WHITE WING
100 YEARS
JULY 2023

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



COGOP Pastors Answer Questions

We Preach Christ

The Church in the Heart of the City with the City in Its Heart

After Post-Christianity



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WHITE WING
MESSENGER

July 2023 • Volume 100, Number 11

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.

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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, worshiping 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

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FACING FORWARD

A Letter to Pastors

Pastors,

At just twenty years of age, my name was called for my first pastoral appointment. I still remember the thrill of holding the church key in my hand and opening the door of the small building for the first time. I was so proud to be a pastor. Kelly and I were all in. This church of 22 members immediately had our passion, our love, and the very best that we could offer. Although we were small in number, we were convinced that it was the best church in the state.

This marked the beginning of 28 years in pastoral ministry. Some tell of the pain, struggles, and disappointment of serving the local church; however, this was not our story. The pastorate provided positive experiences for Kelly and me as well as our three children. Some of our best memories, closest relationships, and "God-moments" are rooted in the local church pastorate. Since stepping away from the pastoral ministry in 2009, Kelly and I have served in various leadership roles within the church; however, we have never lost the heart of a shepherd.

Are pastors perfect? We certainly weren't. Do they have weaknesses and flaws? We certainly did. However, it is undeniable that "He Himself gave some to be… pastors…for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11–12 NKJV).

Pastors are God's gift to the church, and as such, are worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17).

A pastor who played a significant role in my early years of spiritual formation was Bishop J.E. Brisson. Through his example, I learned to take the preaching of the Word seriously, worship passionately, weep deeply for souls, and serve the needs of the church. It was under his pastorate that I was given the opportunity to preach my first sermon as a young teenager. Although I thought I had fallen short and missed the mark, he took the time to send me a personal letter of encouragement. Forty-eight years later, that letter still has a place in my desk drawer.

It has been said that the church is the hope of the world because it is the God-ordained vehicle for carrying the gospel. If that is true, and I believe it is, then it is not a stretch to say that pastors are the hope of the church. As spiritual shepherds, they have been given a divine mandate to feed, protect, and lead the people of God. Seldom will a church rise above or progress beyond its pastoral leadership, so it is incumbent upon pastors to lead well, serve with integrity, and be men and women after God's own heart so they can say, as Paul said to the Corinthian saints, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

In this edition of the *White Wing Messenger,* you will hear the voice of Church of God of Prophecy pastors as they tell of current ministry opportunities and challenges. As a young minister, my dad encouraged me to always pastor two churches at any given time, one being the church as it was, and the other as it could be—the reality and the vision. Perhaps you will hear a bit of both in this discussion of opportunities and challenges.

Also in the edition, you will learn what pastors think are the most pertinent issues impacting the future of the Church. What are the emerging societal, cultural, and moral matters that pastors are dealing with, and how might the Church speak to these concerns?

Finally, pastors will share what they are doing to motivate their people to reconcile the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. How can every member be engaged in this worthy pursuit?

Men and women who serve as pastors are engaged in the grassroots of ministry. They have their thumb on the pulse of the church and their communities, and they are hearing from God. Read carefully, listen intently, and you will hear the voice of the Spirit. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying (though pastors) to the church (Revelation 2:29).



Tim Coalter
COGOP Presiding Bishop

CONNECTIONS

Report from the Center for Biblical Leadership National School in Nicaragua

The Center for Biblical Leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Republic of Nicaragua held its National School of Leadership from March 16–19, 2023, in our Las Jaguitas National Tabernacle where 950 students participated, including pastors and key leaders from all over the country.

We were honored with the presence of our general presbyter for Central America, Mexico, and Spanish Speaking Caribbean, Dr. Benjamin Feliz, who shared a powerful message from the Word of God in the opening service, "The Six Characteristics of a True Disciple." He also presented the matter of our 101st International Assembly Agreements. In addition, we were also honored with the presence of Dr. Elias Rodriguez, our international CBL instructor, who shared the message, "The Transforming Elements of the Gospel."

All the topics were of great blessing to the national leadership. We firmly believe that they contribute to a greater growth of the leadership in our country to continue carrying out the Great Commission given by Jesus to his church.

Many thanks for this excellent school and for the efforts of our mentors, to National Administrative Bishop Jose Esteban Somoza, his wife Elizabeth, the CBL national directors, Pastor Consuelo Tijerino and Bishop Jesus Espinoza, and the entire team that worked to make this school possible.

To God be all the glory always!



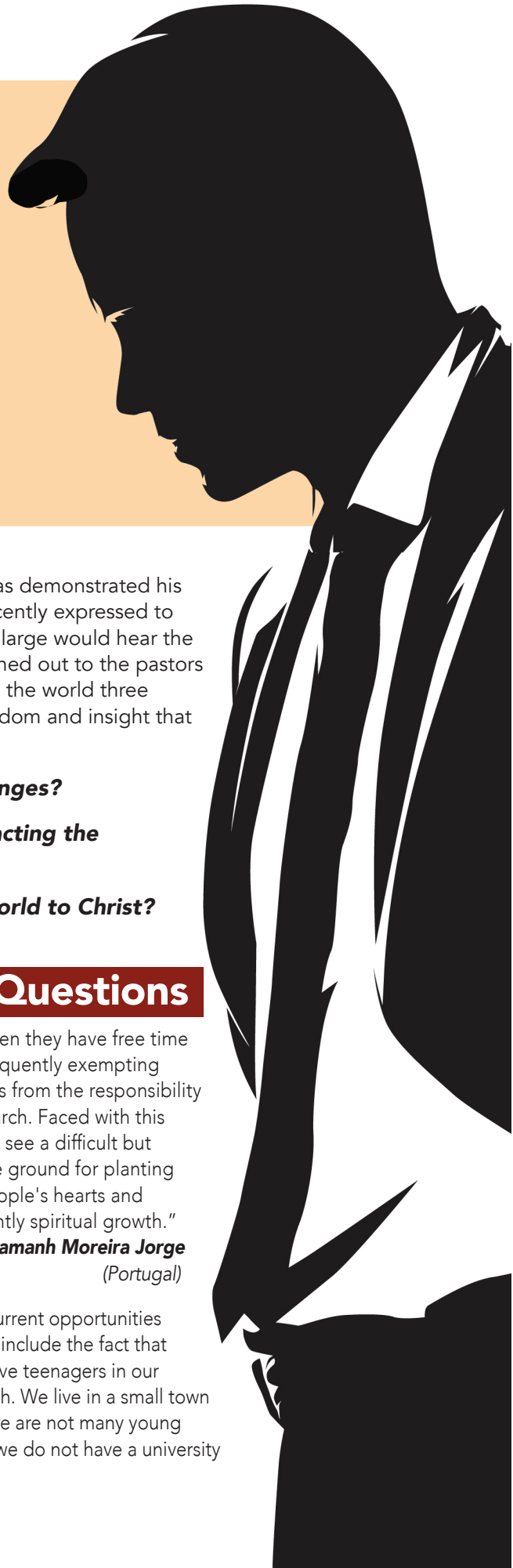






Church of God of Prophecy

PASTORS ANSWER QUESTIONS



A note from the managing editor: Presiding Bishop Tim Coalter has demonstrated his heart for the local church and pastors throughout his ministry. He recently expressed to the editor of the *White Wing Messenger* a desire that the Church at large would hear the thoughts and insights of pastors in various contexts. The editor reached out to the pastors Bishop Coalter mentioned. She asked men and women from around the world three questions. Their responses fill this issue. Each article is full of the wisdom and insight that came from each one. The questions were:

What are your current ministry opportunities and challenges?

What do you believe are the most pertinent issues impacting the future of the COGOP?

How are you motivating your people to reconcile the world to Christ?

Wider Europe Pastors Answer Questions

Tessa Dietz, the administrative assistant for Wider Europe and the Middle East, graciously gathered responses from five pastors who serve in that area for the three selected questions.

What are your current ministry opportunities and challenges?

"If we talk about opportunities, then today is a fertile time in this country to openly bring the gospel to people, even through social networks. A challenge continues to be a lack of human resources, the workers."

Pastor Jeyhun Farhadov (Azerbaijan)

"Faced with a call to 'reconcile the world to Christ,' there seems to be a 'cooling off' in Christian circles; each person has become much more concerned with trying to stay healthy and well. They are leaving their spiritual search to only when they have free time and consequently exempting themselves from the responsibility for the search. Faced with this barrier, we see a difficult but productive ground for planting faith in people's hearts and consequently spiritual growth."

Pastor Ramanh Moreira Jorge *(Portugal)*

"Our current opportunities in ministry include the fact that we can serve teenagers in our local church. We live in a small town where there are not many young adults, as we do not have a university

or a college, so all the students leave. So we can serve youth and children. In fact, we encourage youth to be engaged in kids' ministry. Our biggest challenge was the church split we managed to overcome, although some people do not seem to be fully on board and supportive about serving people and reaching out."

Pastors Masha and Pasha Hndezin *(Belarus)*

"Many Bulgarians have immigrated, and as a result, there are big numbers of Bulgarians all over Europe. Those who left as unbelievers tend to be more open to the gospel as immigrants, and those who were already Christians look for culturally relevant churches to join. A few new churches have been organized and more and more opportunities arise. The challenge is to have trained and mature leaders to lead these churches."

National Bishop Darin Ivanov *(Bulgaria)*

What do you believe are the most pertinent issues impacting the future of the COGOP?

"The future of the COGOP depends on two factors: first, intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and second, our teaching should be in strength and spirit, attracting more youth to the ministry."

Pastor Jeyhun Farhadov *(Azerbaijan)*

"Like everything, there are some things that are less good than others. I won't go on about it, but what affects us the most is the need to invest (financially, spiritually, and academically) in those doing the work. The work becomes much more arduous and painful when we are not able to give 100 percent of our time to the ministry. It can be exhausting. There are ministers who cannot give 100 percent to the work but still need to solve problems and be present at events, but there needs to be a concern also for a pastor's home life, finances, and family, among others. I know the COGOP leaders cannot be everywhere, so I think if we kept a few 100 percent on the job, it would be more enjoyable and have even greater benefits to COGOP."

