuck by each other. We were like a brother and sister on the playground. We might scrap with each other, but let an outsider try to horn in and he had to take us both on! If one of us hurt, the other wiped away the tears. We made a habit of believing in each other while our careers got off the ground. We showed each other all the

kindness that two impatient young people could be expected to show—and then some more. It really wasn't long until we discovered something stupendous about our relationship: We found out *we belonged*. We came first with each other, and always would.”¹

Of course, I know that God must come first in anyone's life, and especially in a marriage, but from a daily human perspective, the importance of the love principle of *belonging* must be prioritized above career choices, romanticism, sexual fulfillment, social interaction, financial planning, church life, and procreation. From the beginning of the annals of husbands and wives in Genesis 2:18, *aloneness* was addressed by the Creator through giving humans a wonderful joy called *the gift of belonging*. In my observation as a marriage counselor and through my own marital experience, it is this one element that has had the ongoing influence to bring joy and abundant life to a committed couple. In the legendary passage in 1 Corinthians 7, titled by some as the “Principles of Marriage,” Paul makes a powerful point in verse three (NKJV): “Let the husband render to his wife the affection (*eunoia*²) due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.” Some Bible versions define this *eunoia* as “sexual needs,” other versions use the word “benevolence,” while still others use words that emphasize duty, kindness, or good will. While all these words contain a nugget of truth in them, the fuller meaning is found in the Greek word *storgos*, which is used in reference to intimate relationships. It encompasses a more realistic attitude toward one another that is best described as companionship that comes from having a sense of belonging. This *storgos* (in the form of *philostorgos*³) is referred to by Paul in Romans 12:10, and as *astorgos* (where it is used negatively in reference to same-sex unions) in Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3. This gift of belonging, given by the Creator to humankind through the marriage of one man and one woman, is unmistakably stronger than any other emotion or activity that two people can share together.

This is more than togetherness, which can become corrupted or misused as happens in many relationships today. It is more than a self-centered happiness. Let me return for a moment to my wife and me. I have always affectionately

called my wife Jude. We will soon celebrate our 55th anniversary with thankfulness and memories of times we needed that *sense of belonging* in our relationship. We remember being together for the birth of each of our two daughters, both of whom continue to bring us such joy. We also reflect back on my wife's miscarriage between those two births—a difficult time that brought us feelings of fear, loss, and pain. We can recall the times we left places in our ministry that we loved, only to start another adventure with new friendships. Yes, we watched our daughters leave home, with joy and uneasiness, as they entered their own marriages and started their own families, but soon that uncomfortable separation brought the overwhelming joy of five grandchildren. Together we lived through the pain of my broken back, the sudden loss of both our dads within a month's time, and afterwards, the passing of our mothers, my older brother and sister, Jude's surgery to replace her knee, and the Covid pandemic that almost took our lives. Then, there was the death of my wife at 32,000 feet on an airplane—only to see the Lord raise her from the dead over 20 minutes later! Intermingled in those events, we were blessed to welcome into our family two beautiful Christian ladies who married two of our grandsons. Over the last two years now, we have enjoyed the birth of two great-grandsons. This coming August 31, we will make another transition from active ministerial service that has taken us to 45 states and 48 nations. I am truly blessed to enjoy *this gift of belonging* with my loving friend, my wife.

One area many Christians neglect in their relationship with their husband or wife is that of affirming their partner. If there is one thing that will hinder a person's *sense of belonging*, it is the lack of genuine approval. A spouse's approval causes the other person to sense that they are thought of favorably. This human need for affirmation is seen flowing from our Creator's personality. Twice in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Father made it audibly clear so others would know that He was affirming the eternal value and love that His Son needed: in Mark 1:11, at the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, and later in Matthew 17:5, when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. In both scenarios, the powerful affirming words of approval were spoken by the

Father to the Son: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” The Father had done this before Jesus started His ministry, and the Father did it again before Jesus ever suffered and died on the cross. Their mutual *sense of belonging* should not be overlooked.

Statistics will show that on many personality evaluations taken by married couples, *approval* from their partner shows up as one of the top three needs desired by both the husband and the wife. Both *approval* and *the sense of belonging* are so intricately tied to one another that couples need to focus on them over the entire years of their marriage. Personally speaking, I believe this is the secret to a joyful marriage. In a counseling setting several years ago, one wife shared an alarming response to me. She said, “I love my husband, but I have never liked him.” The look in his eyes made me know quickly that this was not a new revelation or confession by her. In almost every counseling session since, one of the first questions I ask each of the partners is this: “Do you like your husband (wife)?” The answers—whether quick, reluctant, or carefully dodged—have always revealed whether or not there is a sense of belonging (or approval) in the couple’s relationship. David Ferguson, in his book *Never Alone*, shares this insight:

Meeting the need for approval should focus more on your spouse’s intrinsic worth as God’s creation than on what he or she has accomplished. Approval does not highlight

what has been accomplished as much as why it was accomplished. Showing approval places value on your spouse’s character qualities and gifts that enable success—qualities such as determination, persistence, creativity, reliability, or attention to detail. Demonstrating love through approval requires that you really know your spouse.

Having read several testimonies from couples who have come to realize the importance of the gift of belonging, let me share one of those brief comments with you:

In the quiet of their shared kitchen, Elena watched Marcus stir a pot of soup, his shoulders relaxed in a way they never were in the outside world. For years, she had chased the feeling of “home” in childhood houses and bustling cities, but it always felt like a temporary lease. It was in the small, unscripted moments—the way her husband instinctively moved to make room for her by the stove, or how they could sit in twenty minutes of silence without a flicker of unease—that the restlessness finally stilled. She realized belonging wasn’t about a shared last name or a mortgage; it was the profound relief of being fully known and still being invited to stay. As Marcus handed her a spoon to taste, his eyes holding a familiar warmth, Elena understood that she was no longer a visitor in someone else’s life. She was the architecture of his, and he was hers.⁴⁴

¹ Ed Wheat and Gloria Okes Perkins, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 97.

² Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG International Inc, 2008), s.v. “eunoia,” 2178.

³ Zodhiates, *Key Word Study Bible*, s.v. “philostorgos,” 2305.

⁴ Brittney Powell, “The Story of Us,” *Lemon8*, Lifestyle Community, September 4, 2023, <https://www.lemon8-app.com/brittneypowell/7220260331451908614?region=us>.



BISHOP WALLACE PRATT, DMIN
IDAHO, OREGON, UTAH, AND NAVAJO NATION REGIONAL BISHOP

Wallace Pratt is the regional bishop for the Church of God of Prophecy in the COGOP IOU Navajo Nation region. He was born into a Church of God of Prophecy family and has been a Christian and a member of the Church from an early age. He serves the Lord and the Church as an administrator, teacher, evangelist, and a pastor to the pastors in his region. He is married to Judy Pratt and has two daughters and five grandchildren.

MARRIAGE MADE IN THE PHILIPPINES

BISHOP ROGELIO D. JUSTINIANO AND
FLORDELIZA R. JUSTINIANO



The expression “marriages are made in heaven” has two primary meanings: God decides who we marry, and that marriage is a sacred and eternal bond. This reflects the views of many people who see marriage as a holy combination of two people, and it also reflects the idea that certain things seem perfect together. Thus, “a match made in heaven” refers to an ideal couple or an ideal combination of things, and it has its roots in the belief that divine forces orchestrated them to meet and find each other.

My marriage to the then Miss Flordeliza Prado Reyes is definitely known by God in His sovereignty. As we acknowledge God in all our ways, He directs our paths, including our decision to marry. It may not be a perfect marriage without challenges, but God will always direct our paths to yield a biblical, lasting, and joyful kind of marriage.

I met Flor, as we fondly call her, at church when we were still in high school. She lived in Marikina City, while I was in Olongapo City, a distance of 175 kilometers. Every summer vacation, I had the opportunity to visit Marikina City, where I could attend church and had the chance to see my future wife. During my college days, I moved to Marikina City, where my interest in Flor blossomed and became a real attraction. We became boyfriend and girlfriend while in college, but we had to hide the relationship from her strict father. He advised her to finish her schooling first, get a decent accounting job, help the family, and love later. I guess I was a persistent suitor, so after

seven years of engagement, we finally decided to tie the knot. We were married on December 16, 1989. This year, we will be celebrating our 37th wedding anniversary.

I was already active in church ministry when we got married. The Lord blessed our marriage with two girls and a boy. I was appointed as the National Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Philippines in 1992, the year we had our first daughter. Our marriage became a ministry partnership. Flor has been involved in church finance, administration, and children’s ministry ever since; those are her strengths and areas of giftedness. I was involved in the ministry most of the time, but spending time with the family has been a rule within our marriage. I have seen ministers who prioritized ministry over their family, believing they were glorifying God in doing so. As a result, many of them suffered failed marriages or developed dysfunctional families as their kids grew up.

