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WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

AWAKENING



**The Divine Kiss: "Where
Heaven and Earth Embrace"**
BISHOP DENNIS HUANG

The Beauty of the Cross
BISHOP MICHAEL HERNANDEZ, DMIN

The Resurrected Life
PASTOR JEREMY OSBORN



CHURCH of GOD of PROPHECY INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

Office of the Presiding Bishop

February 2025

To Our Global Church Family, Pastors, and Leaders:

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV).

It is with sincere appreciation that I thank you for your faithful support of the International Assembly Expense Offering in recent years. Because of your generosity, we were able to stand before the Church at our two most recent International Assemblies and report that both gatherings were completed debt free. That is a powerful testimony to God's provision and to the obedience of His people.

We have now entered the current season for receiving this year's International Assembly Expense Offering, which continues through May 31. I prayerfully invite every pastor, congregation, and member of our global family to participate in this shared commitment.

The International Assembly stands as one of the most distinctive and meaningful events in the life of our movement. It brings our family together from around the world for worship, business, inspired preaching, and vision for the future. It is a unique time of gathering that strengthens our unity, renews our calling, and reminds us of who we are as God's people.

Central to this experience is the participation of our national and regional leaders representing more than 130 nations. Many of these leaders would not be able to attend without the assistance this offering provides. Through the giving received by the International Assembly Expense Offering, we help cover lodging and meals, ensuring that voices from every part of our global church can be present and heard.

As you know, the costs associated with travel and accommodations continue to increase. Even with generous participation, this offering has never fully covered the total expenses of the Assembly. The International Offices must often rely on other ministry funds—resources that could otherwise be used for leadership development, evangelism, and church growth—to close the gap.

A strong response to the International Assembly Expense Offering helps protect those resources and allows us to keep our financial focus on advancing God's work around the world.

Your generosity makes it possible for leaders to attend and connect with our family. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we continue building a church that is united, Spirit-filled, and committed to our mission of reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for giving faithfully and joyfully in support of this global gathering.

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

Tim Coalter
Presiding Bishop

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, worshipping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

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

Vision Statement

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

Mission Statement

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

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A W A K E N I N G

It happened many years ago, but I have never forgotten it. I was driving home to Tennessee after attending a youth camp in North Carolina. Those who have gone to youth camp can attest to the fact that you leave refreshed and energized but also exhausted. As I was driving on this hot summer day, the sun was piercing through the windshield, and my eyes were growing heavy. I remember thinking that I would close them for just a second. . . . Bad idea! Suddenly I was awakened to find my car heading straight for a bridge. Fortunately, I woke up in time to make the needed adjustments to avoid a life-threatening accident.

I can still feel that moment—the jolt, the sudden awareness, the realization that I had drifted further than I thought. I did not intend to fall asleep. I did not plan to lose focus. I was just tired . . . and for a moment, I drifted.

And the truth is, this is not just a driving story. This is a spiritual reality for many of us.

Sometimes we don't walk away from God—we just drift. Not all at once, but little by little. Fatigue sets in. Routine replaces passion. Familiarity dulls what once stirred us deeply. And before we know it, we are not as alert, not as sensitive, not as awake as we once were.

Which is why Easter matters.

There is a statement that has been stirring in my spirit:

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not simply the conclusion of the gospel story; it is the ignition point of a global awakening.

We often treat the resurrection as the final chapter—something to celebrate and then move on from. But the truth is, the resurrection is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of everything that matters. The resurrection is God's wake-up call to a drifting world.

Paul understood this with unmistakable clarity. In 1 Corinthians 15:14, he writes, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is



▲ Peru National Convention 2024

also vain” (KJV). If there is no resurrection, there is no hope. No forgiveness. No future. We are, as Paul says, still in our sins.

But then comes the turning point: “But now is Christ risen from the dead” (v. 20).

Every genuine awakening—whether in Scripture, history, or our present moment—begins with a fresh encounter with the risen Christ.

On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter declared the resurrection, the people were “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37 ESV). That’s what awakening feels like.

It is possible—even in ministry—to become familiar with what should leave us in awe. We know the story. We have preached it. We have celebrated it year after year. But Easter is more than something to remember—it is something to experience.

Paul did not just explain the resurrection—he wanted to know its power.

That is the invitation of Easter—not just to celebrate that He rose, but to allow His resurrection power to awaken us again as it did the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As Jesus made Himself known after rising from the dead,

Scripture records, “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. . . . [Then] they said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us?’” (Luke 24:31–32).

It is happening today across college campuses and churches. Eyes are opening. Hearts are burning. Young people are gathering—not for performance, but for presence. Services are extending for hours. Worship is unscripted. Students are confessing sin, praying, and surrendering. No spotlight. No hype. Just a deep awareness that Jesus is alive.

This is awakening. And at the center of it all is the reality of the resurrection.

But the burning question of this moment is not whether awakening is happening somewhere else. The question is, is it happening in me? Is it happening in you?

Because just like that moment on the highway, awakening requires a response. A correction. A turning. A decision to fully engage again.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not simply the conclusion of the gospel story; it is the ignition point of a global awakening.