Pastor Ramanh Moreira Jorge *(Portugal)*

"The issues affecting the future of COGOP are a lack of new leaders and church planters (well, definitely in our country). We do not have many qualified leaders in our churches. Somehow not many people study at the Bible college these days, either. But we see *MDP* as a great opportunity that will affect the future of COGOP in a massive way. We totally believe the material to be relevant and absolutely needed for the new generation of leaders and ministers. We believe that this course will encourage many more people to serve and help them do it more efficiently."

Pastors Masha and Pasha Hndezin *(Belarus)*

"The most pertinent issue affecting the future of the COGOP is the mounting pressure from the increasingly secular culture and its values. We need the will to stand on the Word of God despite anything and look for his protection and approval. We must keep gaining momentum in the efforts to reach the world through the power of the Spirit and also maintain persistence on our part."

National Bishop Darin Ivanov *(Bulgaria)*

How are you motivating your people to reconcile the world to Christ?

"By motivating the people in the church through teaching, gospel stories, issuing the challenge, by personal example, and the testimonies of believers."

Pastor Jeyhun Farhadov *(Azerbaijan)*

"We are working in an evangelistic way and with a focus on understanding the importance of all human beings to Jesus. Even as sinners and being far from God, they deserve our attention and the message of reconciliation entrusted to us. We have motivated the leaders to serve the community with support to the minors and also the people who are homeless. In the face of diverse scenarios, we strive to preach the truth and give a good witness of Christ, something that has been denigrated in Portugal. We are offering marriage counseling and personal life guidance. We always try to get jobs and homes for those who come to us with such difficulties. Showing our love for people I think is a great way to show that Christ loves and wants them to be reconciled with him."

Pastor Ramanh Moreira Jorge *(Portugal)*

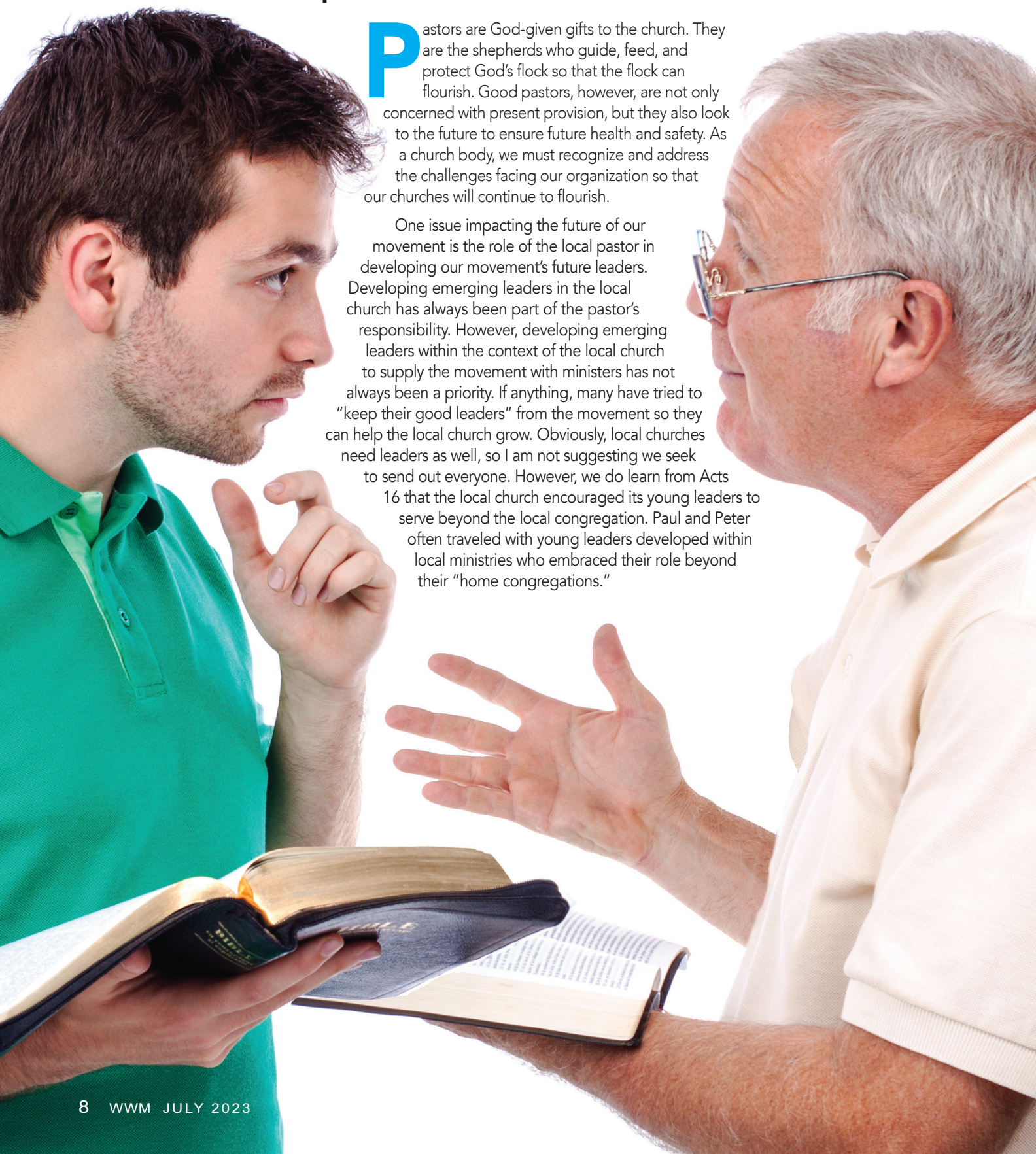
"We motivate our people to reconcile the world to Christ by preaching (we have done quite a few messages on this topic recently), by giving people opportunities to serve (we participate in a Global Serve Day as the whole church and we invite everyone to join when we have outreach projects). We also invite our church leaders to visit our home, share our lives, serve them, and encourage them. We believe that there is nothing better than personal example and there is no better way to show it than by living our lives together."

Pastors Masha and Pasha Hndezin *(Belarus)*

"I believe the key is to ask God's help in prayer and to increase our skills, as well as present the right image of God—a God who cannot stand sin (disobedience) and yet with his whole heart looked and found a way at his own expense to secure our forgiveness and the way to come back to Him—in other words, to accurately present the person who is at the same time, and always, the Lion and the Lamb. We must encourage people to remember always that God is pleading with the world through the Church to be reconciled to him!"

National Bishop Darin Ivanov *(Bulgaria)*

Challenges and Opportunities Impacting Our Future



Pastors are God-given gifts to the church. They are the shepherds who guide, feed, and protect God's flock so that the flock can flourish. Good pastors, however, are not only concerned with present provision, but they also look to the future to ensure future health and safety. As a church body, we must recognize and address the challenges facing our organization so that our churches will continue to flourish.

One issue impacting the future of our movement is the role of the local pastor in developing our movement's future leaders. Developing emerging leaders in the local church has always been part of the pastor's responsibility. However, developing emerging leaders within the context of the local church to supply the movement with ministers has not always been a priority. If anything, many have tried to "keep their good leaders" from the movement so they can help the local church grow. Obviously, local churches need leaders as well, so I am not suggesting we seek to send out everyone. However, we do learn from Acts 16 that the local church encouraged its young leaders to serve beyond the local congregation. Paul and Peter often traveled with young leaders developed within local ministries who embraced their role beyond their "home congregations."



Trevor Reid serves as lead pastor of the Bridge of Hope Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. Trevor earned a Bachelor of Science in Education, minoring in Biblical Literature from Nyack College, and went on to receive a Master of Divinity from Liberty Theological Seminary. He is an ordained bishop with the Church of God of Prophecy. He is married to Dr. Aileen Reid, and they have three children.

BISHOP TREVOR REID | GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

These emerging ministers belong to God and not to the pastor or to that "home" church. The local pastor's ability, willingness, and generosity in time, mentoring, and equipping are crucial to ensuring we have leaders for the movement (2 Timothy 2:2). I believe pastors raise the best pastors! Today's COGOP pastors and local congregations must feel the burden to raise up ministers for the kingdom of God in these last days!

Another critical issue facing our future is recognizing apostolic ministry outside of "trans-local appointments." As a movement, I am not sure we have adequately recognized the "gifting of apostolic ministry" within the context of the pastorate. Apostolic leaders, or leaders who feel the burden to expand God's work through the Church where it has not yet gone, exist not only among trans-local appointees but also within the local church. These are leaders who do not just want to plant a church; they want to raise leaders who make disciples and send them out in various contexts, communities, and environments. We must affirm, support, and encourage pastors with this gift of the Holy Spirit. Many of our trans-local appointed leaders are so enmeshed in the administrative duties of the ministry that they do not have the time, energy, or (in some cases) vision to go where the movement has never gone. Local pastors are strategically placed to consider cities nearby that are unreached by our movement. All pastors are not wired for this, but some are. We must encourage pastors and congregations to dream beyond the limits of their own cities. Our movement has few "large congregations," but we do have many "healthy ones." These churches can send disciples to other towns for the purpose of making disciples who will become either a campus of that local church or a new church plant. The goal is neither control, nor credit, but mission. We can and must return to the missional spirit where our movement began. We have affirmed traditional pastoral, evangelistic, and teaching gifts. The time has come to discern and unleash the apostolic gift among us.