Isaac modeled for us a good example of what our priorities should be in life. Genesis 26:25 (NIV) records, “Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.” When Isaac moved to Beersheba, a pattern of priorities was evident in his family life. First, he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. His first priority was God and the worship of Him. Secondly, Isaac pitched his tent, established his home and family, making family his next priority. Then,

his servants dug a well, which was his work or ministry that God had called him to do. That was his last priority. God, family, and work/ministry—correctly ordered—are key to maintaining proper God-honoring priorities in life. When this order is mixed up, problems will soon arise. Good time management is a very important factor in making good use of prioritizing.

The principle for the Christian family, as Paul instructed the church at Ephesus, is crucial for establishing a family that will last and be joyful:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:21–33 NIV)

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ is the overarching principle. If husbands and wives practice mutual submission, the wives submitting to their husbands and the husbands loving their wives, the result is a harmonious relationship. My wife, Flor, was asked several times, “What is the secret of a lasting and joyful relationship?” Her reply was “understanding and



patience.” She would usually follow this up with a disclaimer that there is no perfect relationship. Marriage will be tested by situations that can destroy or strengthen it, once the clouds have settled. If you are understanding and patient, you learn how not to overreact. Overreacting often makes forgiveness a struggle. Your patience, on the other hand, gives your partner a chance to be a better person next time.

Besides the biblical understanding of marriage, Filipino cultural factors contribute to a lasting, joyful relationship.

A joyful Christian marriage for Filipino couples is basically about faith, family, and faithful love. Of course, all marriages have some problems or difficulties, but the Filipino culture, combined with Christian values, undoubtedly provides a very strong foundation for a happy and joyful union.

1. Christ at the Center

When you speak of Christian Filipino couples, a great source of their joy is found in God when He is the center of the marriage. Besides making decisions together by asking God for His guidance, couples also grow spiritually and emotionally through prayer, going to church, and worshiping together. Ecclesiastes 4:12 states, “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

2. Commitment Beyond Feelings

Here, in the Philippine setting, a marriage is definitely more than just a personal choice; it is a solemn and sacred covenant meant to last forever. A joy that lasts comes from the firm decision to be faithful even in the most difficult times. The extent of love is shown not only in the romance but also through sacrifice, patience, and perseverance.



3. *Pamilya Muna* (Strong Family Values)

The Filipino couples are here to tell you that they cherish the closeness of their families. When couples honor and respect their parents, elders, and relatives, their marriages will be even stronger. However, to be most effective, this must be combined with setting proper limits. Couples will enjoy harmony, peace, and support rather than conflict if they decide to be one and, at the same time, respect the family.

4. *May Paggalang* (Open Communication with Respect)

The house of happiness for a man and a woman also grows through straightforward, sincere communication seasoned with gentleness. Filipino culture values slightly different things, such as *pakikipagkapwa* (shared humanity) and *paggalang* (respect). Listening with humility and speaking with kindness helps prevent misunderstandings and heals wounds.

5. Forgiveness and Mercy

A Christian marriage is a place of forgiveness, at least as far as the marriage is concerned. Having considered the fact that Filipino couples are no exception in experiencing insecurity or problems—such as money issues, not seeing

each other because of work, or having to make personal sacrifices—there are times they have to tolerate each other to some extent. As far as pain is concerned, choosing to forgive is a way to express God's love and to give yourself permission to be happy again.

6. Shared Responsibility and *Bayanihan* Spirit

Togetherness in marriage means sharing and caring. *Bayanihan* is a term that comes from the Filipino spirit of communal unity and cooperation to achieve a particular goal. Naturally, joy will be the result when a husband and a wife follow the principle of *bayanihan*—helping and carrying each other's burdens of life. It is a healthy and productive relationship when two people in a marriage co-parent, work, and take care of their home together.

7. Gratitude and Simple Joys

People often say that the little things are what really matter or make the biggest difference. Filipino couples, too, often connect their happiness to such trifles as the whole family gathered around the table for a meal, bursts of laughter, praying together, or simply spending time together. Being thankful to God for both the good and the bad is what really sustains and nurtures contentment and lasting joy.

In Summary

The road to a happy Christian marriage for Filipino couples (as well as others) will have its fair share of ups and downs, yet it will be deeply marked by faith, love, sacrifice, and hope. If couples lean on God, respect and love one another, and live out Filipino values inspired and guided by Christian teachings, they will be able to build a marriage that is not only durable but also very joyful.



BISHOP ROGELIO D. JUSTINIANO, MDIV, DD, AND FLORDELIZA R. JUSTINIANO
PHILIPPINES NATIONAL BISHOP

Bishop Rogelio Justiniano is an ordained bishop with the Church of God of Prophecy and currently serves as the National Bishop of the Philippines. Bishop Justiniano was formerly a translator for the White Wing Publishing House and Press and trained with the COGOP School of Practical and Advanced Studies through the International Offices' Leadership Development and Discipleship ministries. He lives in Taytay, Rizal, Philippines, with his wife, Flor.

In the Presence of Jesus

— GRACE FOR SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES

CHARLIE SCRUGGS

In the early morning of my wedding day, May 7, 2016, I got in my car and drove to a quiet and secluded place in my hometown. My groomsmen had gathered with me beforehand to celebrate the day that was about to unfold. We were all staying at the same place, so when they woke up that morning and could not find me, they worried that I had bailed on my wedding day! It all made for much laughter after the fact. Nonetheless, I knew I had a very important appointment that needed to be kept early that morning.

As I watched the sun break through the morning darkness, I met with Jesus in the stillness and calm to prepare for the day of celebration that would soon take place. Amáris and I had decided that we would write our vows to one another. Understanding the weight of making a lifetime commitment to my soon-to-be wife, I knew I needed God's help to write out this vow. More importantly, I knew I would need His grace to actually live out the words I was writing. Meeting there with Jesus, I sensed His presence, His love, and His voice tenderly guiding me. In that moment, along with the months leading up to it, I recognized an important truth: I am completely helpless without God and, apart from Jesus, I lack everything to be the spouse that I need to be for my wife. Yet, in the presence of Jesus, I have ALL that I need to love, cherish, support, and honor my wife as she needs.

Most weddings tend to be marked by this familiar verse: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6 NIV). Perhaps, the most overlooked part of this verse is the spiritual unification that takes place. We tend to easily identify the joining together of families, finances, and futures in marriage. It is the spiritual unification that is harder to identify because we cannot see it. Yet that is the most important aspect of marriage. Marriage is a spiritual covenant between one man and one woman. God is the only one who can cause two to become one. This is a direct result of an abiding relationship with Jesus.

My wife and I both recognize that we are novices when it comes to marriage. We admire and look up to those who have been married for decades. What a testimony! We are always learning more about each other and growing in our capacity to love. We also understand that neither one of us will ever love each other as much as we first love Jesus. In order to be the spouse we need to be for each other, we must have a consistent, faithful, fervent, abiding time in the presence of Jesus.

If we want to grow in love, then we must learn to spend time with the one whose very being is love. My wife and I have discovered that as we spend time with Jesus, we are continually reminded of how merciful and kind He is to us. We are reminded of how faithful He is to us. We are reminded of how patient He is with us. These reminders about the love of Jesus are



exactly the model we need to love each other. A mentor of mine has said, “Most things are caught before they are taught,” meaning that we tend to “pick-up” things by being around and near them rather than being informed about them. This is absolutely true about the love of Jesus. The more I am in His presence and influenced by His love for me, the easier it is to embrace this model of love for my wife.

When we are in the presence of Jesus, He is continually knitting our hearts together, uniting us as one flesh. When we give priority to the presence of Jesus, He has a way of plucking out those things in our life that stand in the way of being “one flesh.” Pride cannot live in the presence of Jesus. Selfishness cannot live in the presence of Jesus. Anger and an argumentative spirit cannot live in the presence of Jesus. All things that boast of self and the flesh must be put to death in the presence of Jesus.

When we continually practice a lifestyle of submitting to Jesus, the by-product is a lifestyle of submission to one’s spouse.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:21–22, 25)

A holy awe of Jesus produces a tender humility towards our spouse. The moment that we lose this awe and wonder, we tend to prioritize ourselves and lose the selflessness that He modeled.

Second to God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, the best gift I have received in my life is my wife, Amáris. I am thankful for the truth of His Word that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17). Marriage is just that, a gift from God. I am often reminded in prayer that I am totally helpless and bankrupt apart from Jesus. I need Him more and more. Yet, flowing from the presence of Jesus, we have all that we need to be the faithful, loving spouses He has called us to be.