Note: This article was edited by ChatGPT for structure, grammar, and clarity.



Testimony from **WIDER EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

Pastor Simon Röck

As we seek to reconcile the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, God is on the move in the region of Wider Europe and the Middle East. As the Church of God of Prophecy continues to minister across a wide array of languages and cultures, new ground has been broken through the combined efforts of local translation teams and ongoing teaching efforts through our Minister's Development Program. For the first time in our movement's history, many of our brothers and sisters have the official

teachings of the Church of God of Prophecy in their own language in their respective countries. As a result of this, new ministers are being trained to be effective servants of the gospel, changes are being noted in the local churches, and the region of Wider Europe and the Middle East is pressing into the harvest as we continue to fulfill our mandate to make disciples of all nations. God has great things in store for our region, and we are excited to see them come to pass!

▼ *Wider Europe and the Middle East Leadership Conference 2025*





THE DIVINE KISS

"Where Heaven and Earth Embrace"

A DEVOTIONAL

BISHOP DENNIS HUANG

PSALM 85:1–13 (NKJV)

Lord, You have been favorable to Your land;
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.
You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;
You have covered all their sin. *Selah*
You have taken away all Your wrath;
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.

Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
Will You not revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
Show us Your mercy, Lord,
And grant us Your salvation.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak,
For He will speak peace
To His people and to His saints;
But let them not turn back to folly.
Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Yes, the Lord will give what is good;
And our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before Him,
And shall make His footsteps our pathway.

[CLICK TO LISTEN](#) - HOLY SPIRIT/HERE AS IN HEAVEN ACOUSTIC COVER | ELEVATE LIFE MUSIC

Psalm 85 is a beautiful song of hope because it stands between memory and expectation. It looks back with gratitude and forward with longing. The psalm opens with a strong declaration: God has been favorable to His land and has brought back the captivity of Jacob. The name *Jacob* is not accidental. Jacob, whose name means “supplanter” or “heel-grabber,” represents a people who struggled, failed, and wrestled both with others and with God. Yet he was also chosen, renamed, and transformed. By calling the nation Jacob, the psalm reminds us that God restores imperfect people. His mercy is not given because we are flawless, but because He is faithful to His covenant.

When the psalm says God “brought back the captivity of Jacob” (v. 1), it recalls seasons of exile and return. Historically, this points to times when Israel was scattered because of sin and later restored by divine mercy. The *land* mentioned is more than soil and stone. In the Hebrew understanding, the land was the visible stage of God’s promise to Abraham and his descendants. It was where worship, justice, harvest, and national life were meant to reflect God’s character. To say that God was favorable to the land is to say that He renewed His purposes among His people.

The psalmist goes further: “You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin” (v. 2). Then comes the word *selah*. Though we cannot define it with absolute certainty, *selah* appears to be a musical pause, an invitation to stop and reflect. It is as if heaven itself says, “Pause here. Do not rush past this.” Forgiven sin is not a small matter. Covered iniquity is not a light thing. Before asking God for anything new, the psalmist invites us to breathe in the wonder of mercy already given.

Yet the tone quickly shifts. After remembering past forgiveness, the psalmist cries out again: “Restore us, O God of our salvation” (v. 3). This reveals a deep spiritual truth: Returning to a place is not the same as returning to God. A nation may be back in its territory and still feel spiritually dry. A believer may be back in church yet still long for inward renewal. Physical restoration does not automatically produce spiritual revival. That is why the psalmist pleads, “Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?” (v. 6).

This tension between gratitude and longing can still be seen in the hills and valleys of Israel today. In the region near Jerusalem, in communities scattered through the Judean landscape, there are modern individuals who understand both memory and hope. For example, entrepreneurs working in agriculture often see their labor as more than business. They see it as participation in God’s promise that “the Lord will give what is good; and our land will yield its increase” (v. 12). When farmers cultivate vineyards or olive groves in rocky soil, they are not only growing crops; they are expressing trust that God blesses faithful stewardship. Their work becomes a living illustration of the psalm’s promise that divine goodness results in earthly fruitfulness.

Verse 10 of Psalm 85, just past the center, contains one of the most breathtaking verses in Scripture: “Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.” Here, the psalmist uses poetic language to describe God’s character. Mercy speaks of compassion toward sinners. Truth speaks of God’s unwavering standard and faithfulness. Righteousness demands justice. Peace longs for reconciliation. In human systems, these qualities often collide. When we emphasize *truth without mercy*, we become harsh. When we emphasize *mercy without truth*, we drift into compromise. When we insist on *righteousness without peace*, we produce fear. When we pursue *peace without righteousness*, we tolerate injustice.

But in God, these qualities are not enemies. They meet. They embrace. From a Christian perspective, this finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. At the Cross, truth did not disappear—sin was acknowledged and judged. Righteousness was not ignored—justice was satisfied. Yet mercy flowed freely, and peace was offered to humanity. The psalmist may not have seen the full picture, but his words point forward to a salvation where heaven’s justice and heaven’s compassion unite.