Another issue impacting our movement is the embracing of Jesus' discipleship model. I believe that not only is his message sacred, but his model of ministry is sacred as well. When we study the way Jesus discipled there are at least seven practices that he modeled in the Gospels that must be embraced by pastors, leaders, and members:

1) He personally spent time with God the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15–16; Mark 3:7; 6:31–32). Part of the discipling experience is regularly setting aside time to commune with the Lord.
2) Jesus spent time with people far from God on their turf (Luke 15:1–2; John 4:4). If we are going to disciple like Jesus, we must spend time with people who do not know Jesus—people who do not think like us, agree with us, or even like us! Establishing relationships with people who did not know God was a key part of Jesus' method of making disciples.
3) He depended upon the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:5–8; Luke 4:1–2; 4:18; John 1:32–33; Acts 10:37–38; Romans 8:11; Galatians 5:16). We spend a great deal of time focusing on our "Pentecostal heritage" which takes its name from Acts 2. However, the Spirit-filled life did not begin on the day of Pentecost; it began at Jesus' baptism. Actually, once Jesus determined with the Father that he would set aside his divine power to exclusively live dependent upon the Holy Spirit's power, the Spirit-filled life was born! We must, like Jesus, be filled with his Spirit by yielding to him daily. Prayer, fasting, consecrating ourselves to him, and living for his kingdom mission (and not our own) are part of the Spirit-filled life.
4) We must love the disciples (John 11:3; 20:2; Acts 2:40–47). The fellowship of the body is critical if we are to bring people who are leaving family, culture, and other religions into the kingdom of God. Jesus loved his disciples, and we must love one another deeply, generously, and consistently.
5) Jesus discipled many, but he invested more of himself in a few, rather than the masses (Mark 5:37; Matthew 17:1; Luke 8:51). He had hundreds of disciples according to 1 Corinthians 16, but the Gospels record him spending a great deal of time with not only the Twelve, but more specifically Peter, James, and John. If we are to be effective disciples, we must identify a few to whom we will give ourselves intimately.
6) He lived what he wanted to see (Luke 16:12; John 4:4, 7; Luke 19:5; 22:42; Mark 1:14–17). Jesus did not ask of others what he himself was not willing to do. He served, obeyed the Father, forgave, and was generous.
7) He sent out those he discipled (John 17:18). This is a missing part of our personal disciple-making. I am not referring to the local congregation, but each disciple must disciple others and equip them to make disciples in their personal network.

I have personally had to revisit my job description, weekly practices, and even my church schedule to align my ministry and work with Jesus' disciple-making model. I have had to intentionally commit to inviting unbelievers to my home though they have never been to our church. I had to commit to discipling three to five people weekly as part of both my ministry and my personal call. There are more adjustments to be made, but this is not just a "pastoral" issue.

The average believer must be discipled to do what Jesus did. Until we believe that the last and youngest disciple must be oriented to follow Jesus' way of disciple-making, we risk our future. Classes do not disciple; people disciple. Positions do not disciple; people disciple. Jesus—the Savior, the Lamb, the King of kings—modeled for us how to fulfill his mission, and if we do not go back to his way, we risk our future! The Church will continue, but our commitment to his mission without excuses and exceptions will determine if WE survive.



Bishop Nonito Que serves in the Samoan Islands and has many years of experience as a pastor. He was selected by his general presbyter, Bishop Tim McCaleb, to share his insight for this issue of the *White Wing Messenger.*

BISHOP NONITO QUE | SAMOAN ISLANDS NATIONAL BISHOP

Asia, Australia, and Oceania: A COGOP Pastor Answers Questions

Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations. He knew there would be challenges, yet he commissioned his disciples to go. Bishop Nonito Que outlines some of the challenges and opportunities he sees facing the Church of God of Prophecy as the Church seeks to fulfill the Great Commission in the region where he serves.

What are your current ministry opportunities and challenges?

- **Opportunities**
  - o Opportunity for the local church to be part of planting mission churches in areas worldwide.
  - o Better training opportunities for church members through COGOP LDD materials available online.
  - o Opportunity to be part of the work in mission fields brought by easier ways to transfer funds using the Internet.
  - o Opportunity for the local church's spiritual growth especially of children and youth.
- **Challenges**
  - o Prohibitive cost of airfares to attend face to face trainings due to our geographical location.
  - o Reversal of a lackadaisical attitude to church attendance brought about by regulations on face-to-face church services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - o Economic challenges due to the steep rise of cost of living.
  - o Challenges in unity among church members.

What do you believe are the most pertinent issues impacting the future of the COGOP?

- The ability to hold on to unchanging Biblical standards without compromise amidst a fast-changing world, especially in the area of holiness and morality.
- Flexibility and effectiveness of methods against operation cost in the work needed to reach the unsaved.

How are you motivating your people to reconcile the world to Christ?

- Reminding ourselves that although we see with our eyes, people by culture are attending church every Sunday in the Samoan Islands; fulfilling the Great Commission to teach and preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to make disciples is still needed, the more so today.
- Reminding ourselves of the need to be more fully aware that we are ambassadors of Christ and, as such, live as examples of godliness to more effectively reach out to the lost in our communities.

North Carolina Hispanic Convention Holds 1-Day Children's Ministry Intensive Camp

SOL SHERTZER | RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

April 29, 2023, the first annual 1-Day Children's Ministry Intensive Camp premiered during the North Carolina Hispanic District Convention at Maranatha Camp COGOP in High Point, North Carolina. The Spirit of God moved mightily through the teaching of the gospel, games, crafts, and worship. One hundred ten campers from ten local churches arrived to celebrate BRAVE KIDS 2023.

We joyously report that eight campers, ages 5 to 11, accepted Christ as their Savior for the first time, and more than 60 prayed in the altar to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That day, we had children that had never heard about Jesus or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was an evangelistic event whose purpose was to reach out to many others outside the church.







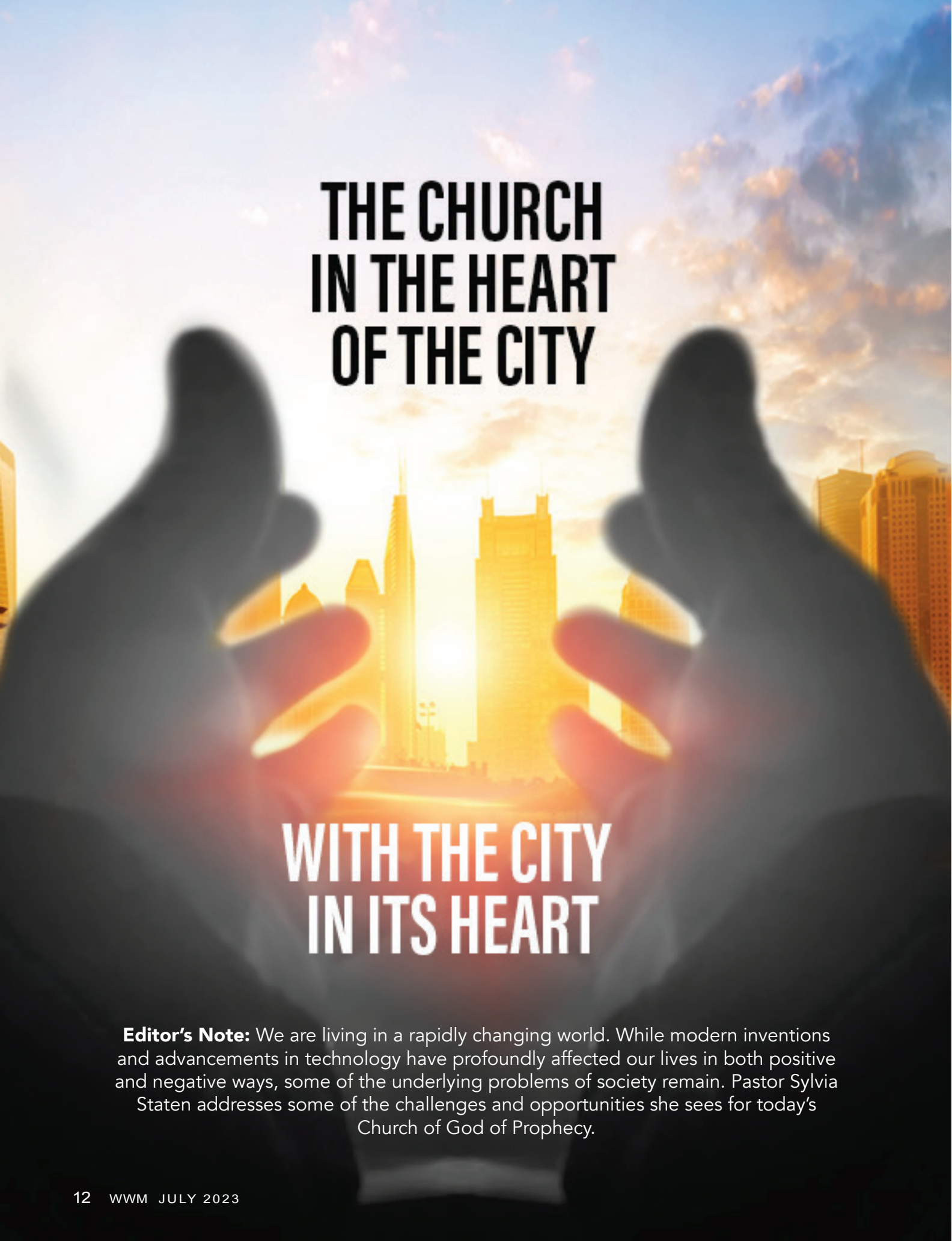


Pastor Elmer Shertzer from COGOP Abundante Gracia bilingual church in Raleigh is the appointed North Carolina Children's Ministry director. He mingled with the little ones all day and was also a group leader for 7- to 9-year-old boys. He enjoyed answering questions and leading worship for everyone. Pastor Elmer said that the kids were very excited to be at the campground.

Last year, 45 campers attended, and this year we doubled that number. We are working with the regional children's ministries' leaders and workers hand in hand to bring the best experience to our children. We implemented a holistic experience with the gospel including physical exercises, laughter, circle time, and gender-specific biblical teaching. We are very thankful for our team of 30 volunteers whom only God could have brought together, and many others who donated materials, food, and time.

During our children's worship services in the evening, we noticed so much passion and hunger for the Word of God. Many were broken by the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Elmer accepted Jesus at the age of ten and understands the impact of a good Christian foundation on children. He received his Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Pentecostal Theological Seminary in May 2023, and has a Bachelor of Music Education, with an emphasis in Vocal Performance. He was one of the first missionaries for Child Evangelism Fellowship in Durham, North Carolina. He has a great deal of experience and knowledge that God will use to empower North Carolina's children's ministers.



Editor's Note: We are living in a rapidly changing world. While modern inventions and advancements in technology have profoundly affected our lives in both positive and negative ways, some of the underlying problems of society remain. Pastor Sylvia Staten addresses some of the challenges and opportunities she sees for today's Church of God of Prophecy.