CHARLIE SCRUGGS
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

Charlie Scruggs serves as the senior pastor of All Nations Church in Newport News, Virginia, and is a freelance graphic designer. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Religion: Intercultural Studies from Liberty University and a Master of Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary. Charlie and his wife, Amáris, and their daughter, Eliana, reside in Newport News, Virginia.

Testify! THE MAKING OF A JOYFUL MARRIAGE

BISHOP BENJAMIN MNISI

Young's Bible Dictionary defines marriage as follows:

The union of a man and a woman first consummated in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve. This union became the pattern for all others to follow (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:46). (Young, 359)

Having lived a Christian life for some time now, I can testify about the making of a joyful marriage. As I set out to write this testimony, my mind quickly raced back along the journey Prudence (my wife) and I have taken together. My wife joined the family just when I had responded to the call of God to work fulltime in ministry. We started this journey together in January 1990, and God has since blessed us with five children. We have already celebrated 36 anniversaries, and God is still leading us together. One might ask, "Has it been pleasant every single day?" No, but we made it pleasant as we faced challenges along the way. Praise God, we know who brought us here and into this relationship. Even today, we know who the Source of marriage is, and without Him in the block [in the mix], there is no relationship that can last the tests of time, let alone be enjoyable in the process.

Testimony of Love

Our family grew steadily as I felt the power of love from Prudence, and I believe she felt the same from me as well. Her love radiated throughout the house during the day and the night. I could feel it as the Holy Spirit moved in our home. The truth that God is love cannot be denied because that is exactly how things have worked in our life all these years. Keep in mind, I worked in ministry both near home and far away. As ministry responsibilities grew, time for the family sometimes had to be shared with the congregants, but we did all this together. My life partner is a schoolteacher. She has responsibilities outside the home as well.

Often, she will come home exhausted, and I can see that my little "angel" is tired, but as duty calls, it is sometimes necessary for me to go out to fulfill the work of the ministry. When I come home, she is the same person, glittering in love.

In order to understand our love story, it is helpful to understand how the Oxford Dictionary explains love: "an intense feeling of deep affection." Because love is based on feelings, it can be hurt. Therefore, it needs to be taken care of. Love can be hurt by behavior, words, and other related actions. Even certain looks can contribute to the hurt that affects love. I became very mindful even of my speech because words may be interpreted differently at times.

As mentioned previously, Prudence and I knew who brought us into this marriage, and He must always be consulted should misunderstandings arise between the two of us as a couple. To enjoy marriage, you must have a strong relationship with the One who designed it. Surely, that is God Himself. Dr. Wallace Pratt, in one of his marriage workshops in Eswatini, emphasized that in every successful and enjoyable marriage, God must equally sit above both individuals, the husband and the wife. Dr. Pratt also presented the marriage triangle, which starts with God at the apex and both the husband and wife at the base corners of the triangle. Unless God controls the house, there is no joy in the marriage; instead, there will only be ENDURANCE in the house.

My conviction about marriage is that joyful relationships thrive excellently where intimacy is highly valued and allowed to command a space in the house. Genesis 2:24 indicates that God created human beings who would share intimacy in their marriage relationship. The two words that seem to be pillars of the message in this verse are LEAVE and CLEAVE. "To leave" means to go to a new location, while "to cleave" means to

adhere to, be glued firmly, be joined, and to abide securely or cling to.

The above statement accurately reveals the heart of God about marriage: It was never meant to put people under the yoke of endurance, but instead, God intended to put the man and the woman in a relationship of joyfulness, togetherness, and oneness. That is why Adam, in the Garden of Eden, sprang into a poetic song when Eve was introduced to him. “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called a woman” (Genesis 2:23). He was celebrating the love of God between Eve and himself.

Family Testimony

My wife and I, each of us being individuals within the family, understand that we are ONE in the sight of God. Her praise and burdens are mine because we are one unit before God. I have noted how God calculates in marriage setups: $1 + 1 = 1$. This is what makes us fight the challenges of life together, and then we also celebrate victories together. I never allow my wife to fight battles alone, and she does the same for me.

The secret of this joyful marriage is love, respect, and honesty toward one another. While writing this brief testimony, I asked Prudence what her testimony is when it comes to a successful and joyful marriage. This was her response:

As a born-again child of God, it is always significant to remain a Christian all the time. All decisions and behavior should reflect your love for God. A two-faced life, lack of honesty, can destroy a marriage. These are the godly values that have kept us together.

I agree with her. In our marriage, we should celebrate God’s love. When we do so, peace will prevail in our homes.



Marriage is mainly supported by what we bring into it together. My “self” as an individual plus her “self” will bring perfect results as long as God is above and in control of our thoughts and actions. Sadly, many marriages fail, and many that remain never live up to expectations. The reason behind the failure is simply the failure to recognize the supremacy of God’s Word for our guidance. Many families rely on their cultures for guidance, but when cultures clash with godly values, then a chaotic situation erupts in the family. Our homes, especially our bedrooms, should not be battlefields filled with hurtful words but places of peace and safety, rest, and enjoyment of the love that we each brought into the marriage.

There are several Christian disciplines that promote Christian values and are beneficial for our families:

- Love (Ephesians 5:25)
- Prayer (1 Corinthians 7:1–5)
- Holiness (Hebrews 13:4)
- Respect (Ephesians 5:21)
- Satisfaction (1 Corinthians 10:24)

Based on our own experience, I can confirm that God has been with us throughout our matrimonial journey, and we can conclude as a family that, since God is love, no truly successful and joyful marriage will ever survive without Him.



BISHOP BENJAMIN MNISI
ESWATINI NATIONAL BISHOP

Bishop Benjamin Mnisi is the national bishop of Eswatini. He lives with his wife, Prudence, in Mbabane, Eswatini (Swaziland), where he serves and leads the COGOP bishops and pastors of his nation. Bishop Mnisi loves the Church and its people.



Dābaq

A MARRIAGE THAT CLINGS

TESSA DIETZE

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” – Genesis 2:24 (NKJV)

Marriage means to be joined together and to become one flesh. Other translations of the above verse use phrases such as “be united,” “hold fast,” or “shall cleave unto.” The original Hebrew word used here is *dābaq* (דָּבַק).

The Hebrew word *dābaq* means to cling, cleave, stick, be joined, or even be glued together. It reflects a *permanent bond*. This word appears more than fifty times in Scripture. One example is found in Deuteronomy 10:20, where God establishes a renewed covenant with Israel after the first tablets [of the Ten Commandments] were broken. God calls His people to cling to Him—to fear Him, to serve Him, and to swear by His

name—rather than following man-made idols. Similarly, Joshua 23:8 records Joshua reminding the Israelites to cling to the Lord and remain loyal to Him.

This clinging describes an *intimate loyalty*—a full dependence on God’s power and grace.

Dāḥaq, thus, encompasses all this: to cling, to hold on, to be loyal, to fight for, to put effort into, to love, to care, to prioritize, to build a foundation, to promise, to bond, to offer oneself fully, and to be unashamed.

From the very beginning, God intended man and woman to be together. We read of Adam and Eve enjoying one another’s company, working side by side, and caring for the Garden of Eden—everything God had entrusted to them. Marriage is God’s design; it is a gift that reflects His nature of living in community. It is a unified partnership that holds fast regardless of circumstances or challenges.

My husband and I were married in February 2008. I was 22 years old, and he had just turned 21 a week before our wedding. We were young, inexperienced, full of hope and emotion, and eager to begin life together. The past 18 years have been the most beautiful—and the most challenging—years of our lives.

Through 18 years of clinging to one another, we are now the proud parents of three beautiful children. We serve in our local church in Langen, Germany, where my husband serves as an elder. Together we have served as youth pastors for many years and continue to serve as camp directors. Our hearts are for the nations, and we are honored to serve as youth coordinators for Wider Europe and the Middle East. Every two years, we help lead the European Youth Conference, *Get Plugged In*, alongside Youth Ministry Director Kirk Rising. My husband works full time as a client service director for a marketing company, and I work part time for an airline.

Together, we have laughed, cried, fought, argued, grieved, celebrated, loved, cared, ignored, aggravated one another, endured, and remained loyal.

The testimony of our marriage is this: *We choose to cling.*

We married young, found our footing in our careers, and devoted our time, finances, and prayers to ministry. We have always been full-time ministers, even when not labeled as pastors. Our marriage reflects our passion for the Lord and for the lost. That is what I love most—we serve together and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us through different seasons. It is a joy to serve as a married couple.