This meeting of mercy and truth is not only theological; it has practical implications. In agriculture, governance, education, and daily work, people are constantly balancing principles and compassion. In modern Israel, educators who teach biblical history to new generations are helping truth “spring out of the earth” (v. 11). Legal

scholars and community leaders who promote justice are seeking righteousness that reflects heaven's standard. Teachers in Jerusalem, pastors in the Galilee, and professionals in Tel Aviv who seek integrity in their fields are, in their own ways, participating in the harmony that Psalm 85 describes. Revival is not confined to a sanctuary; it touches classrooms, farms, courtrooms, and marketplaces.

The psalm concludes with a vision of cooperation between heaven and earth: "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (v. 11). This is a powerful picture. Truth *grows upward* like a plant rooted in the soil of daily obedience. Righteousness *descends* like rain from above. When both movements happen together—faithful action below and divine favor above—society flourishes. Crops grow. Justice strengthens. Peace becomes possible.

We see glimpses of this whenever communities rebuild after crises, when farmers restore damaged fields, when business leaders choose fairness over greed, and when neighbors stand together in times of conflict. Such actions are signs of people who fear Him and expect His glory to dwell in the land. Psalm 85 teaches that God's salvation is not limited to private spirituality. His restoring work touches land, labor, and legacy. He heals hearts, but He also heals relationships and renews purpose.

The warning in the psalm is just as important as the promise: "But let them not turn back to folly" (v. 8). After revival, there is a choice. We can return to old patterns, or we can walk forward in righteousness. God speaks peace to His people, but peace must be received and guarded. The psalmist invites us to listen carefully: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (v. 8). Revival begins with attentive hearts.

For us today, Psalm 85 is both a comfort and a challenge. It comforts us with the assurance that God restores imperfect people. He brought back Jacob, and He can bring us back from spiritual dryness, failure, or discouragement. It challenges us to seek more than outward stability. We are called to pray not only for success, but for revival; not only for harvest, but for holiness.

When mercy and truth meet in our own lives, we become instruments of peace. When righteousness guides our steps and we listen for God's voice, our homes and workplaces begin to reflect His character. And when we pause—like the *selah* in the psalm—to remember His forgiveness, gratitude fuels our hope.

Let us therefore stand between memory and expectation. Let us thank God for every past deliverance. Let us ask boldly for fresh revival. And let us believe that when truth rises from our faithful obedience and righteousness looks down from heaven, the Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land—wherever He has placed—us will yield its increase.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your mercy that restores "Jacob," imperfect yet chosen. Thank You for covering our sin and inviting us to pause and remember Your grace. We ask You to revive us again. Let Your mercy and truth meet in our hearts, and let Your righteousness and peace shape our lives.

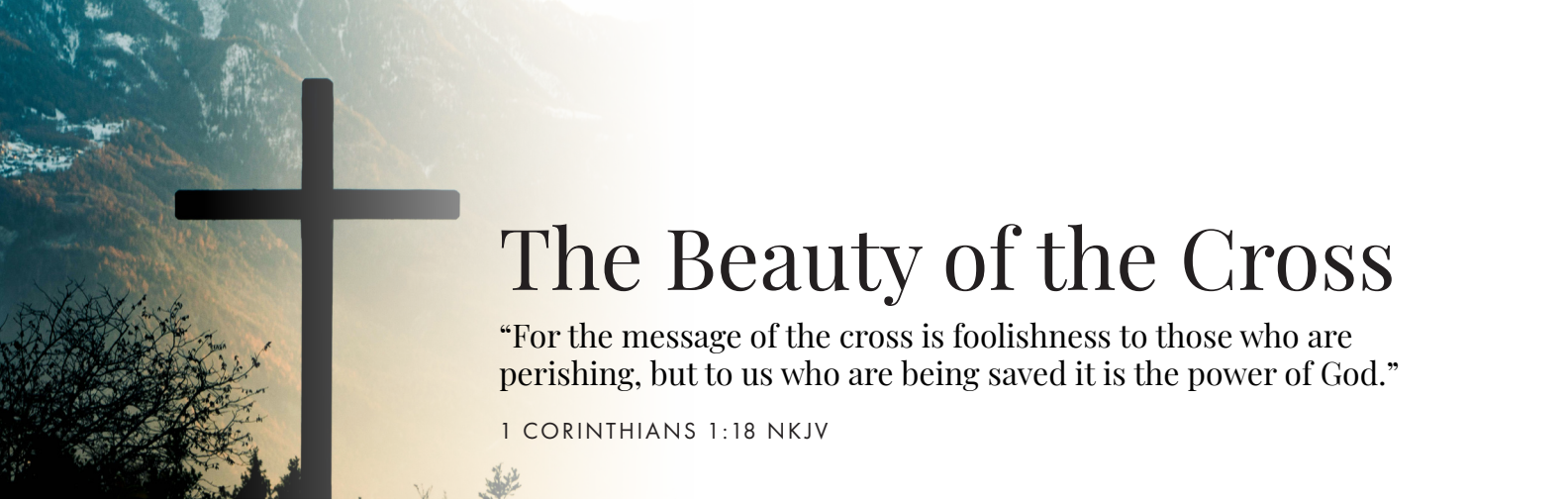
LORD, help us to hear Your voice and not to return to folly. Cause truth to spring up from our daily work, and let Your righteousness look down upon us with favor. May Your glory dwell in our homes, our communities, and our land.