Pastor Sylvia Staten attended Columbia International University where she earned a bachelor's degree. She served as a pastor in the Church of God of Prophecy for 17 years in Winnsboro, South Carolina. Pastor Staten then evangelized internationally for 17 years and most recently, she returned to pastoring for the past 10 years at The Place of Grace COGOP in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Notably, Pastor Staten was appointed by Bishop George McLaughlin as the first female district supervisor in South Carolina.

PASTOR SYLVIA B. STATEN | ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA

Challenges and Opportunities

The obvious aging of congregations in the Church of God of Prophecy nationwide is a pressing and challenging issue, even for my local church. Winning and maintaining what I have titled the "GAP" age group (15 to 40 years of age) is an ongoing focus of study and prayer for me. However, with this challenge comes opportunity. Our local church, The Place of Grace, is developing and implementing a plan to break the repetitive cycle of winning and losing new people. With this as a main focus, we have developed, implemented, and continue to revise a consistent plan for discipleship that focuses on teaching the "saved to serve."

In addition to the issue of aging congregations, the Church is challenged to be consistent in developing and implementing a plan of diversity and inclusion in the COGOP leadership. This has been a long-time point of pain among minorities in this church. While the topic has been addressed many times on platforms of the International Assemblies and State Conferences, and while some progress has been made, there must be more intentional efforts on all sides to bring this to fruition, and it must be implemented and maintained.

The following is a statement from the "SC Diversity and Inclusion Commitment Declaration" which was presented at the 2021 SC State Conference:

> Social structure, upbringing, or societal norms have become convenient excuses for demonstrating racism, but this is not acceptable to God, nor should it be acceptable to the COGOP. We must work past natural preferences and the discomfort that comes from being around those who do not look like us, and we must strive for unity, inclusion, and mutual respect.

The issue of minorities also includes adding qualified women to leadership positions. To be a church of impact, our organization must reflect the masses as we attempt to "reconcile the world to Christ." Any resistance on our part could make us appear complicit with these inconsistencies. This is why it is so important that we be intentional and proactive in addressing diversity and inclusion in the Church.

Focus on Mission: Reconciling the World to Christ

In our effort to address on the challenges before us, our church has adopted a theme: "The Church in the Heart of the City with the City in Its Heart." As pastor, I have intentionally tried to live up to that mission.

Here at Place of Grace, the church has been divided into four teams. These teams are small groups that I have formed, and I am constantly pouring into them to train, develop, and build leaders. They, in turn, pour into their team members. The teams have been assigned city blocks in the community surrounding our building. During COVID, the city of Rock Hill gifted two pallets of hand sanitizer. The team leaders and members distributed these cases to the homes in their designated blocks, passed out church information, and took prayer requests from the families. Members were also encouraged to distribute hand sanitizer to their neighbors and family.

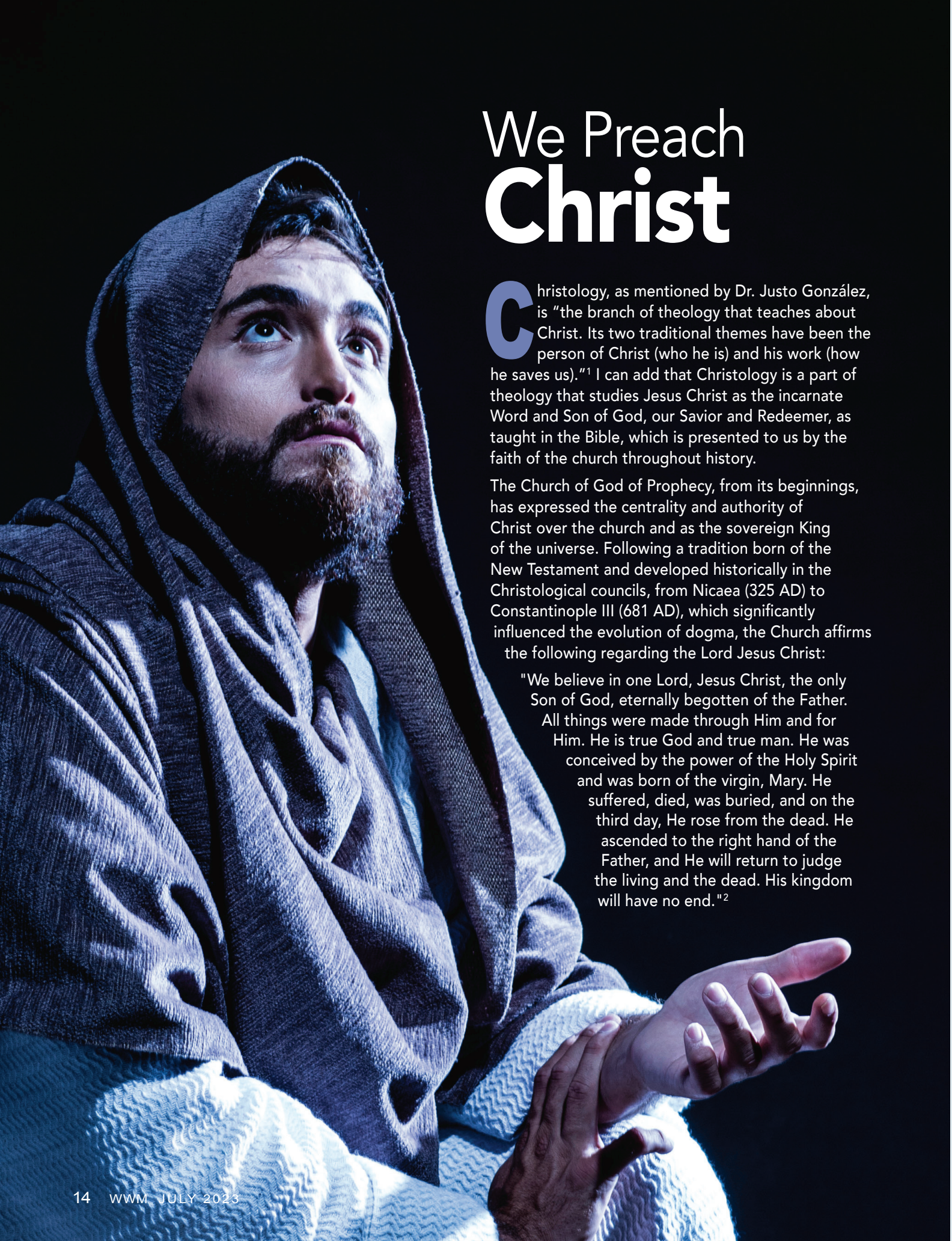
In another avenue of ministry, the local prison system has developed a program in which I have been certified as a "prison pastor." As a result, Place of Grace is equipping the membership to accept the "other sheep" who are not of this fold.

To encourage evangelism, Place of Grace conducts an "Out of the Saltshaker into the World" conference every two years. Speakers are brought in from our International Offices along with other ministers who are "doing" the work of evangelizing urban areas.

Since Covid, our local church has not been able to go back to the normal Sunday school pattern. In an effort to compensate for this, Place of Grace will be conducting quarterly "Youth Summits." We will remain intentional about instructing youth in our church, community, and surrounding areas through the following topics:

- Developing a life in Christ
- How to evangelize your peers
- Teaching the hazards of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD)
- Career development
- Financial literacy

I feel our churches are dying not because of a lack of souls or people, but more so because our churches are "stuck" in a pattern of doing things in the same old ways. COVID has forced Place of Grace to think outside of the box.



We Preach Christ

Christology, as mentioned by Dr. Justo González, is "the branch of theology that teaches about Christ. Its two traditional themes have been the person of Christ (who he is) and his work (how he saves us)."[1] I can add that Christology is a part of theology that studies Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word and Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer, as taught in the Bible, which is presented to us by the faith of the church throughout history.

The Church of God of Prophecy, from its beginnings, has expressed the centrality and authority of Christ over the church and as the sovereign King of the universe. Following a tradition born of the New Testament and developed historically in the Christological councils, from Nicaea (325 AD) to Constantinople III (681 AD), which significantly influenced the evolution of dogma, the Church affirms the following regarding the Lord Jesus Christ:

> "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."[2]



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BISHOP FERNANDO LÓPEZ CRUZ, JR., DMIN | SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

This statement expresses the description ascribed to Jesus, the Son of God: who he is, his centrality, and the mission he had and has in the divine plan. We can say then that "in the depths of all Christian life and of any theological reflection there beats consciously or unconsciously a certain Christology. Evidently, throughout life, the images and representations we have of Jesus or of Christ evolve, and they have been and are different."[3]

The Threefold Office of Jesus Christ

Although in the New Testament there are, according to Raymond E. Brown, "many other evaluations of Jesus: Rabbi (Teacher), Prophet, High Priest, Savior, Master or Lord, the Son, Son of Man, Son of God, and even God,"[4] we can also find in the Bible the Christological teaching of the threefold office of Christ over his church. The threefold office (*munus triplex*) of Jesus Christ is a Christian teaching that has its basis in the Old Testament, and of which some Christians have differing points of view. It is said that one of the first to describe this teaching was Eusebius of Caesarea, and it was further developed by the Reformer, John Calvin.[5] The doctrine states that Jesus Christ performed three functions or "offices" in his earthly ministry: prophet, priest, and king. We can say that "the offices of Jesus Christ belong to the classic study of Christology, which relates his Person to his work. When we refer to the offices, we refer to what Christ did and continues to do for our salvation. So, we refer here to what Christ Jesus did in his state of humiliation and continues to do in his state of exaltation."[6]

In the Old Testament, the appointment of anyone to any of these three offices could be sanctioned by anointing him with oil on his head. Therefore, the term Messiah, meaning "anointed," is associated with the concept of the threefold office. While the office of king is the most closely associated with the Messiah, Jesus' role as priest, which involves intercession before God, is also prominent in the New Testament, and it is explained in greater detail in the book of Hebrews, chapters 7–10.[7] It is important to note that it has been customary in Protestant circles since the Reformation to talk about the work of Christ under three main titles: prophet, priest, and king.