My grandmother once told my mother that she would make two of the most important decisions of her life. The first would be to say yes to Jesus. The second would be deciding to whom she would say yes in marriage. Both decisions shape an entire lifetime.

I said yes to Jesus.

And I said yes to my husband.

And I will gladly continue to say yes to both until I have finished the race.

Like every marriage, we have experienced both highs and lows. In the first months of our marriage, we barely had enough money for groceries. Our parents fed us and allowed us to wash our clothes in their homes because we could not afford a washing machine. We learned together how to steward what little we had and how to find favor in our work. Tithing became a priority—even when we had very little—and we witnessed firsthand how faithful God is. We never lacked.

Our greatest struggle was infertility.

The pain of longing for children—crying out to the Lord while continuing to serve faithfully, watching friends and family start their families, and holding babies while wondering if we would ever kiss our own—was heartbreaking. We endured miscarriages, years of waiting, countless doctor visits, medications, and desperate prayers for healing.

Yet God remained faithful, even when we felt weak.

As we clung to one another, we clung to the Lord—and He blessed us with three wonderful children. They are our greatest testimonies, and we thank God for them daily.



Marriage is sharing life—discovering new places together, facing joys and sorrows side by side, falling asleep together, and waking up to face each new day as one. It is having someone who holds you, challenges you, and cares for you.

My husband often jokes that he “saved” me—because I knew I wanted to marry him the moment I realized I needed to be more Spirit-filled to walk alongside him. He encouraged me to draw closer to Jesus. He truly is the best thing that happened to me after saying yes to Christ.

“Two are better than one. . . . A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12 NIV).

As my husband and I cling to one another, God remains the center of our cord. We are woven together as husband and wife, each of us individually clinging to the Lord. Without the Holy Spirit’s leading, we are not strong enough. To cling to one another, we must first cling to God.

I believe marriages must become a greater priority in our ministries and churches. Healthy, Spirit-filled marriages lead to healthy, Spirit-filled families; and healthy families build healthy, Spirit-filled churches and generations.

Our ministries and jobs cannot consume all our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. First, we must cling to Jesus personally, then to our marriages and families. From that overflow, we minister.

My marriage is not perfect. I am not a perfect wife or mother. But, because of the Spirit’s conviction, I am determined to do better—to love more deeply, forgive more quickly, cultivate peace, and grow in kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

In my recent studies at Spirit and Life Seminary, I was deeply inspired by Dr. Michael Hernandez’s book, *Shalom in the Pentecostal Family*, where he writes that the condition of families affects the condition of the church. I would add this: **The condition of marriages affects families, and families affect the church.**

So I ask,

- What is the condition of your marriage?
- What is the condition of your family?
- What is shaping your church?
- How can the Holy Spirit strengthen your home today?

Joel 2:28–29 promises an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all people—young and old, male and female. That outpouring is for marriages and for children. The first Assembly in 1906 encouraged families to practice daily worship together—to kneel in prayer as a household. I believe our marriages need more grace and forgiveness, less resentment, and more compassion, love, and Holy Spirit guidance.

Would it not be beautiful if the Church of God of Prophecy were known for healthy, Spirit-filled marriages and families?

As for me and my house, **we will cling . . . to the the Holy Spirit and to one another.**



TESSA DIETZE
WIDER EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Tessa and her husband, Johannes, live in Germany, where they serve at their local church and in Europe as the Youth Ministries Directors for Wider Europe and the Middle East. They have been blessed with the miracle of three children.



HERITAGE MINISTRIES

2026

HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

A new year brings a new opportunity to partner with COGOP Heritage Association, helping to maintain and improve the Church of God of Prophecy historical properties. These properties include Fields of the Wood, First Assembly House, Shearer Schoolhouse Site, and Holy Ghost Marker Site.

PLATINUM

Monthly Donor
joining online at
cogopheritage.org

Receive:
Membership card
and 20% discount
at Gift Shop and
White Wing Christian
Bookstore

GOLD

Donation of
\$100 or more

Receive:
Membership card
and 20% discount at
Gift Shop

SILVER

Donation between
\$50 to \$99

Receive:
Membership card
and 10% discount at
Gift Shop

BRONZE

Donation between
\$20 to \$49

Receive:
Membership card

JOIN ONLINE
www.cogopheritage.org

Fowrenew.org
is another avenue
to donate at any time.

CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

103RD INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONTRACTED ACCOMMODATIONS

The following hotels have contracted special pricing for constituents of the IA! Please utilize one of the links below to book accommodations for your family. If you prefer to call the hotel, please be sure and state that you are attending the International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy so that your booking is credited to our room blocks.



Rosen Shingle Creek

\$140 USD/night

- 9939 Universal Blvd, Orlando, FL 32819
- 866.996.6338
- Complimentary self-parking, based on availability
- Parking with unlimited in/out privileges
- Assembly Venue

[RESERVE A ROOM](#)



Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando

\$102 USD/night

- 9000 International Dr, Orlando, Florida 32819
- 800.999.8585
- Complimentary parking
- 2.3 miles to Assembly Venue
- Shuttle to Assembly venue available

[RESERVE A ROOM](#)

NOTE:

Hotel prices do not include taxes and/or possible property fees. Reservations, cancellations, etc., are subject to the hotel. Questions/clarification should be directed to the hotel.

If you contact one of the hotels below by telephone, prior to beginning your reservation process, please inform them you are attending the Church of God of Prophecy International Assembly.

**Residence Inn by Marriott**

\$120 USD/night

- 8800 Universal Blvd, Orlando, Florida 32819
- 407.226.0288
- Complimentary parking
- 2 miles to Assembly Venue
- Shuttle to Assembly venue available

**SpringHill Suites by Marriott**

\$120 USD/night

- 8840 Universal Blvd, Orlando, Florida 32819
- 407.345.9073
- Complimentary parking
- 2 miles to Assembly Venue
- Shuttle to Assembly venue available

**Hampton Inn Orlando**

\$126 USD/night

- 8900 Universal Blvd, Orlando, Florida 32819
- 407.354.4447
- Complimentary parking
- 2 miles to Assembly Venue
- Shuttle to Assembly venue available

RESERVE A ROOM

Honor, Covenant, and the Countercultural Witness of Christian Marriage: Is Marriage a Contract or a Covenant?

Last year in the state of Tennessee, a new law was passed that allows a couple to obtain a “covenant marriage” license, which is different from the usual marriage license.

Knoxville News Sentinel (knoxnews.com) reports that divorce would be more difficult for couples who choose a covenant marriage. According to the bill, “Only when there has been a complete and total breach of the marital covenant commitment may the non-breaching party seek a declaration that the marriage is no longer legally recognized.”¹

The article goes on to identify the circumstances under which a divorce would be granted in the Volunteer State (Tennessee) under this new law:

- A spouse has committed adultery.
- A spouse has committed a felony and has been sentenced to death or “continuous confinement.”
- A spouse has abandoned the couple’s home for more than one year and refuses to return.
- There has been physical or sexual abuse.
- The spouses have been living separately and apart continuously for more than two years.

- There are “excesses, cruel treatment, or outrageous conduct” that would make living together “insupportable.”²

The goal of the bill is to enable people to view marriage as being a lifelong relationship, not something that can be jumped into or out of on a whim or simply because of “irreconcilable differences.”

While I applaud this new legislation, I find the mere idea of it—that such a change in the law is even necessary—to be alarming. Unfortunately, it seems that many people view marriage as more of a contract commitment than a covenant commitment. What do I mean by this? What is the difference between a covenant and a contract?

In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him that his children would be a great nation. We see that covenant promise fulfilled in the people group of Israel. But what makes it a covenant rather than a contract?

It has been said that a contract exists for the benefit of an *individual*, and it is broken by even the *smallest* indiscretion. This can be seen in the many business contracts that are regularly drawn



AMBASSADORS ON MISSION



up. Even the smallest breach of contract can void the entire agreement.

A covenant, on the other hand, exists for the benefit of a *relationship* and is only broken by the *largest* of indiscretions. Not only does this apply to God's covenant with Abraham and Israel, but it also speaks loudly to our marriage covenants of today.

Marriage is one place in our earthly existence where God gives us a true reflection of who He is within the Holy Trinity. In Genesis 2:24 (NIV), God tell us, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." Within marriage, a male and a female become one—spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This is a reflection of the Holy Trinity, and it is a place where God allows us an intimate glimpse of His very nature.

Many scholars have speculated as to the nature of the Trinity. What could possibly hold three together as one? The answer to this question is *love*. Love is the bond that holds the Trinity together as one. I have often tried to find words to describe the Trinity, but it is difficult to put words to something so unfathomable. However, I have found one thought particularly helpful.