In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.



BISHOP DENNIS HUANG
SINGAPORE NATIONAL BISHOP

Bishop Dennis Huang is the national bishop of Singapore, an appointment he received back in 2006. Having a desire to be equipped for ministry, he studied and completed a diploma program with the Parousia School of Missionary Training in 1992, fulfilled SOPAS (COGOP's School of Practical and Advanced Studies) training in 2011, and earned a diploma from Gordon Conwell Seminary in 2014. Bishop Huang serves the people of Singapore with his wife, Veronica.



The Beauty of the Cross

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 NKJV

I have always loved hymns. I have fond memories of singing them in church, and I can still recall the words of the hymns we sang in the churches I grew up in. As you sing the hymns, you often hear key words and themes repeated. One of the most common themes you will hear as you sing these hymns is “the Cross.” Why is it important that we reflect on the Cross, especially during the Easter season?

We reflect on the Cross because what was created as a means of painful death is now a symbol of life. In our respective domains of life and ministry, we encounter death in many places. Not only do we suffer through hardships ourselves, but we also witness the pain that others go through. We witness the harsh reality that life is not fair and that justice in this present world is not always assured. We acknowledge that death is always present in a world marred by sin. But the Cross gives us hope for life. Just as Christ’s journey to Golgotha did not end there, our journeys in Christ do not end with death but with everlasting life. “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

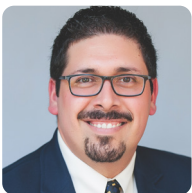
We reflect on the Cross because what was an excruciating punishment is now a sign of the reward yet to come. As leaders and ministers, we recognize that serving others is not easy. We have willfully and obediently taken on a burden

that can sometimes be overwhelmingly painful. It can be difficult at times to find the strength and resolve to continue in the calling we have been given. But the Cross gives us purpose. We know that what we do has spiritual implications and that if Christ’s resurrection is a reality, then He will be sure to keep His promises, for Scripture tells us that “He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

We reflect on the Cross because what had once served as a means of humiliation is now a symbol of victory. Life is full of valleys and mountaintop experiences. Most of us have had our fair share of failures more often than we would like to admit—our prayers have not yet been answered, the outcomes of an event were not as expected, the ministry opportunity did not have the fruitful results we had hoped for, the fundraiser we had spent time and effort on did not achieve its goal. As humiliating as these losses are, we keep our sights on the One who has already won and has made us more than conquerors.

As we remain rooted at the Cross, we embrace the hope that the resurrection has given us. This Easter season, may we continue to see the beauty of the Cross and sing along with the hymnist:

So I’ll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.
(George Bennard, “The Old Rugged Cross, 1913)



BISHOP MICHAEL HERNANDEZ, DMIN
ACCREDITED MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AND SPIRIT & LIFE SEMINARY PRESIDENT

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 and his wife, Kara, live in Cleveland, Tennessee, where they attend Keith Street Ministries (COGOP).



▲ RISE Youth Conference, Chattanooga, Tennessee

The Resurrected Life

PASTOR JEREMY OSBORN

An entire generation died in the wilderness. Forty years of walking. Forty years of collecting manna. Forty years of grumbling. Forty years of God miraculously providing for them. Forty years of following the visible presence of God.

When reflecting on the resurrection of Jesus, it may seem strange to begin with the wilderness wandering of the Israelites. However, we find ourselves in a situation mirroring theirs. We are a liberated people looking forward to the promise of an Edenic land, and yet we find ourselves in a land marked by death. But it is still the same providential hand that sustains us. The Israelites were given manna; we have received the body of the Messiah.

But what does all this have to do with the resurrection? As Christians, the resurrection is the central doctrine of all our beliefs. Paul said if Christ

has not been raised, “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19 ESV). Without it, we are completely hopeless. While we commemorate the day of our Messiah’s resurrection, one question would benefit us greatly, should we take the time to consider it: What has changed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The resurrection changed everything, right? But we still face failure. We still grumble. We still rebel against the God who saved us. We still wander around a world that looks less like Eden and more like the wilderness, more like hell than heaven.

We are like Israel, constantly living a mixed bag of faithfulness and failure. However, because of the resurrection, we have hope. It is not simply a future hope—a promise for a time unknown—nor is it just an esoteric reality now. The power of Christ’s resurrection is our daily hope *because it is the power which transforms all aspects of the Christian life*. Our lives in this present world are strikingly paralleled to the wandering Israelites in the wilderness, with this incredible difference: The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is not dwelling in a secluded chamber of the tabernacle, but *it lives in us*.