Jesus Is the Prophet Par Excellence

The doctrine of the threefold office of Christ affirms that Jesus is the prophet par excellence. Pablo Jiménez defines a prophet as "a person that speaks in the name of God, calling the people to faithfulness. His message does not always speak of the future. Usually, he mentions the future only when he affirms that God is going to do something extraordinary or when he warns of possible judgment that comes with unfaithfulness to God."[8] Per Jiménez, Jesus is the prophet par excellence for two reasons. First, he is the one spoken of in the Old Testament prophecies and in whom they are fulfilled. We find an example of this in the account of the wisemen's visit in Matthew 2:1–6. Secondly, as noted in John 7:45–46, Jesus is the great prophet "who speaks of God as no one has ever done before."[9]

Jesus is referred to as prophet only in the Gospels. He is accepted as prophet by popular opinion (Mark 6:15; Matthew 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40). "However, although the disciples do not call him a prophet with total clarity," writes Casiano Floristán, "the words and gestures of Jesus have a marked prophetic accent, as can be seen in the beatitudes and in the theophanies of baptism and transfiguration."[10] Therefore, Jesus "is a prophet because, with absolute fidelity to his mission and with uncompromising freedom, he announces the radical demands of God, with full lucidity about individual and social events."[11]

Jesus Is the Great High Priest

The second office that affirms the doctrine of Christ is that of priest. Not only is the priest dedicated and consecrated to make, celebrate, and offer sacrifices before God, but he is also the person who serves as mediator between God and humanity. Jiménez notes that "Jesus is 'priest' because he was the perfect victim offered in perfect sacrifice before God. Since Jesus gave his life voluntarily, he fulfilled the role of 'priest' and the role of the lamb offered in sacrifice before God."[12] Thus, as affirmed by Hebrews 4:14–15, Jesus has become the great High Priest who intercedes before God for all of us.

Jesus, in his public life, had little contact with the priests, except at the time of the passion. Nevertheless, in the letter to the Hebrews, the title of "priest" or "high priest" is applied to Christ with a double distinction: Jesus does not belong to the Jewish priest lineage (7:3–14), nor is his worship ritualistic but "in spirit and truth" as "he offered himself" for the sake of humanity. Floristán comments, "The priesthood of Jesus is unique just as his sacrifice is unique. The death of Jesus is not carried out with the meticulousness of a sacred ritual, but with a dedication of total love until death, a true worship of God. In summary, Jesus is the high priest because he became like those who suffer, died for the love of justice, and surrendered himself faithfully to God."[13]

Jesus is the King of Kings

Thirdly, the threefold doctrine of Christ affirms that Jesus fulfills the office of king over all creation. A king is the sovereign monarch of a kingdom. Jiménez reminds us that, in this case, the kingdom of Christ is God's presence and rule over the world. That Jesus is king is affirmed in Scripture: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9–11). The book of Revelation also

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Evangelical Covenant Church Faces the Future

A COGOP Pastor Answers Questions

Starting and sustaining a new church in the urban context comes with challenges. While it certainly can be difficult, we have realized that some of our most significant challenges are also our most incredible opportunities! Our Evangelical Covenant family has encountered many challenges as we seek to serve the Lord faithfully in Jersey City.

Ministry Challenges and Opportunities

For those who do not grow up in an urban context, one of the most significant obstacles is the pace of life. The high cost of living creates a greater work demand for the family. This results in people being busy, making it difficult for families to commit to anything else. The "busyness" in today's culture puts pressure on the church pastor and leadership team, especially when there seems to be a lack of interest in serving and committing to ministry. Many members let those "called" lead the work, not realizing that we all have been designed to serve God and people.

While this is undoubtedly challenging, it creates opportunities to better define the local church's disciple-making process. Effective discipleship cannot take place at events people will not attend. One aspect of effective discipleship is building genuine relationships within the local church. As relationships are deepened, so is the awareness and removal of misconceptions of God's ministry design for the church. Through these relationships, the church is equipped and mobilized to participate in incarnational ministry. How are we impacting the spaces we engage daily with the gospel? How are we applying God's mission to every aspect of our lives? In what ways are we allowing the gospel to transform the neighborhoods where we live?

Jersey City is one of the leading, most diverse cities in America. We are diverse ethnically, economically, and geographically. The numerous neighborhoods within our city are shaped by the individuals living there. This makes ministry challenging! I experienced a deconstruction of ministry philosophy as I was commissioned out of an ethnic-based church to serve intentionally amongst this diverse population.

Reaching these diverse groups requires intentionality, but it is so worth it when you realize that this work mirrors the vision of God for the church in Revelation 6. The church is called to have the identity of Christ and lead the work of redemption in the city. Our local church vision is to make Jesus Christ known and his kingdom visible. Visibility of God's kingdom is not restricted to a particular denomination, ethnic group, language, or socioeconomic status. There is space for everyone in the kingdom; therefore, our hearts burn passionately to see all people groups reconciled to God the Father.

One final challenge I would like to highlight is the great need existing within our city—a need that can make one feel hopeless and overwhelmed. Our city is growing and changing rapidly. Despite the advancements, our school systems still fall behind in quality resources; the rate of homelessness is high, crime still invades our streets, and our most vulnerable population—our children—suffers the most. Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more! We see abandoned and neglected neighborhoods being gentrified, leaving emotional chaos and division among our people.

This creates opportunities for the church to demonstrate just how powerful the gospel is. In a city where hope seems lost, the gospel of Jesus Christ shines even brighter. God's hand is seen when individuals are delivered from addictions, children are healed, families are restored, men are redirected to take ownership of their homes and communities, and the poor and marginalized are loved and valued. All these stories are part of the narrative of God using the church through the power of the Holy Spirit to complete the work of redemption.

Looking to the Future of the Church

The future of the COGOP looks bright because we belong to Jesus, the head of the church. On that note, our aim should be complete surrender to Jesus and his heart for the church and the world.

Jesus wants us committed to making disciples of all people groups. The Great Commission is centered on making disciples. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives us the layout of this mission—we are to make disciples of all nations which requires the church to aim for all four



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PASTOR JONATHAN OLAVARRIA | JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

corners of the world. We make disciples by teaching them to observe [obey] what has been instructed by our Savior and incorporate them into the body of Christ through baptism. None of this is possible unless we preach the gospel under the Spirit's influence in an unadulterated form. Discipleship can start before conversion. Being in relationship with people in the city allows you to see the work of the Holy Spirit sprouting the seed of God's Word even before a profession of faith takes place. The church must refocus on discipleship. After all, healthy churches are composed of disciples of Jesus.

Following the mandate of making disciples everywhere includes a strategic plan to increase our presence in the urban context. Cities are known for their constant movement and growing populations. Urban areas are developing in new regions all the time. The COGOP needs to commit to the city. Every major city in the world needs vibrant churches that sound and look like the people residing in them. Ethnic-based churches are essential, but that should not distract our movement from seeking to plant multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-generational churches worldwide.

Lastly, the current leadership must dedicate time and energy to mentoring the next generation. Local churches have struggled to successfully implement mentoring in the development of emergent leaders. If leaders receive any training, it usually comes from a Bible institute or other information-based seminar/workshop. Some have pursued formal ministerial education through a seminary. However, mentorship has been a neglected topic for some time. If there is any organization that should be deeply committed to mentoring, it should be the local church because the mission of the church is to love God and to love people enough to see them live to God's purpose for their life.[1] Mentees will be willing to step into future leadership roles and serve faithfully and confidently when mentoring emerging leaders becomes a priority in leadership development. Mentoring is the best way to establish an expanding and influential ministry team to produce a dynamic and transformational church. It is a critical component of a healthy church and multiplies a leader's impact. A pastor can reach five; a team of well-trained leaders can reach fifty. Research has shown that mentoring is directly related to overwhelmingly predictive ministry outcomes such as speed of growth and church size.

Motivated to Reconcile the World to Christ

We are encouraging people to reconcile to the world by spending time with Jesus and adopting missional habits. The church is apostolic in its mission because we recognize that Jesus has sent us. He said, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21 CEB). Wherever you are working, living, or visiting, you have been sent there by Jesus. A priority for those "sent out" is to pray and stay near to Jesus. We cannot share an experience that we do not have. The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we will look, feel, and sound like him. [Evangelism] often begins with our stories about God: how we experienced God, how we were changed by God, how God met us in our need. Our stories say to others that God isn't just a distant idea. God is an immediate presence. As we tell stories from our spiritual journey, others start thinking about their experiences…. We need to have available multiple personal stories of the aliveness of God which we can draw on to pepper our conversation.[2]

Prayer will always increase compassion and passion for the lost in our spaces. The Evangelical Covenant Church family has adopted the acronym B.L.E.S.S. as an initiative to reach and restore people, starting with those who are closest to us, yet who seem far from God. The B.L.E.S.S. initiative involves the following: Beginning with prayer, Listening with care, Eating together, Serving with love, and Sharing your story.[3] By building relationships, sharing our stories, and loving others, we can continue the work of reconciling the world to Christ.

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[1] Bill Hendricks and Howard Hendricks, *Men of Influence: The Transformational Impact of Godly Mentors* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 248.

[2] Richard Peace, *Holy Conversation: Talking About God in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2006), 34.

[3] David Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S.: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World* (Washingon, DC: Salem Books, 2021).

Healthy Dynamics of a Pastoral Family

Managing Expectations and Boundaries

Reverend Aileen Reed, DMin



(A Sample from "The Minister's Personal Life," *Minister's Development Program,* Lesson 6)

First Timothy 3:1–5 clearly defines the biblical model for pastoral leadership in the home:

> Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) (NIV)

The pastor is responsible to be a faithful spouse, leader, and parent in the home out of reverence for Christ. Scripture makes it clear, if the minister does not hold spiritual authority over his family, the effectiveness of his leadership to the congregation will be compromised. The duality of role and responsibility as parent in the home and shepherd of the congregation can lead to relational pressures that cause discord in the home and cause the couple to be a "performing couple." A "performing couple" is one that presents a perfect image to the congregation, while at the same time struggling on multiple fronts in the home without any help or guidance to walk them through their relational dysfunction. What resources does the family have available to them to handle problems such as brokenness, addictions, loss, and grief? Whereas the pastor is usually the one to walk other families in the congregation through these difficult times, the pastoral family does not have a pastor of their own.