Have you ever known a married couple who have been together for 50 plus years, and they are still just as in love as the day they met? These

relationships are special, encouraging, and interesting. Two people can sit in silence, simply enjoying one another's presence. Or they can talk and finish one another's sentences. After years of marriage, you can see how two are becoming one.

In my efforts at theological reflection, limited as they are by my humanity, I like to think about the Trinity in this manner: What if that couple could have more than 50 years together? What if they had 100 years? Or 250? Or 1,000 years together? How much closer would they be? Consider how close a married couple could get over the course of eternity—with no beginning and no end. This is how I envision the Holy Trinity as reflected within the marriage bond.

This is why marriage is so special and spiritual. This is why it **SHOULD** be viewed as a covenant, and not a contract. If love holds the Trinity together as one, can it not hold you and your spouse together through anything?

This is why marriage is so often under attack. Within a true, devoted, and intimate relationship, we find the ultimate meaning of love. And within that love, we find a small piece of the Trinity here on earth. Do not give up that piece of God within you and your spouse. It is special. It is unique. It is God-given. And it is holy.

¹ Allison Kiehl, "What Is a Covenant Marriage? Proposed Tennessee Bill Would Create Marriage Distinction. Here's What to Know," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, February 3, 2025, <https://www.knoxnews.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/03/covenant-marriage-traditional-marriage-tennessee/78021445007/>.

² Kiehl, "What Is a Covenant Marriage?"

BISHOP DARREN SCHALK
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE



Messages in Tongues and Interpretation: *A Pentecostal Perspective*

Few spiritual gifts are as frequently misunderstood as messages in tongues and interpretation of tongues. For Pentecostals, when the Holy Spirit moves in a gathering of God's people through tongues and interpretation, it is not mere emotional excess. It is a holy moment in which the Spirit intends to edify the church and glorify God. Rooted in Scripture and overseen by pastoral discernment, messages in tongues and interpretation serve a vital role in a Pentecostal church service when exercised in love, humility, and order.

Distinguishing Tongues

There is a scriptural distinction between tongues as a personal prayer language and tongues as a public message requiring interpretation. Scripture affirms both expressions, but they serve different purposes. Paul writes, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (1 Corinthians 14:14 NASB). Pentecostals understand this as a reference to private prayer and devotion in which the believer communes with God beyond the limits of human language.

When tongues are spoken out loud and publicly, interpretation is necessary so that the congregation may receive the same benefit as prophecy. Paul is explicit: "Let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret" (1 Corinthians 14:13). This is foundational for Pentecostal practice. It affirms both the spontaneity of the Spirit and the responsibility of the believer. Interpretation is not optional; it is essential for the gift to function properly in corporate worship. Additionally, Paul's instruction, "If there is no interpreter, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:28 ESV), is frequently cited in Pentecostal teaching as evidence that self-restraint is itself a Holy Spirit-enabled discipline. The Pentecostal perspective is that a public utterance in tongues without a Holy Spirit-given interpretation does not fulfill the intended purpose of corporate edification.

Biblical Foundations for Tongues and Interpretation

Pentecostal theology rests firmly on Scripture, particularly Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12–14. In these chapters, tongues and interpretation of tongues are listed among the gifts of the Spirit, distributed sovereignly by God "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Not every believer speaks in tongues publicly, nor does every service include a message in tongues; the Spirit apportions gifts as He wills.

Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church are a correction, not a prohibition. He affirms tongues as a legitimate gift, but he also addresses the issues of misuse and disorder. "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). This was in no way a prohibition. In chapter 14, Paul declared, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you" (v. 18), showing that he valued tongues deeply, even while insisting that public worship be intelligible and edifying. This balance remains central to Pentecostal practice today.

The Nature of Interpretation

Interpretation of tongues is not understood as a literal, word-for-word translation. Rather, Pentecostals describe interpretation as a Spirit-inspired rendering of the message's meaning. This explains why interpretations may vary in length or style while remaining faithful to the same utterance. The authority of the interpretation does not lie in linguistic equivalence but in spiritual discernment and alignment with Scripture.

Interpretations frequently resemble exhortation, encouragement, praise, or calls to faithfulness. They do not introduce new doctrine but always reinforce truths already revealed in Scripture. Pentecostals are careful to emphasize that any interpreted message must be weighed by church leadership and tested against the Word of God. The Holy Spirit, who inspires the message, will never contradict Himself. He is the One who inspired Scripture!

Order, Discernment, and Pastoral Oversight

Pentecostal worship is Spirit led, not Spirit-let-loose. Paul's directive, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said" (1 Corinthians 14:29), establishes a principle of communal discernment that applies equally to tongues and their interpretation. Mature leadership plays a critical role in guiding the congregation, setting expectations, and lovingly correcting excess or misuse.

Healthy Pentecostal congregations teach their members when and how public messages should be offered. Speakers are encouraged to wait prayerfully, trusting that if the Spirit intends to give a message, He will also provide interpretation—either through the same individual or another member of the body.

This pastoral framework protects both freedom and order. It ensures that spiritual gifts build trust rather than confusion and that worship remains centered on Christ rather than individual expression.

Edification as the Central Purpose

Paul told the church in 1 Corinthians 14:26, "Let all things be done for building up." Messages in tongues and interpretation are never meant to elevate or showcase the one speaking. Instead, the speaker is an instrument through which God speaks encouragement, correction, or comfort.

Jack W. Hayford, in *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*, warns against equating spiritual maturity with vocal participation: "The gifts of the Spirit are not badges of spirituality but tools of service. Love remains the true measure of spiritual life."

Paul's governing principle remains clear: "Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12). Interpreted messages are a visible sign that God remains actively engaged with His people and is still building His church. As Simon Chan observes, "Charismatic speech in worship reminds the church that God is not merely spoken about but is speaking" (*Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*).

When exercised properly, these gifts remind the congregation that worship is not merely of human effort and initiative but is a Spirit-directed

encounter with the Godhead. All the gifts bear witness to the living presence of God in our midst and invite the church to listen attentively to His voice.

Addressing Misunderstandings and Concerns

Outside of Pentecostalism, there are those who argue that tongues and interpretation no longer have a place in modern worship. Some, even within Pentecostal circles, say that allowing tongues in church services creates barriers for visitors. Most Pentecostals have seen or heard stories of instances where tongues and interpretation were not managed well.

Scripture shows that Paul did not call for the cessation of tongues and interpretation but for their proper use. Scripture and experience have shown that pastoral sensitivity is important. Clear teaching, explanation, and modeling the right way to operate in these gifts help demystify tongues and their interpretation and help prevent division.

Well-taught congregations understand that spiritual gifts are expressions of God's love, not tests of spiritual maturity. Tongues and interpretation are valued, but they should never be elevated above love, holiness, and Christlike character. Order does not quench the Spirit; rather, it allows the Spirit's work to be received and trusted. Paul's directive was clear: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV).

Messages in tongues and interpretation of the same serve as a powerful testimony to the Spirit-empowered life of the church. They echo the events of Pentecost itself, when the Spirit enabled believers to speak as God gave utterance, drawing attention not to themselves but to "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11 ESV).

For Pentecostals, these gifts remain a gracious provision for the church today. When practiced biblically, with pastoral oversight, and lovingly, they deepen worship and remind believers that God still speaks in the midst of His people.

In a world hungry for authentic encounters with God, Pentecostal worship affirms that the Holy Spirit is not distant or silent. Through ordered, interpreted messages in tongues, the church bears witness to a God who continues to speak for the building up of His body.

Testify! SECRETS OF A JOYFUL MARRIAGE

Marriage is not a new concept. Adam and Eve were not officially married in a formal ceremony as is the custom today, but God established their union and blessed it (Genesis 1:27–28). Many couples in the Old Testament were married for hundreds of years, as a person's lifespan was much longer back then (e.g., Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah). In modern society, this is nearly inconceivable. How could any man and woman possibly live together for that many decades?

According to *Marriage: Its Foundation, Theology, and Mission in a Changing World*, two key terms in Genesis 1 “need attention: image/likeness and subdue. One term tells who we are. The other tells us what we are to do.”¹ Genesis 1:27 tells us that God made humans, male and female, in His image. In verses 28–30, God instructs them to multiply and steward creation.

Marriage in ancient times was an institution designed to create stability as families managed farming communities and grew societies.² It was about mutual commitment, not just the Hollywood version of romanticized love. Families were not

without their share of problems, but the goal was to endure through them together.