In what way has this resurrection power changed our lives? Lest we forget, Paul reminds us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Prior to the resurrection, animal sacrifice was the regular, messy reality. It was the visceral reminder that sin puts blood on our hands. Prior to the resurrection, as the preacher of Hebrews says, the sacrifices were performed year after year because the blood of bulls and goats was not able to atone for sin (Hebrews 10:1–4). Prior to the resurrection, we were slaves to sin, held in bondage by its power. But now, on the other side of history, where the tomb stands empty and robbed of its authority, we are able to glorify God because we can truly know that we are forgiven, washed white, made pure, cleansed of every sinful stain. That is a reality that we can stand upon confidently. And even more, Christ has imputed to us His own righteousness, so that we will be glorified with Him as though His works were our own. That is why Jesus says to the church in Laodicea, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Revelation 3:21). And Paul tells us that this



▲ RISE Youth Conference, Chattanooga, Tennessee

has already begun, for he writes to the Ephesians, “Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5–6).

The depths of the wonder that we possess because of the resurrection of our Lord have never been fully explored. An old hymn says it well: “The half has never yet been told.” Contemplate the gift we have through the power of Christ’s resurrection, and you will find “joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

How beautiful to think that common people are filled with God’s Spirit, partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3–4); to know that the curtain was torn and we may enter boldly before the throne of grace (Hebrews 10:19–22). Something changed. Everything changed. The promise of dwelling in the presence of God has become a reality that we can experience now. The resurrection grants us access to that for which David longed for his whole life:

One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

While this life might be filled with “light momentary afflictions” (2 Corinthians 4:17) and our wilderness

wanderings may tempt us to grumble, through the power of the resurrection, we have new life even now in this land stained by death. The living water is in us—God’s children—and it brings new life wherever our wanderings take us.

We experience the tension of the “already but not yet” as we daily face life and death, blessings and curses, glimpses of the promised land while the wilderness surrounds us. The apostle Paul was acquainted with suffering more than many of us will ever know, yet he understood this mystery. The entire anthology of his letters bears witness to this tension that the resurrected life is the reality of Christ’s presence renewing us even as the outward man perishes (2 Corinthians 4:16). Thus, whether he lives or dies, Paul’s words ring out like an anthem, “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his suffering, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10).

This is the message of Scripture—it points to Christ and what He has accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection. Sin’s curse has been broken. While we still live in this world, we are no longer imprisoned by its chains. Our hearts overflow with endless praise. Like David and Paul, we join our own voices with those who proclaim,

No guilt in life, no fear in death;
This is the power of Christ in me.
From life’s first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
(Stuart Townsend and Keith Getty, “In Christ Alone,” 2001)



PASTOR JEREMY OSBORN
MAUD, TEXAS

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GRACE THAT BECOMES A TABLE

JUAN MANUEL ADAMES SILVA

There are needs that make no noise until they become urgent. Sometimes they arrive like an empty refrigerator after an unexpected layoff. Other times they appear as a medical prescription left on the table because the money did not stretch far enough. At times, need sits silently on the last pew: a father who has lost control of his home, a mother who cannot sleep under the weight of what she owes, an elderly person who smiles to keep their loneliness hidden. These are stories that do not ask for applause; they ask for mercy. And when reality hits like that, the church discovers that its faith must not only be preached; it must be visible, orderly, and faithful.

Scripture teaches that grace is not merely a message we receive, but a life we are entrusted to steward. When Paul speaks about the offering for the saints, he does not present it as a simple collection; he describes it as a work of grace that produces comfort, equity, and worship. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he writes, and then he ties that grace to something concrete: that the abundance of some would supply the lack of others, “that there may be equality” (2 Corinthians 8:9, 13 BSB). Grace, when understood, redirects what we have. It frees us from the illusion of ownership and calls us to live as instruments of the Owner. That is why the gospel, rightly grasped, not only heals the believer’s heart; it also reorders our relationship

with time, money, talents, influence, and even the way we look at those in need.

In the early church, that logic became culture. Luke tells us that the multitude of those who believed were “of one heart and soul,” and that “there was not a needy person among them” because, moved by love, they placed their resources at the service of the community (Acts 4:32–35). It was not magic, nor mere idealism; it was mature spirituality. When Christ reigns among a people, hands open and feet move toward what hurts. Faith ceases to be theory and becomes a table—a place where need is not humiliated but met with dignity, and where life is not reduced to a statistic but embraced as a soul for whom Christ died.

At that point, social welfare [benevolence] ministry stops being “just another area” within the church and becomes a coherent extension of the gospel. If the good news proclaims reconciliation with God, that reconciliation must also begin to mend the human fabric. James is direct: If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and someone says, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving what is necessary, what good is that? (James 2:14–17). Faith that does not translate into tangible care ends up sounding like a well-sung hymn with a distracted heart. The Lord did not call us to be spectators of suffering, but witnesses of His kingdom in the midst of it.

Yet for grace to become a table, good intentions are not enough. Christian compassion requires order, transparency, and continuity. Many churches love deeply, but they grow weary because service becomes reactive, emotional, or improvised. When that happens, we help today and abandon tomorrow; we give something, but we do not walk with people; we treat the symptom, but we do not address the root. The gospel teaches us that God does not only give; God forms, restores, and guides. Therefore, social welfare [benevolence ministry] that most resembles the heart of Christ is not limited to “handing things out,” but sustains processes that heal and reorient lives.

A healthy ministry “table” needs at least four sturdy legs.