If pastoral couples are to produce children who are emotionally healthy disciples, they must have the freedom to parent their children without concern about the implication for their pastoral role. Nurturing Christian beliefs, morals, and values, and navigating family values when they are at odds with church values, can be difficult when the pastor is ministering in a context where the church (culturally or philosophically) does not share the values that the pastor and spouse are trying to pass on to their children. For instance, because context often differs for missionaries and church planters, they may experience scenarios where their family values may be at odds with congregational or local values. In some instances, 1 Timothy 3:15 may be erroneously used by members or church leaders to criticize the pastor's leadership of his home if his spouse or children do not meet the congregation's expectations. Although the congregation can play a role as an extended family to provide additional support to the pastoral family, boundaries—just like in natural families—should be clearly articulated. Otherwise, church leaders or the congregation might develop unconscious, unrealistic, unspoken, or unagreed upon expectations of the family.

Members of the congregation might consciously or subconsciously have expectations for the pastoral family which may include the following:

- Behavioral standards for children—they must be perfectly behaved, or they are otherwise stereotyped as defiant rebels.
- Children should be fully-formed disciples—their knowledge of the Bible should be greater than that of children their age because they are the pastor's children.
- The minister's spouse is to assume a particular role or ministry in the church, or not pursue employment outside the home.
- Family feels pressured to please, serve,

perform, and be present with the congregation at all times.
- Pressure is on children to continue in a ministry career.

Expectations exist in every facet of life, and sometimes these expectations do not become clear until disappointment or conflict arises. Thus, the key question that should be asked by the congregation is, what is a valid expectation? Valid expectations are as follows:

- **Conscious:** I am aware of my expectation.
- **Realistic:** This means there is evidence to support that the expectation is reasonable. Either it has been done in the past or the person has the capacity and willingness to do it.
- **Spoken:** I have expressed the expectation clearly.
- **Agreed Upon:** The other person has agreed to the expectation by saying "yes."

Expectations should also be established by the family for themselves regarding how they will balance life and ministry. Communicating expectations is particularly important for families with adolescent children entering the pastorate for the first time. As mentioned earlier, there will be a significant shift in the family's dynamics. Therefore, the family should be in regular conversations at every stage—throughout a pastoral appointment/search process, prior to and after relocation, and at regular family check-ins. Singles who plan to enter the ministry and plan to get married should also clarify expectations during dating and prior to marriage. Consider how the ministry will impact the future spouse's role in the church, the type of employment they can pursue, and expectations for how the home will be managed. Parameters should also be established between the pastor and the congregation regarding how the family is expected to function in the local church. When expectations have not been mutually agreed upon between the pastoral family and the congregation, boundaries become unclear.

Boundary Ambiguity

The quality of the pastoral family's relationship with the congregation is critical to the health of both the family and the congregation. When there is congregational misfit, tensions arise that can cause additional stress on the pastoral family and on the congregation as well. However, when there is a good fit, the congregation thrives. But even where there is a good fit, congregational demands or intrusiveness can become an additional pressure point in the family's life. Boundary ambiguity, therefore, refers to the intrusiveness of congregational demands on the pastoral family. Typical intrusions that the pastoral family may experience include unannounced visits by members, family time interruptions by a phone call, an invasion of privacy by a member, or member criticism about the family's childrearing or disciplinary practices, to name a few. Boundary ambiguity occurs when expectations between the congregation and pastoral family are not clarified and formalized.

Five church dynamics that may intensify boundary ambiguity and intrusion include the following:

- The church may possess assumed expectations about the role of the pastor and the pastoral family.
- The church may view the parsonage as church property rather than a private residence.
- Church members often expect the pastoral family to have a different set of values than themselves.
- Individual members of the congregation project their set of family values or their faith beliefs upon the pastoral family.
- The pastoral family possesses an ethic of self-sacrifice that tolerates repeated instances of ambiguity or intrusion.

Boundaries are especially important with children in order to protect against emotional intrusions and imbalances of power between children and adults. For instance, a member of the congregation may publicly discipline or reprimand a pastor's child because they are the pastor's child and "should know better" but not hold their own or others' children to the same standard. If boundaries are not clearly expressed and formalized, the congregation's expectations of the pastoral family can become skewed, and the pastoral family might experience loss of privacy and diminished quality of life.

Time Demands

The pastorate is a 24 hours, seven days per week job, and the spouse and family may feel abandoned by a pastor who is always on the job. The pastor's hours are often in the evening, nighttime, and weekends when weekly services are held and members are not working. However, these are also the same time periods that the family is available to spend time together. The demand for a pastor's attention can come at inopportune times, such as during a family meal when an emergency arises at the church, or

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AFTER POST-CHRISTIANITY

The world we live in today is no longer the world we lived in 20 years ago. Actually, it's no longer the world we lived in five years ago. No, wait, it's no longer the world we lived in last year. Or did I mean yesterday? It is so confusing—the times in which we live are easily defined as a post-Christian society. The church is no longer important; and in some respects, it is no longer important to the people it was important to a few years ago. The church is no longer relevant to people. For far too long, we have been answering questions nobody is asking, preaching sermons and teaching lessons that have no impact on the people who enter our sanctuaries. Everything you have just read should cause you to begin evaluating yourself, your church, and the church's mission.

First, let us examine the truth about a post-Christian society. Since it follows a Christian society, it means that there are still morals and values that exist within that society that were shaped by Christianity. An interesting fact about our post-Christian society today is that many who have left the Christian faith did not turn to any other faith. They simply became what is known as "nones." "Nones" are individuals who do not identify with any particular religion or faith. However, even though they state they have no personal identity in a particular religion, what they have done is create their own worldview based on their own subset of information, thereby creating a religion of their own liking and worshiping their own desires. Yet, research shows they have not given up on God and a personal desire to worship something or someone. They believe in God, and they are even open to Jesus. Consider these recent findings from Barna: "In an October 2022 Barna survey of 2,000 U.S. adults, three out of four (74%) say they want to grow spiritually. Additionally, the same proportion (77% a say they believe in a higher power. Nearly half (44%) say they are more open to God today than before the pandemic" (Kinnaman 2023). In addition, the Pew Research Center found that "among Americans overall, about seven-in-ten 'nones' believe in God or a higher power. That includes 86% of adults who describe their religion as nothing in particular and 46% of atheists and agnostics" (Mohamed et al., 2023). Knowing this, you still have reason to evangelize the world and reconcile the world to Christ because they are still searching for truth.



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BISHOP RYAN NAPALO | MOOREVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

What happened to the church anyway? In simple terms, the church became secularized and shrouded by modern trends. We took on the identity of the world in order to appeal to people who were searching for truth. And, before you take that statement too far, there is absolutely nothing wrong with upgrading our churches, making them inviting, and using technology or a bit of fresh paint to share the gospel. We all have a high calling that demands excellence in everything we do; therefore, use whatever you can to reach the lost. Just don't replace the power and presence of the Holy Spirit with whitewashed tombs: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27 ESV).

Current trends and preliminary research, however, are leading researchers to believe that after a post-Christian society, we will come to a post-secular society—another reminder for us to stay the course and not give up. There is a reconciliation that must happen, and you and I are called to GO. We can no longer remain in our churches with the mentality that the world will come to us when the Great Commission is calling us to go (Matthew 28:19–20).

So how do we overcome this? We de-secularize the church. We traded our authenticity and anointing for a program, a routine, and a way the church down the street does it. We moved from church worship services to encounters and experiences, but we also traded titles to programs for the Spirit's genuine presence with no encounter and no new experiences. Again, do not get me wrong. We needed some improvements in the way we did "church," but we also needed to leave room on the program for the Holy Spirit to move instead of programing him out and leaving no time for him to move among us. And, yet I say to you, there is hope for the Church of God of Prophecy. God is doing a new thing among us.

The act of reconciling an account is a process that is used to prove that the transactions add up to the ending balance. Our call to reconcile the world to Christ is a call to the harvest—to go and bring the lost into God's house. The churches of the Church of God of Prophecy have for far too long been behind. We have in some sense always been last to get on board to innovate and adapt to the world around us. As the church moves to de-secularize, we have one of the greatest advantages: We still believe in the Holy Spirit—the power (*dunamis*: [miraculous] power, might, strength), the anointing, the miraculous, the manifestation of his presence, and the operations of the gifts of the Spirit. So, while we shine up our churches, put on our best, and demonstrate the excellence of our ministries, let's open the door again and welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I have stood at the pulpit of my current pastorate on at least three occasions and quoted an excerpt from Bishop A.J. Tomlinson's "Thirteenth Annual Address" delivered in 1923:

> God was with Moses and directed the church in the wilderness. Jesus was with the apostles in the beginning of the gospel dispensation and started them out in the right way. But now we have the Holy Ghost to guide and direct us and to illuminate the sacred pages of our Lawbook [Bible]. He must have the pre-eminence. He must be recognized and honored in all our services and deliberations. Put Him out and we have nothing but machinery and buildings left. But we want to so conduct ourselves that He will be pleased to remain with us.
>
> O, Thou heavenly dove, Thou hast been thrust aside and grieved—but we have been grieved too. Wilt Thou accept the place in our midst as instructor, guide and ruler according to all the divine plan of our Father God? We want Thee to have due honor, and, if Thou wilt only quicken us to service, we here and now renew our pledge of faithfulness to Thee. We want Thy presence; we want Thy wisdom to be displayed among us; we want Thy power

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GLOBAL MISSIONS MINISTRIES
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



REVEREND CATHY PAYNE, DMIN | GLOBAL MISSIONS MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

Update from Ukraine







Every Tuesday for more than a year, the Global Missions team has been honored to be a part of a Zoom meeting with a group of our pastors from Ukraine. They come together to encourage and pray for each other as well as share what is happening in their respective cities.