When I think of my grandparents, who were married well past 50 years, I remember hearing Grandpa fuss at Grandma on Sunday mornings because she would take so long to get her beehive hairdo ready for church. He threatened to leave without her if she didn't “Come on!” She would not have been able to go to church if he had left without her, since she never obtained a driver's license. Grandpa never really left her at home on Sunday morning. He was just trying to get her to hurry up so he would not be late.

I also remember that after my grandmother passed away, my grandfather was lost without her. The first thing he wanted to do when I went to see him was to visit her grave. He missed her terribly. She had weathered the storms of life with him. She had strained the milk he had pulled from the cows. Her routine biscuit making required no recipe. She was well accustomed to washing his sooty clothing following his shifts in the coal mines where he worked to provide for their family. They were a team.



My husband and I have been married only 27 years, but I am thankful for that sense of connectedness I feel toward him. We have moved across state lines four times, endured job losses for both of us (thankfully, not at the same time), suffered a miscarriage, survived the loss of both our parents (mine 15 weeks apart), raised our son in our 40s and 50s, nursed one another back to health after surgeries, and enjoyed the blessings of God intermingled between all these experiences. The day we got married, we became family.

So, what are some tips for a happy, healthy marriage?

First of all, spend time developing your relationship with God. Read His Word. We can never understand all there is to know about God, but reading His Word gives us a fundamental understanding. Talk to the Lord. He knows our hearts, but He enjoys hearing us tell Him how we feel. He wants us to listen to Him speak to us as well. He is happy to be our Protector, our Provider, our Healer, our Shepherd, and our Peace. He loves it when we acknowledge that we need Him. He also appreciates it when we are grateful.

Secondly, since we are made in God's image, our relationship with our spouse is a reflection of our relationship with God. Thus, the following tips are offered to enhance our marital relationship:

- Spend time together. You will never know everything there is to know about your spouse. Each person's story is as individual as his/her fingerprint. Sharing heartfelt and joyful conversations, however, gives us a fundamental understanding of that person. The more we communicate with one another, the more we learn about each other. But don't smother. Remember to give appropriate space. Take turns. Be respectful.

- Serve one another. Don't expect your spouse to do all the work. God made us to complement each other. Find pleasure in doing small things for one another. Show appreciation when something kind is done for you. Pay it forward.
- Support one another. When you sense pain, genuinely show that you are affected by it too. Listen. Pray. Help. Compliment one another verbally.
- Believe in one another. Be the friend who sticks closer than a brother. Encourage your spouse to become the best they can be. Don't always look for the easy way out. Growth takes time. There is a lot to learn on this journey.
- Dream together. Share your hopes for the future, but don't forget to enjoy the present. Sometimes I look in the mirror and see some wrinkles and gray hair. I love it when my husband says, "Oh, you've got another 20 years before you start getting old." Smile at each other. Take time to laugh. Enjoy experiencing life together.
- Try not to be a worrywart. Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will have its own worries. The troubles we have in a day are enough for one day" (Matthew 6:34 NLV).

None of us knows who will leave this earth first. Only God knows, so live with no regrets. Let your spouse know how precious a gift they are to you today. And while you are at it, thank the good Lord for bringing your spouse into your life. "Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens" (James 1:17 NLT). With God's help we can leave a legacy of love and faithfulness that will train our children and grandchildren long after we are gone (see Titus 2:3–8 NIV).

¹ Curt Hamner et al., eds., *Marriage: Its Foundation, Theology, and Mission in a Changing World* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 70.

² The Canvas Nomad, "Evolution of Marriage: From Ancient Beginnings to Modern Love," Medium.com, October 3, 2024, <https://medium.com/@TheCanvasNomad/the-evolution-of-marriage-from-ancient-beginnings-to-modern-love-4a2ea5642de2>.





DIGITAL TOOLS THAT STRENGTHEN MARRIAGE MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

On a typical Sunday in church, you can watch it happen in real time. A couple arrives together, but not really *together*. They sit side by side, smiles in place, yet the air between them feels heavy with tension. Meanwhile, two rows behind them, another couple sits down, sitting closely to one another, ready to worship and hear from God's Word *together*. Same sanctuary. Same songs. Same sermon. Two very different stories.

Marriage ministry is often treated like a specialty in the church. It is something for a retreat weekend, a once-a-year Valentine's banquet, or a small group for "people who are struggling." But if the local church is a home, then marriage is one of its load-bearing walls. When marriages are strengthened, children feel safer, households become steadier, leaders lead with less strain, and the witness of the church becomes more believable to the world that is watching.

Today, many of the pressures marriages are facing arrive through screens. Couples are navigating relentless schedules, digital distraction, social comparison, financial stress, and communication habits shaped by short messages, GIFs, emojis, and busy calendars. Yet this same digital environment can become an ally for ministry. Used

wisely, digital tools do not replace discipleship, they *extend it*.

Why the Church's Support Matters Right Now

National data show that divorce remains a significant reality across the United States. Provisional data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for 2023 reveal a divorce rate of 2.4 per 1,000 people in reporting states and the District of Columbia (and a marriage rate of 6.1 per 1,000). Even among couples who stay together, many are carrying loneliness; one recent summary notes that about one in six married adults report feeling lonely in their intimate relationships.

At the same time, marriage is still a central part of adult life. Pew Research Center analysis shows the share of U.S. adults who are married increased from 50 percent to 51 percent from 2019 to 2023. That means marriage ministry provides a growing opportunity for pastoral care for a large portion of our congregations.

So, the question becomes practical for the church. How can a local church support marriages consistently, without overwhelming staff, budgets, or volunteers? One strong answer is to build a simple, repeatable *digital pathway* that helps couples demonstrate love in ordinary time.



Digital Tools as Pastoral Presence Between Sundays

Digital ministry to marriages works best when it feels less like a marketing campaign and more like pastoral care. Think of it as small points of contact that keep couples encouraged, equipped, and connected. Below are practical ideas and resources that can be adapted to any church. Start with a few, do them well, and let trust grow over time.

Practical Digital Ideas that Strengthen Marriage Ministry

1. Weekly “Marriage Minute” message (text or email). Send a short, consistent note once a week—same day, same time. Keep it simple:
 - one scripture
 - one sentence of encouragement
 - one action step, such as “Ask your spouse, ‘What’s one thing I can carry for you this week?’”

This does not require a production team, just faithful consistency. Over time, couples begin to expect it as a pastoral touchpoint.

2. A private couples’ community (WhatsApp, GroupMe, or a private Facebook group). Create an opt-in space that is positive, moderated, and practical:
 - prayer prompts
 - date-night ideas
 - short testimonies
 - announcements for workshops

Protect these communities and keep them safe. This is not a space for public problem solving or for airing conflict. The tone is encouragement and resourcing, not therapy.

3. Short video devotionals from trusted voices, with a clear plan. Couples often won’t read a long article in a busy season, but many will watch a three-to-seven-minute video. Here are options many churches use:
 - XO Now (xonow.com) – marriage teaching content via streaming/app
 - The Marriage Course (themarriagecourse.org) – video-based sessions designed for couples

- Free videos on YouTube, Vimeo, or other platforms

The key is not the platform; it is the *pathway*. Ask couples, “Watch this video this week”; then provide two questions they can discuss together.

4. Guided conversations through research-based apps. Some couples need help knowing *what to talk about* without spiraling into conflict. Apps can provide gentle structure. One widely used example is the Gottman Card Decks app by the Gottman Institute (<https://www.gottman.com/couples/apps>). This app offers prompts and ideas for connection and communication. You can turn this into a church challenge:
 - “Pick one card from ‘Love Maps’ three times this week.”
 - “Try one ‘Appreciation’ prompt before going to bed.”
5. A simple online “Marriage Check-In” rhythm (monthly). Offer an opt-in check-in form couples can complete privately:
 - “How connected did you feel this month (1–10)?”
 - “What’s one stressor affecting your marriage?”
 - “Would you like a pastor/mentor couple to reach out to you?”

This helps you move from reactive care (only crises) to proactive care (early support).

6. Premarital and enrichment assessments with digital delivery. For engaged couples, digital assessments can provide clarity and a structured discipleship plan. Prepare/Enrich (prepare-enrich.com) is a widely used tool for premarital and marriage enrichment with online administration and facilitator resources. Even if you are not running formal counseling, these tools can help mentor couples and guide conversations with wisdom and consistency.
7. A “Marriage Prayer Chain” that respects privacy. Create an opt-in list where couples can submit a brief request (e.g., “Pray for unity about a decision,” or “Pray for peace in our home”) without providing details. Then send



a weekly prayer prompt to intercessors. The church becomes a covering without becoming a gossip network.