The first is *discernment*. Not every need is the same, and not every urgency carries the

same priority. Those serving in social welfare ministry must learn to listen wisely: to identify real vulnerabilities, immediate risks, and also opportunities for restoration. Discernment is not suspicion; it is responsible stewardship of what God places in the hands of His people. It requires asking with respect, evaluating with justice, and deciding without favoritism. It also means protecting those who ask for help—their privacy, their dignity, their story.

The second leg is *organization*. Compassion without structure gets exhausted; structure without compassion hardens. The biblical balance is love with order. A social welfare or benevolence ministry needs a simple but clear process: case intake, basic verification, priority criteria, assignment of support, and a follow-up plan. This is not to “control” people, but to honor God with integrity and prevent aid from depending on momentary impulses. When love is organized, the church learns to serve consistently, not just occasionally.

The third leg is *transparency*. Paul himself was careful in the administration of resources so that no one would have reason to fault the work (2 Corinthians 8:20–21). The church cannot proclaim light while handling resources in secrecy. Transparency sustains trust and protects testimony. Periodic reports, accountability, and clarity in criteria do not diminish spirituality; they dignify it. When God’s people see that every resource is honored, generosity grows and worship deepens.

The fourth leg is *spiritual accompaniment*. The table is not only bread; it is communion. Christian social welfare must not be a “delivery” that ends at the door, but a bridge toward holistic restoration. To accompany is not to invade; it is to walk alongside. It is to pray, to guide, to connect people to discipleship, to create spaces for listening, and to help a person regain direction. In some cases, this will include food support; in others, medical assistance; in others, basic budgeting guidance; in others, connection to employment opportunities. In every case, it means reminding human beings that their life has value, that God sees them, and that the church does not reduce them to their need.



▲ Gifts and supplies being distributed to children in Nepal

When these four legs are present, something profoundly spiritual happens: help stops being mere “assistance” and becomes testimony. The person in need not only receives resources; they receive dignity. And the church not only gives; it learns to obey. In that process, what Paul describes is fulfilled—generosity produces thanksgiving to God, and hearts are united in a fellowship that cannot be achieved by words alone (2 Corinthians 9). Some people will never listen to a sermon, but they will read the gospel in a bag of groceries delivered with respect. Some lives will not trust institutions, but they will trust when they see that the love of Christ is not propaganda, but presence.

The kingdom of God is not proclaimed only from a pulpit; it is also proclaimed when a church chooses to become a house of refuge. When social welfare ministry functions with discernment, organization, transparency, and spiritual accompaniment, the community begins to understand something: God not only promises; God provides. And many times, His provision comes through human hands.

Perhaps today, the Lord is calling His church back to this powerful simplicity: to make grace a table—a table where bread arrives on time, where need is not hidden out of shame, where the sick are not abandoned, where those who have fallen can rise with help, and where those who have [resources/abilities] learn to serve without pride. In a world marked by loneliness and scarcity, a church like that becomes public evidence that Christ is alive.

If you are a believer, the question is not just how much you know about God, but what you are doing with what God has entrusted to you. Your time can become a table. Your listening can become a table. Your profession can become a table. Your resources can become a table. Your home can become a table. And if you do not yet believe, perhaps the first face of Christ you will see will not be a religious argument, but a community that looks at you with compassion and says, without empty speeches, “There is a place for you here.” Because where Christ reigns, grace is not just words. Grace becomes a table.



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SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Juan Manuel Adames Silva holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the Technological University of Santiago (UTESA) and is currently studying theology at Spirit and Life Seminary. He serves as a lay leader at the Church of God of Prophecy in Villa Faro, where he and his wife, Zaldi Itamar Hernández Abreu, lead the Social Welfare Ministry. They are the proud parents of Lesley Rochelly, Luis Manuel, and Deivy Josué. With over a decade of experience in digital financial services, he is CEO and founder of Invertpyme®, a company focused on financial education and Christian values. He resides in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

FROM THE GRAVE
to the Glory

BISHOP SYLVESTER SMITH, DMIN

What the world calls a myth, God calls a homecoming.

In Isaiah 40, God invites his people to be comforted: “Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people, saith your God” (v. 1). Yet, when we continue reading Isaiah 40, we find God challenging the people to believe in Him, believe who He is, and believe what He has done, can do, and will do.

We comfort ourselves with the assurance that God exists, that God cares for us, that God supplies our needs, and that God responds to our prayers. Like the Israelites, we may think God has forgotten us, but He has not. We may think He does not know where we are, but He does. We may think God is hiding, but He will never abandon us. We may think God is not listening to us, but His ears are always attentive to us.

We comfort ourselves with this assurance: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Rafael E. Pino said, “Perspective is the way we see things when we look at them from a certain distance, and it allows us to appreciate their value.” Today, from our present perspective, we may not have any appreciation for death. Yet there is a different perspective of both death and heaven.

If you walk outside in the evening, you can look up and see a most beautiful panorama of God’s handiwork. And during the day, God’s beauty surrounds us. Now I say to you, with such beauty before us here, how beautiful heaven must be!