The majority of our Ukrainian pastors were able to attend the European Leadership Conference in early March this year, and their sense of family and camaraderie has grown. Since the beginning of the war, many of them had not been able to travel and minister together. The conference was an opportunity for them to be together, to fellowship, and to be loved on by their fellow leaders around Europe. Since the fighting has ceased in many of the cities where they currently live, they have been able to travel to each other's churches to minister and fellowship with one another.

Several of the pastors recently traveled for a meeting with each other at a couple of the national churches. While visiting, one of our pastors in Kyiv mentioned that his church ministered as usual without any problems while he was away. The pastor he visited said it was wonderful getting to spend time with the group that came, and if there had not been a curfew, they would have stayed up all night talking and catching up. One of our pastor's wives commented on the quietness at the meeting as she was used to hearing explosions from the shelling. She and her husband had come from a heavily attacked region in Ukraine. When they returned home, her husband (the pastor) and others were outside working around the church when an area 30 kilometers from them was hit. She later asked him what they did, and he replied, "We just kept working."

Another group from Nikolaev traveled to Yellow Waters. They were greatly impressed with the youth there, so much so, that several in the group did not want to leave and go home. The following week a group from Yellow Waters traveled to Nikolaev to train them on their children's program, Awana. The pastor from Yellow Waters shared how the Awana program has benefited them. That week alone, they had 18 first-time children join and five of those came the next day for the main service.

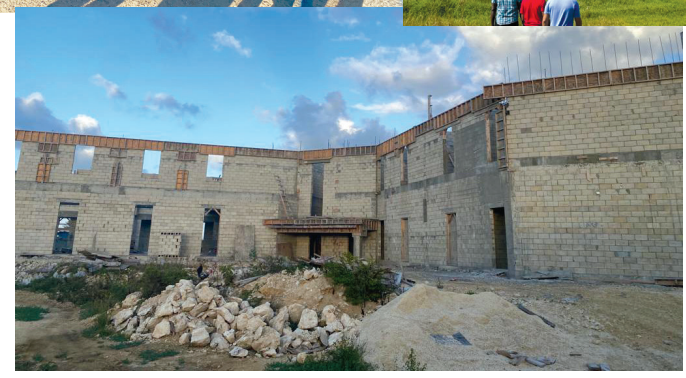
One of our amazing female pastors was so excited that her church was able to have its first service in their building since the military action began. The pastor from Yellow Waters also was thrilled to have his brother home from the war for a little over a week. He continues to ask prayer for his brother, but also for all those who are fighting on the frontlines.

Every week our team is blessed by these men and women of faith. During these Zoom meetings, different ministers from the United States as well as other regions outside of Ukraine have given short devotions, encouraging words, and blessings for our pastors. However, throughout the chaos they experience daily living in Ukraine, these pastors have not only blessed us but have continually challenged us. Their faith is unshaken even when their lives have been turned upside down. Please continue to remember our Church family in prayer throughout this strategic region in Eastern Europe.

Update on New Church Build in the Cayman Islands







We have received exciting news from Bishop Clayton Martin, general presbyter of the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands, and national bishop of the Cayman Islands.

The nation has recently embarked on new construction to complete a long-envisioned and desired local church plant in a new location in the Cayman Islands. Recently Bishop Martin shared a report on the progress of the multipurpose facility being built in Lookout Gardens, Bodden Town, Grand Cayman Islands. This facility will house a large sanctuary, 12 classrooms, and a family life center, all to be used by the new local congregation. Construction began in early January and significant progress has already been made.

If you would like to assist in the building of this facility, your financial assistance would be most welcomed and appreciated. Your prayers for success in completion of the construction and ministry effort are also welcomed.

Urgent Need in Uganda





Heavy rains and storms caused massive flooding and landslides in Uganda killing 136 people, six of which were members of our local fellowship in Gashora Church of God of Prophecy. These floods have caused three of our local church buildings to be washed away, including the Gisha church in Chibumba, the Kabihanga church, and the Gashoro church.

Our district supervisor and authorities have confirmed five additional fatalities in Bizi village and six in Gihuyaga village. Our church in this community was washed away and six members were lost in the landslide. A severe hailstorm damaged the Gisha Church, and the Kabihanga Church was washed away by landslides due to the heavy rains which triggered flooding in communities near rivers, streams, and creeks.

The Chibumba trading center is completely flooded. Many have been evacuated into our local church, Muroro Church, where they are camping out. Food, water, medicine, and other necessities are urgently needed to help our people. I personally drove 800 miles to reach them with a few bags of maize meal. With so many people in need, I am concerned it will not be enough. Urgent prayers are needed to cover these people during this disaster.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS
EUROPE

Spain
A Message of Peace





First Regional Convention in Barcelona

The first regional convention was held in Barcelona on April 14–16, 2023, under the theme "The Message of Peace." Among the participating churches of Barcelona were Virrei Amat, Su Presencia, Mallorca, and Figueres. Our newest mission field in Girona was also present.

The goals of the convention were as follows:

- To have a time of fellowship and unity with the churches in the area
- Share our goals and information with the churches about the progress we have made
- To encourage and strengthen the churches to fulfill the mission and reinforce the core values of the church

Some of the convention activities included workshops specifically focused on women, men, and children.

Among the special guests were National Bishop Edgar Rossini Ortiz; Pastor Elena Beltran from Peru; the national youth ministry directors, Isaias Rodriguez and America Morales; and the supervisor of Zone 3, Rosa Olivare.













Bishop Pedro Pablo Suarez Gutierrez was selected for this issue by the general presbyter of South America, Bishop Gabriel Vidal. Bishop Suarez Gutierrez pastors in San Jose, Barquisimeto, Venezuela. *White Wing Messenger* managing editor, Marsha Robinson, asked the bishop questions that were chosen in consultation with Presiding Bishop Tim Coalter.

BISHOP PEDRO PABLO SUAREZ GUTIERREZ | BARQUISIMETO, VENEZUELA

South America: A COGOP Pastor Answers Questions

In response to the question, "What are your current challenges and opportunities in ministry?," Bishop Suarez Gutierrez answered: "When you are called to ministry, you are always encouraged that you have the opportunity to minister to people who long for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are living in the last of the last days. With that being the case, we must grow in our dependence on God, and let the Holy Spirit guide us, even though that can be a great challenge. As we are more and more dependent on him, we will naturally take action to spread the gospel into every place and the result will be new churches planted. In my opinion, the huge crisis we are now facing and the societal troubles that have led us to suffer as a nation, as well as all the other everyday challenges, represent a range of opportunities all designed to promote growth in the Church of God of Prophecy in Venezuela. We are confronted with the need to prepare more workers for the launch and operation of new missions. We are excited to be a part of the vision and plan of our South America Presbyter Bishop Gabriel Vidal, who prizes and encourages consistency in church planting methods."

When asked, "What do you believe are the most pertinent issues impacting the future of the COGOP?" Bishop Suarez Gutierrez said, "Stewardship and service are solid foundations for the establishment of our churches. If we impact the present in these two things, it is guaranteed we will impact the next generations. For that reason, service is considered, in ministerial terms, the true foundation of leadership. It is that added value that keeps us aware of our true calling as servants of God and as a church that builds a solid future. It is to look at others as God sees them. It is to plant in their hearts the divine purpose, which is incarnating Jesus in the communities using service as an effective means to bring them to God. It says in Matthew 20:28, 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' At the same time, stewardship, as a tool for the proper use of ministry resources, is a relevant plan for missionary expansion, which will provide for the growth of the Church. The finances represent solid support for expansion as a church. Through the years and despite the impact of the passage of time, stewardship and service affect the future positively, which tells us we will do so by passing 'the baton' from generation to generation."

Bishop Suarez Gutierrez answered the question, "How do you motivate your people to reconcile the world to Christ?" by stating, "We must awaken an interest in the hearts of believers to share the saving grace of Jesus. This initiates the process of reconciliation. Restoring the first relationships that existed between God and man brings about a relationship built on three pillars: love, communion, and dependence on God. I am determined to encourage others to promote the voluntary approach between God and His creation, to break paradigms, to overcome obstacles, and to live through challenges."

Bishop Suarez Gutierrez included the wisdom of 2 Corinthians 5:18–21 (NKJV) in his remarks:

> Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.



Do I Really Need a **Degree**?

Here's a question you might be asking yourself: As a minister, do I really need a degree?



Dr. Michael Hernandez serves as the director of Accredited Ministries Development and president of Spirit and Life Seminary for the Church of God of Prophecy. Dr. Hernandez is a licensed minister as well as a state-licensed and nationally certified counselor. He earned his Master of Divinity from the Pentecostal Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He, his wife Kara, and their daughter live in Cleveland, Tennessee, where they attend the Peerless Road Church.

BISHOP MICHAEL A. HERNANDEZ, DMIN | AMD DIRECTOR AND SPIRIT AND LIFE SEMINARY PRESIDENT

Maybe attaining a degree is something you have wanted to do for a number of years, or maybe it has just been on your mind recently. No matter what prompted this idea in your mind, it is a noble desire when you want to apply yourself to learning for the benefit of those you are serving.

It is absolutely true that a degree does not qualify a person to be a minister; God does! However, if we take to heart 2 Timothy 2:15 which says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (NIV), then it is incumbent upon us to do all we can to learn how to serve God's people well and correctly interpret and proclaim the Word of God. Therefore, the more important question to ask first is, Am I doing everything possible to present myself to God as one who is prepared for the mission I have been assigned to on this earth?

Should you feel that God is leading you to pursue higher education studies, the first step towards answering this question is to ask yourself, What are my goals for considering the pursuit of a degree or certificate program? It is important to know what you wish to accomplish by enrolling in a particular program. Is your desire to pursue higher education fueled simply by a desire to grow spiritually? Is your goal to take the steps necessary in order to become an expert in a particular field, even if it takes you several years to get there? Is it to become a more effective minister and preacher? Or is your goal to teach others either in a church or institutional setting? Before you decide to enroll in a program, make sure you are clear about what your goals are for pursuing a particular degree or certificate program.