8. A clear next step for couples in distress. Every marriage ministry should answer, “If things are breaking, what do we do next?” Create a simple webpage (even a one-page document) with the following:

- contact information
- pastoral counseling options
- available mentoring couples
- vetted local counseling referrals
- immediate help and guidance for safety situations

This is not flashy—but it is deeply loving.

What Is the Goal?

The goal is not more content; it is about connection. Digital tools can either add noise or create nourishment to couples. The difference is intentionality. When churches use digital touchpoints to practice biblical love, couples experience support that is consistent, accessible, and biblically grounded.

The most important ministry moment is not always a dramatic altar call. Sometimes it is a simple

Tuesday message that helps two weary, confused, or doubt-filled people remember, “We’re on the same team—and God is with us.”

Statistics and Sources

- U.S. marriage rate 6.1 per 1,000; divorce rate 2.4 per 1,000 (reporting states and D.C.):

National Center for Health Statistics, “Marriage and Divorce,” U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, last reviewed March 17, 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>.

- Share of U.S. adults married increased from 50% to 51% (2019 to 2023):

Richard Fry, “Share of U.S. Adults Living Without a Romantic Partner Has Ticked Down in Recent Years,” Pew Research Center, January 8, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/01/08/share-of-us-adults-living-without-a-romantic-partner-has-ticked-down-in-recent-years/>.

- Summary noting one in six married adults report feeling lonely in their intimate relationship:

Kyle D. Killan, “Why So Many Married People still Feel Lonely,” *Intersections* (blog), *Psychology Today*, September 18, 2025, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intersections/202509/married-and-lonely-how-and-why-it-happens>.

- Research summary reporting regular religious service attendance is associated with substantially lower divorce risk:

The Human Flourishing Program, “Religious Service Attendance and Divorce,” Harvard University, December 4, 2018, <https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/religion-and-divorce>.

This article was refined using AI tools (ChatGPT, OpenAI; Grok, xAI) for grammar, formatting, and style; theological and content reflects the author’s perspective.

BISHOP SHAUN MCKINLEY, PHD
GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





TRANSPORTATION APPEAL



Providing Vehicles for Mission Nations

A Call to Invest in Transportation for the Gospel

As I have traveled among the nations through the work of the International Offices, I have personally witnessed a challenge that repeatedly hinders the progress of ministry: the lack of secure and dependable transportation for our national leaders.

Every effort to train leaders, plant churches, oversee regions, and reach unreached communities depends upon the ability to travel safely and consistently. Yet in many mission nations, transportation is one of the greatest obstacles to sustaining and advancing the work of the gospel. Vehicles are often scarce, unreliable, or far beyond the financial reach of national ministries. In some regions, transportation can cost two to three times more than in the United States, and additional taxes and import fees make ownership nearly impossible without assistance.

Transportation is not a luxury—it is a lifeline for ministry.

National leaders must travel long distances to oversee congregations, train pastors, respond to crises, and carry the message of Christ into difficult and remote regions. Pastors and church planters depend on bicycles, motorcycles, boats, animals, or vehicles simply to reach the people God has called them to serve. Without reliable transportation, ministry slows, outreach is limited, and vision is constrained.

True Christian love calls us not only to feel concern, but to respond in practical ways. When we give toward transportation needs, we empower ministry. We help leaders reach more souls, care for their families, strengthen churches, and expand the work of God in their nations. Your generosity becomes a direct instrument God uses to move the gospel forward.

The need is broad and urgent. A gift of **\$100** can provide a bicycle for a pastor. A gift of **\$900 to \$2,000** can help supply a motorbike or small transport resource. Larger gifts can assist in



the purchase of reliable pre-owned vehicles—sometimes costing up to **\$30,000**—capable of carrying leaders and evangelistic equipment into the most challenging regions of the world. Every gift, regardless of size, has eternal impact.

The early church understood this kind of partnership. Strong churches supported weaker ones. Established believers helped pioneer new works. Paul himself testified, “[I have] received . . . the things which were sent from you, . . . a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:18–19).

Missionaries of past generations could not have established the work without faithful partners. Today’s national leaders cannot continue or expand that work without our continued commitment. Together, we become the hands that extend help, hope, and provision.

We invite you to prayerfully consider making a direct gift today toward transportation for our national leaders and pastors. Your investment will move the gospel farther, faster, and into places it might otherwise never reach. Together, we can carry the message of Christ to the nations—one journey, one leader, and one life at a time.

Listed below are several of the most urgent transportation requests currently on file from the nations. While the complete list of needs is extensive and available upon request, our present funding does not allow us to meet every need at this time. Even so, we continue to receive, trust, and believe that the Lord will provide the

resources necessary to extend this opportunity to all our brethren.

Spain – \$15,000 to complete requested need

Guatemala – \$20,000 for a national vehicle

Burundi – \$8,000 for national vehicle

El Salvador – \$30,000 for national vehicle

Other needs beyond the national offices include many requests from national bishops for bicycles for their pastors and motorcycles for regional leaders.

We ask that you remember these leaders, pastors, and ministries in your prayers, and that you consider partnering with us as God enables you.

There are two options for those who are interested in being a part of the miraculous provision toward any of these needs: Individuals may give through the *Helping Hand Ministry*, and local churches may give through *Harvest Partners Project Giving (HPL2)*. Through these COGOP-sponsored opportunities, 100 percent of funding is sent directly to the designated mission nation for their specified purposes. You may send your offerings, directed to **Transportation Appeal 2026**, to the address below. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

Global Missions Ministries
Church of God of Prophecy
P.O. Box 2910
Cleveland, TN 37320-2910

Or call 423-559-5207 / 423-559-5209
or e-mail global@cogop.org

Included below are expressions of gratitude and photos of completed transportation requests from this past year.

▼ Ivory Coast



▼ Botswana



▼ Philippines





Ivory Coast

I am so happy to say THANKS to all the donors who gave for us to have this car to use. We were able to complete the papers and the insurance. Thank you to all who contributed to make this dream come true, and may God bless you. Words are too small to express my gratitude.

Bishop Koissi Antoine
Ivory Coast National Bishop

Botswana

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the funds provided for us to purchase a vehicle. I would like to report that we managed to find a good, strong 2017 Toyota Fortuner from South Africa.

We would like to extend our utmost appreciation to all the Harvest Partners and the donors who made this possible. You are continually in our prayers that our God will bless you according to His promises.

We also thank the Global Missions office and our General Presbyter for supporting us in this regard. May God bless you all for the good work you are doing for the nations.

Thank you very much,
Bishop Edison G. Mooketsane
Botswana National Bishop

Philippines

I just want to officially thank you and those who helped in funding the vehicle that we acquired for the orphanage ministry here in the Philippines. We were able to obtain the papers, insurance, and a roller lid bed cover. Right now, we are using it for all the operations of the orphanage such as sending the kids to school, going to the hospital, getting their supplies, kids' day out of the orphanage, and other activities.

We appreciate you and the ministry you are doing for the One Child Fund. Thank you and God bless you.

Bishop Rogelio D. Justiniano, MDiv, DD,
Philippines National Bishop

Benin

Thank you for your faithfulness. I am so happy with the engine work that has been done for the recently purchased national vehicle. I thank the LORD for this blessing. May our good God continue to strengthen you and guide you.

Thank you for all,
Richard Kadato
Benin National Bishop

Fiji

We give thanks to God, the donors, Alabama COGOP Missions, and Global Missions Ministries for providing the funds to purchase this 2020 Nissan X-Trail 4x4 with only 18,800 miles on it. We love you all and are so thankful to have this necessary tool for spreading the gospel! Thank you and may the Lord Bless you all!

Bishop Daniel Gann
Fiji Islands National Bishop

Indonesia

Thank you so much for your consideration for providing donor funding for this vehicle. I appreciate it so much. I know this van will be a blessing to the national work.

Bishop Tim McCaleb
Asia, Oceania, and Australia General Presbyter

Curaçao (See images on page 35)

Over the past year, Global Missions Ministries and Children's Ministries (KidServe) have partnered in a collaborative effort to help supply transportation for a growing children's ministry in Curaçao within the Paragon Region. Please enjoy this testimony of partnership and rejoice with us as we give thanks for God's provision and the faithfulness of His people.

▼ Benin (top) / Fiji (bottom)



▼ Indonesia





CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY
PARAGON REGION
ABC ISLANDS, BVI & USVI

January 15, 2026

Dr. Catherine H. Payne, Director, Global Missions Ministries
Joy Rivas, Director, International Children Ministries
Church of God of Prophecy International Offices
3720 Keith Street NW
Cleveland, TN 37320

Subject: Letter of Appreciation

Dear Sisters Cathy, Joy, and respective staff,

Please receive this letter as an expression of our appreciation for the extraordinary efforts that went into securing the van for the children's ministry in Curacao. We understand the challenges of responding to the countless requests for ministry support that both of your ministries receive on a regular basis. We do not take for granted the priority that you gave to this effort.