The psalmist spoke of heaven and death from a different perspective when he said, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15). From a human perspective, death is a time of sorrow, of loss, of defeat, and of separation. But for the Christian, it is a time of release, of reunion, of rest, and reward.

Too often we think of death as coming to destroy everything for which we have lived. We should picture death as coming to save those we love. We often think of loss when we should think of gain. We think of separating instead of restoring.

We think of closing the door of life instead of opening the gate of eternity. Let us comfort ourselves by looking at death from a certain distance that allows us to appreciate its value.

A Departure

First, here on the earth, death looks like the end; but on the other side, it is the beginning. When you look at death from this earthly side, it seems so final. It appears to be the end of life, the end of relationships, the end of all that we have worked for, all that we have earned, all that we have laid up. But, from the other side, death is not the end; it is the entrance.

Picture the moment—not darkness, not cold silence, not fear—but the sudden, comforting hand of the Shepherd welcoming us home. The weariness of every hard year, every sleepless night, every aching burden, simply lifts. Like a person walking home in frigid rain who finally steps through a door into the warmth of a fire, the soul exhales, perhaps for the first time in years, and thinks, “I am finally, completely safe.” Not arriving somewhere unfamiliar, but somewhere deeply known. Not a strange country, but the promised home you always knew existed—the one your heart has longed for all your life.

Death is not the goal, but the gateway. For the believer in Christ, it is the door into a glorious new life, eternal life.

In 2 Timothy 4:6, Apostle Paul saw his own death not like an ending, but like a ship finally weighing anchor, catching the wind, and sailing toward home. Rightly understood, then, death is not the end. It is the departure from our earthly house of clay, and entering our eternal home, swallowed up in victory.

Death, for the believer, is not what it appears. What looks like an ending is a beginning. What feels like a closing is an opening. What sounds like farewell is, in the ears of heaven, a welcome.

Robert Freeman wrote a beautiful description of death in “Beyond the Horizon.” Note his words:

When men go down to the sea in ships
‘Tis not to the sea they go;
Some isle or pole the mariners’ goal,

And thither they sail through calm and gale,
When down to the sea they go.

When souls go down to the sea by ship,
And the dark ship's name is Death,
Why mourn and wail at the vanishing sail?
Though onward bound, God's world is round,
And only a ship is Death.

And when I go down to the sea by ship,
And Death unfurls her sail,
Weep not for me, for there will be
A living host on another coast
To beckon and cry, "All hail!"

A Reunion

Second, here on the earth, death looks like separation; over in the Glory Land, it is reunion.

My favorite description of death is what is said of Abraham: "[He] gave up the ghost, . . . and was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:8). The expression "gathered to his people" clearly implies something more than being carried back to a cemetery and covered with dirt after eulogies, pastoral comfort, and prayers. Death has a deeper, more spiritual meaning than that.

When Abraham's sons laid him to rest, they were convinced that he was reuniting with his deceased loved ones. He joined in a glad reunion. This is the hope Apostle Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, when he says to not grieve like those who

have no hope. We have hope of Christ bringing His saints back with Him when he returns to get all those who are alive and remain faithful to Him. What a glad reunion day!

A family friend, Thomas Garrison, died as he lay in the emergency room waiting to be examined. They resuscitated him, and later that year, I asked him about his experience. He said the ER doctor told him to push back and lie on the bed while she examined him. He said that as he pushed with his feet, he was instantly in the most beautiful garden—indescribable, with the most vivid colors. I said, "Wait, Brother Garrison." He grinned at me and said, "No bright light. No tunnel. One second, I was in the ER, and the next, I was in the garden."

Now, get this. He said that a crowd was coming to him in greeting, "Welcome, welcome. The Lord is expecting you." And he said there were no elderly people there—a few children, but no elderly that he saw. I said, "Where did you go?" He said, "I went to paradise, and frankly, I wish they would have left me there."

A great truth of the Bible is that the moment we close our eyes in death, we open them in the Lord's presence. And many will rejoice that we have joined the reunion. What a day that will be! Clearly, death is not the end; it is the beginning. It is not parting; it is arriving. It is not separation; it is reunion.



“Clearly, death is not the end; it is the beginning. It is not parting; it is arriving. It is not separation; it is reunion.”

As Christians, we never say goodbye for the last time. We do not say goodbye forever. We say goodbye for now, and there is all the difference in the world. Every grave we stand beside is really a door we are standing before. And so, we do not part with despair, but with quiet, confident hope. We do not say goodbye. We say what the saints have always said to one another across the centuries: “See you in the morning.”

Death is not the period at the end of a sentence; it is the first word of a brand new story.

A Victory

Third, from this side, death looks like a loss; but for the Christian, it is gain. From this earthly side, it appears to be defeat; but from the other side, it is victory. Apostle Paul said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

Paul chose his words carefully. “To die,” he said, “is gain.” Not loss. Not defeat. Not erasing everything lived for and loved. Gain. This gain cannot be taxed, cannot be stolen, won’t rust or rot, and will never depreciate.

Songwriter Eugene Monroe Bartlett wrote,

Just a little while to stay here,
Just a little while to wait,
Just a little while to labor
In the path that’s always straight,
Just a little more of troubles,
In this low and sinful state,
Then we’ll enter Heaven’s portals,
Sweeping through the pearly gates.