The second step you should take towards figuring out if you really need a degree is to ask yourself, What are the benefits of the program I am interested in? Before you jump headfirst into signing up for a program, you need to be aware of the benefits of that particular program. You must ask yourself, What will I gain by enrolling in and completing this particular program? Will this program make me a better pastor, preacher, teacher, or a leader of a particular ministry? If your goals for pursuing higher education and the benefits of enrolling in a particular program *do not line up*, it is a telltale indicator that the program you are considering may not be the one for you. Make sure you pay attention to the description of a particular program, as well as the learning goals and learning outcomes for that program. If you pay attention to these, you will gain a clear picture of the program before you make the decision to enroll.

Third, when you find a program you are interested in that meets your goals, you must do two things—*pray* and *seek wise counsel*. Why should you pray first before enrolling in a program of study? Because God is the author of your story. Why would you want to leave him out of the decision-making process when he knows better than we do what we need most? As you begin to seek wise counsel, make sure you talk about this decision with your spouse/family first. Your family will be affected greatly by the amount of time and energy required to complete a program of study, so make sure you involve them in this important decision. Talk to your pastor, mentors, and prayer partners. The more people you have advising you and praying for you, the more protection you have from making a mistake.

Now, to turn back to our original question: As a minister, do I really need a degree? Well, the answer is that you don't need a degree to engage in ministry. What we need is to be in the will of the Lord. It is better to be in God's will than engage in activities that keep you from being in God's perfect will for your life. If our focus is to be in God's will, maybe rather than asking, Do I really need a degree?, the better question to ask is, Is God calling me to pursue higher education? If we focus our attention on continuing to answer the call of God on our lives, he will let us know if pursuing a degree or certificate program is something he can use to impact *his kingdom.*

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> to be demonstrated. We do not want our faith to become attached to human wisdom, but we want it anchored to the power of God—Thou, the blessed Holy Ghost. O Thy sacred presence is here. How our souls are delighted with Thee. Please never leave us again. If others do not want Thee, we want Thee to always know that Thou art welcome here. We want Thee to feel free to move about amongst us as Thou seest best for our good and the glory of Jesus, whom Thou camest to exalt and glorify. O heavenly, heavenly Dove, we want to speak good to Thee, we want to speak good of Thee always. We want Thee to direct this campaign that is to go down in history as a last days Church revolution. We know it will go right if Thou hast control. We will not be deceived by spies who may come into our midst. We will not be deceived by traitors who may be among us, for we depend upon Thee. O, Thou Holy One from on high, preserve and keep us for we are not able to keep ourselves without Thee. We will continue to look to Thee; we depend upon Thee at all times.

Our churches are some of the finest institutions in the world. Smart Church Management (SMC), an online resource, reminds us that "the beauty of the body of Christ is that God uses everyone in slightly different ways." Each church possesses unique qualities which are used by God to create a beautiful tapestry of churches. Church growth, according to SMC, is not about competing with other ministries in your community; it is more about developing the people God has planted in the local church—people whose unique gifts are given by God to be used for his purposes. God places them in a church so that they can discover, develop, and use these gifts as he intended. The church is a place that fosters Christian growth and encourages each one in their unique calling.

In *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren writes, "Since the church is a living organism, it is natural for it to grow if it is healthy…. If a church is not growing it is dying" (Warren, 1995). This can be a scary thought, especially for a small congregation. Along the same time, growth brings its own challenges. However, we know that with God, ALL things are possible!

Some churches don't grow simply because the leadership gets comfortable with the way things are and does not do anything to change. In a recent live stream, one pastor spoke about churches shrinking in America and how they justified themselves for where they were. This may be okay, but then again, it may not be. There is newfound hope for the future of the church. Barna's most recent study, "The Open Generation," found that overwhelmingly Christian teens today say that Jesus still matters to them. According to their research, 76 percent said, "Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life" (Kinnaman 2023). In a culture that has downgraded the influence of Christians and "relegated Sunday worship and other church-related activities to the sidelines of society, teens remain refreshingly open to Jesus as an influence in their lives."

Is it possible there are people who could benefit from a particular church body that is stagnant? I don't know how long I would stay around. However, it doesn't have to be this way. I know that we can call a prayer meeting tonight, turn the Lord's house back into a House of Prayer, welcome the Holy Spirit back in our midst, and then go forth and change the world.

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Continued from page 15

anticipates the final victory that Jesus, our King, will have as he defeats the forces of evil, sin and death (19:11–16).[14] This is why most exegetes agree in affirming that the center of Jesus' message and activity was the immediate coming or arrival of the reign of God, together with the transformation that God demands for this reign to be put into practice.

The Threefold Office of Jesus Christ and the Flag of the Church of God of Prophecy

Let us look closely at the powerful Christological symbols we find on the flag of the Church of God of Prophecy, which point to the threefold office of Jesus Christ over his church. First, the white on the flag represents the purity and holiness of Jesus—the purity, holiness, and perfection of his threefold office, specifically in his roles as teacher (prophet), savior (High Priest) and ruler of the whole universe and the church (King of kings).

The color blue represents the truth and loyalty of Christ and the church, which is the body of Christ and pillar and support of the truth. It also emphasizes that Christ continues being today the prophet par excellence. Jesus was more than a prophet; he was the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the past. He came into the world to speak God's final words about the good news of our salvation. As the writer to the Hebrews declares, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (1:1–2).

Christ commissioned the apostles, as well as the church in general, to continue proclaiming the gospel (Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:21–23). Today, the church proclaims the truth of the gospel to all nations: "Christ is the message, and the church is the messenger." The church carries out its ministry of "reconciling the world to Christ" and thus fulfills its prophetic mission, until the day when the Lord will "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Ephesians 1:10 NIV). Hence the idea of the blue stripes, which are not yet united, remind us that we are called to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3 NIV).

The red on the Church of God of Prophecy flag represents Jesus Christ as the great High Priest. It represents the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for all humanity, regardless of ethnicity, color, religious creed, etc. Christ offered himself as the sacrifice for sins. Paul writes, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people" (1 Timothy 2:5–6 NIV). No other sacrifice would do; one sinful human cannot ransom another. As the psalmist writes, "No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them" (Psalm 49:7 NIV). Only the sinless God-Man could atone for the sins of the world. Today, Jesus still acts as a priest, interceding for us at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, thus guaranteeing our right to be heard.

Likewise, the color purple represents Jesus' royalty, which is seen with greater emphasis in the symbols of the scepter, the star, and the crown. The purple also points to his loyalty; it allows us to see Christ fulfilling for us the law of God (Galatians 4:4–5). We call this active obedience. He also allowed himself to be punished for the sins of the whole world (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13), which we call passive obedience. Jesus, in both his active and passive obedience, acted as our substitute (Isaiah 53:4, 6). He is our King, and he is also the ruler of the universe.

In the symbols on the flag—the scepter, the star, and the crown—we observe a clear representation of the kingship and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is the sovereign monarch of a kingdom. That kingdom is God's presence and rule over the world. As children of God, we will always need spiritual discipline, guidance, and government. We are not autonomous, even after our conversion. We have no right to govern ourselves, nor could we do so successfully. Christ supplies this need through the dominion he lovingly exercises over us in the church. He is also sovereign over all nations.

Finally, I quote the words of the theologian Charles Hodge, in relation to the threefold office of Jesus Christ:

> We are enlightened in the knowledge of the truth; we are reconciled to God by the sacrificial death of his Son; and we are delivered from the power of Satan and introduced into the kingdom of God; all of which presupposes that our Redeemer is to us at once a prophet, a priest, and a king. This is not, therefore, simply a convenient classification of the contents of his mission and work, but it enters into its very nature, and must be retained in our theology if we would take the truth as it is revealed in the Word of God.[15]

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Healthy Dynamics of a Pastoral Family



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during a family vacation, when a crisis occurs in a member's life. Sometimes these occurrences are urgent and require immediate attention. At other times, situations arise that are important, but made to feel urgent, causing added strain on the family. Pastors' spouses and children can recount various instances that have robbed them of precious family time.

Digital Pressures

The demand for the pastor's time is further complicated by the fact that we live in a digital world where there is an expectation to "always be on." While there are positive aspects to digital media technology, "always being on" causes changes in our brain processing that impacts our focus, productivity, personal interactions, and spiritual lives. This begs the question of how much "screen time" the pastor should have in his role as pastor and leader of the pastoral family. For example, the pastor is expected to be always available and accessible by phone, email, social media, etc. There needs to be an understanding with the congregation that only emergencies will be responded to after a certain hour, on sabbaths, and on vacation days. Pastors should set boundaries with members on social media, texting, and with email that after a certain time the pastor will not respond; emergencies are not to be put on social media platforms but should be in the form of a phone call. Similarly, the pastor also has to resist the urge to constantly check-in once these boundaries are established as they are also robbing the family of precious quality time.

Living in a Fishbowl

The fishbowl experience (or another expression often used is "living in a glass house") describes a family's lack of privacy, or the feeling of always being watched or scrutinized by the congregation. Stated another way, it is feeling like the congregation believes they are entitled to every aspect of the family's life and makes judgements about what's taking place on the inside by looking in from outside.

In a recent study conducted by Lifeway Research, 49 percent of pastors' spouses agreed that their family lives in a fishbowl. This same percentage also agreed that if they were honest at church about their prayer needs, those needs would become gossip. The fishbowl experience results from ambiguous boundaries and unclear expectations. Consider the following fishbowl experiences :

- One clergy child spoke of the church member who rang the doorbell to the parsonage only to reprimand him for standing on a sofa while wearing shoes.
- Other clergy children reported incidences where parishioners [church members] would simply walk into the parsonage unannounced and unanticipated.

A fishbowl experience can be very stressful for the pastoral family and leads to isolation and loneliness, as well as mental health issues.

Managing congregational expectations and boundaries can be challenging, but, when properly attended to, there is a positive impact on the pastoral family. For example, the pastor's flexible schedule enables him to adjust to the needs of the family. In doing so, the pastor is able to communicate to the family that they are his first priority. Likewise, a disciplined pastor will protect his family time and exposure to church issues and conflict by establishing parameters for his time, as well as congregational access to and expectations for his family. Children will also learn ethics of confidentiality based on how church conflict is discussed and managed in the home by the pastor and spouse.

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