The children ministry at *Sentro di Amor* (Center of Love) church located in Souax, Curacao will be blessed with the opportunity to provide transportation to the many children in the community that will depend on this transpiration to attend church and receive this vital ministry.

We appreciate the partnership with the International Offices and the benefits of being part of this global movement. May the Lord continue to bless the efforts of the Global Missions and Children Ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Carswell A. Leonard, PhD
Regional Bishop
Paragon Region, Church of God of Prophecy



C-5 Estate Hoffman
P.O. Box 7967
St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands
00801



(340) 779-2111
(340) 715-1124 (fax)



necaribbeancogop@gmail.com



Let's Celebrate!
\$16,000.00

**RAISED AND COMPLETED
FOR CURAÇAO VAN PROJECT**





▲ Bulgaria



▲ India (top) / Indonesia (bottom)



▲ Haiti (top) / Mali (bottom)

Christmas “Thank You’s”

FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

Bulgaria

Dear Sponsors,

Thank you for your love in action. You have blessed 120 impoverished children and gave them joy and happiness. It is very precious to know that someone across the ocean thinks about the poor children in Bulgaria.

God bless you, your families, and your churches.
Many blessings,
Bishop Darin Ivanov
Bulgaria National Bishop

Haiti

We hope and pray this message finds you in great health and peace.

As 2025 comes to a close, the OEDP Children's Home would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to you for your faithful support throughout the year. Your trust, patience, and continued love have made a lasting impact on the lives of our children and staff. Because of you, hope is restored and futures are being shaped.

During this holiday season, we pray that you enjoy precious time with your families and loved ones. May your days be filled with joy, peace, and many blessings.

Happy Holidays and thank you for standing with us. Stay blessed!

Mali ([Click to watch video](#))

The celebration at the center [orphanage] with the children was truly wonderful. Their joy and excitement made the day especially meaningful.

We extend our sincere thanks to all our donors for your generous material, financial, and spiritual contributions. Your support continues to make a lasting difference in the lives of the children we serve.

On behalf of myself and the entire staff, I wish you a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year in 2026.

Myanmar

From the depths of our hearts, we thank you for your generous Christmas gift contributions to the three centers housing our orphanage homes. On January 3, 2026, all three centers celebrated Christmas on the same day in three different locations. Because of your love and generosity, every child received beautiful Christmas gifts and enjoyed a special Christmas luncheon. Your support brought great joy, bright smiles, and renewed hope to their hearts.



▲ Nepal (top) / Rwanda (bottom)

▲ Myanmar (top) / Philippines (bottom)

▲ Ukraine

The 51 orphans from our three centers are thanking God for you and continue to pray for abundant blessings upon all our Harvest Partners and donors.

Nepal ([Click to watch video](#))

Hello, greetings, and shalom. Thank you so much for your prayers, support, Christmas love gifts, and the special dinner for our orphanage home in Nepal. Your kindness has brought great joy to the children. May God richly bless you.

Philippines

A Special Christmas Day Out at KIDZOONA

Wishing you a joyous Christmas!

This Christmas, we celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ, the greatest hope for all. May His love fill your hearts with joy and peace.

We are deeply grateful to our donors, volunteers, staff, and supporters whose generosity made this special day possible. Your kindness has brought joy and comfort to the children in our care.

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Psalm 107:1 NIV).

From our home to yours, Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

To God be the glory!

Rwanda

Thank you for your prayers and faithful support. The Lord was very good to us during the Christmas

celebration with the children, and it was a joyful and blessed time.

We are grateful to share photos from the celebration to present to our Harvest Partners and donors. Please receive our warm greetings and heartfelt gratitude from Rwanda to our entire COGOP family. Because of your generosity, we were able to provide a joyful festival filled with food, drinks, and gifts for the children.

There was great joy among the children in our local churches as we shared the OCF Christmas funds. We believe the attached photos will serve well as part of the thank-you message to donors for the OCF Christmas offering.

May the Lord bless you abundantly.

Yours in His service, and wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year in 2026,

Redias Nkundabera

Rwanda National Bishop

Ukraine

Dear friends,

From all our hearts, we want to say thank you for helping us and especially for helping our orphan children during these challenging days. While most of the day there is no electricity, our hearts are full with gratitude and thanks.

India ([Click to watch video](#))

Indonesia ([Click to watch video](#))



HERITAGE MINISTRIES

FIELDS OF THE WOOD

As we step into a new year, Fields of the Wood is moving forward with renewed vision and fresh projects that continue to advance this sacred ministry. Last year, thousands walked these grounds—seeking hope, healing, and a deeper connection with God. We were blessed to pray with visitors, encourage families from around the world, and witness lives reshaped by the presence of the Holy Spirit that permeates this historic site.

We regularly hear testimonies of strengthened faith, restored joy, and renewed callings. Many rediscover their relationship with Jesus Christ as they encounter the Word of God displayed on the mountainside and experience the peace that fills this holy place. Ministers often share how their visit brought fresh clarity, inspiration, and spiritual renewal.

This impact is possible because of faithful partners like you. Fields of the Wood is a ministry of the global Church of God of Prophecy, and the generosity of donors is what keeps the gates open, the grounds beautiful, and the message alive. *Every gift—large or small—given through fowrenew.org goes directly toward preserving and enhancing your historical properties.*

Major Renovation Opportunity

During these colder months, we have a unique opportunity to complete important repairs on the historic home located in the heart of the park. With no current residents, we are addressing longstanding issues that require immediate attention. We recently repaired significant plumbing challenges in the basement and are now focused on releveling the home and reinforcing beams that have settled over time. Additionally,

the electrical system—now outdated—must undergo a complete and necessary upgrade.

These repairs are essential, foundational, and costly. Your support is urgently needed as we move through each phase of this restoration.

Preparing Space for Ministry and Connection

Once the structural, plumbing, and electrical work is complete, we will begin transforming the interior of the home. Our vision is to create a welcoming ministry space available for various events:

- Pastoral team retreats
- Small group gatherings
- Birthday and babyshower celebrations
- Local church functions
- Other ministry-building events

The master suite will be restored and designated as the *Tomlinson Room*—a historic name long associated with this space—and reserved as a sacred place of prayer, reflection, and renewal for our church leadership.

Partner with Us as We Move Forward

As spring approaches, many additional projects await, alongside the ongoing care required to maintain these beloved grounds. Every initiative depends on partners who believe in the mission and legacy of Fields of the Wood.

We invite you to join us—through giving, volunteering, and sharing this mission with your local church. Every team that serves here finds joy, and every donation is used wisely and purposefully to care for what God has entrusted to us.

Thank you for standing with us, praying for us, and helping preserve this sacred landmark for the global body of Christ.

*These are your historical properties. This is your heritage.
And together, we can strengthen this ministry for generations to come.*

BISHOP TODD D. BAGLEY
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT AND HERITAGE MINISTRIES COORDINATOR





IN HIS PRESENCE

DECEASED MINISTERS | REPORTED AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2026

PORFIRIO U. MEJIA MEJIA

Nicaragua

October 25, 2025

Licensed minister for 26 years

WILLIAM M. GRIGGS

South Carolina

October 28, 2025

Licensed minister for 32 years

ELWOOD L. LOWE

New Mexico

December 18, 2021

Licensed minister for 47 years

ALFREDO C. SANTIAGO

Philippines

December 1, 2025

Licensed minister for 43 years

JOHN L. WILLIAMS

Virginia

February 2, 2024

Licensed minister for 20 years

CARROLL D. LAMB

South Carolina

January 3, 2026

Licensed minister for 70 years

NYLE T. VERNON

Florida

November 25, 2025

Licensed minister for 23 years

ESTEVAN JOSE

Arizona

December 3, 2025

Licensed minister for 40 years

JERRY ROBBINS

Tennessee

December 22, 2025

Licensed minister for 56 years

JOSEPH H. NEWBERRY

Ohio

August 1, 2025

Licensed minister for 47 years

MARIO GANDIA

Delaware

December 24, 2025

Licensed minister for 71 years

WILLIAM M. STOCKHAM

Tennessee

January 17, 2026

Licensed minister for 50 years

EARL E. LAMB

New Mexico

August 14, 2024

Licensed minister for 73 years



HERITAGE MINISTRIES

26

Ur

YOU'RE
07.161718.2026

THE ELEMENT WE NEED AT **ASSEMBLY FOR KIDS**

Orlando, Florida | July 16–18, 2026



Scan the code
today to sign up!