So, remember, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Waiting on the Lord means we are enduring to the end. If you want to know how one waits on the Lord, remember all the faithful saints asleep in Christ. Look at all the faithful saints around you. Here is what we are waiting for.

Over in the Glory Land, there is no more weakness. Over in the Glory Land, there is freedom like eagles soaring across the sky. Over in the Glory Land, there is no more weariness. Over in the Glory Land, there is limitless energy and unrestrained enthusiasm. Over in the Glory Land, there is no giving up or quitting. Over in the Glory Land, walking is fun, with no tired feet or weak legs or aching ankles, aching knees, aching hips, or aching backs.

Over in the Glory Land, we’ll be healthy. Over in the Glory Land, we’ll be happy. Over in the Glory Land, wandering will be over, questions will be answered, tears will be wiped away, all that this world could never satisfy will be fulfilled. Completely. Finally. Eternally.

Because over in the Glory Land, we will be home.

And home, for the child of God, is not just a place. It is where the Savior himself greets you at the door, where the Holy Spirit joyfully hovers around you, where the Father personally welcomes you in. And everything you ever hoped for exceeds your most extravagant imaginations.

Hallelujah.



BISHOP SYLVESTER SMITH, DMIN
ANNISTON, ALABAMA

Bishop Smith and his wife, Bobbie, have served COGOP pastorates for 51 years. They are bilingual (English and French), having served pastorates in both languages. Sylvester has been a CBL instructor in East and West Canada, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Tanzania, and has also taught in Lee University’s online school. His academic achievements include a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies, a Master of Theological Studies, and a Doctor of Ministry degree. In addition to his pastoral ministry, Sylvester has an online ministry, *Courage Today* at drsylvester.com. The Smiths have two adult children and a wonderful grandson. They reside in Anniston, Alabama, where they serve a great congregation.

DIGITAL OUTREACH MADE SIMPLE FOR SMALL CHURCHES

GLYNIS VARLACK | CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE



The goal for Christians is always the same: We passionately work to grow the kingdom of God through sharing the good news. The methods are continuously evolving and growing, and we should be curious and knowledgeable of these methods so we can take advantage of every opportunity.

For large churches that have cutting edge equipment and adequate staff to handle new information, it is often less complicated to embrace new strategies, innovations, and new information. For smaller churches, however, these

things can be challenging and rather daunting. With new information dropping daily and platforms evolving with new algorithms and new ways of processing data from day to day, most small churches are looking for the best ways to share the love of Christ and disciple people in as efficient a manner as possible.

So, taking all this into consideration, what is “digital outreach”?

Creating content targeted to be consumed by users on cell phones, watches, tablets, computers and other non-analog devices in order to share the gospel of Jesus Christ is what I consider to be digital outreach. This includes social media outlets like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, and communication avenues like email and text messaging. These are all important weapons in every church arsenal, but they are especially effective for small churches who have a smaller footprint [physical and/or digital presence] and lower reach in general.

There are exceptionally practical ways to use these avenues to effectively disciple young converts and reach new people for Christ. I am sharing my three favorite post ideas used to reach the largest audience most efficiently. None of these posts are event posts. We are looking at posts that encourage and teach.

1. Post an uplifting graphic or scripture image that reminds people of the power of God to help us overcome darkness. In a world where many individuals live with very little hope, this is a valuable way to reach those who are hurting with the good news. As you caption your post, make sure to remind people that there is hope in the middle of sorrow, and that Jesus is that hope.



2. Post a reminder that the enemy is defeated. This can be done through a scripture, a song lyric, or a testimony. In this case, a 30 second reel or video can be remarkably moving. An older saint or a child affirming that Christ has overcome would be terrific. Experience from the older and hope and passion from the younger can be effective tools to drive the message home.
3. Post a reel from someone in leadership sharing a favorite scripture, a favorite song, or a favorite church memory. This is always encouraging and can be a lot of fun. Sometimes people just need a break from the everyday drudgery of life. Bringing back memories with a nostalgic post is a great idea. Remind people that God is still the same miracle worker He was back in 1984. He has not changed!

Consider these three questions:

1. Do you spend more than 30 minutes per day on social media?
2. Do you ever open emails?
3. Do you check text messages?

Congratulations! All of these are digital outreach methods.

Now, let's consider a fourth question. What impact does your digital footprint have on the kingdom of God? Our mission is clear. Jesus quoted Isaiah in Luke 4 saying,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Luke 4:18–19 NKJV)

If we as Christians are called to follow Christ individually, how much more so should we as the community of believers, the church, follow Christ's mandate to preach the gospel to the poor? To heal the brokenhearted? To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind? To set at liberty those who are oppressed? To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord?

Here is my best advice, smaller church pastor: Don't reinvent the wheel. Try the three simple tips to post uplifting content weekly and watch what the Lord can do. If you are willing, He can cause your work to be more fruitful. God is always so much better to us than we deserve. His grace is sufficient for you, and you can do this with His help.



DEE LANCASTER | CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE



It was a lazy Sunday afternoon. I hopped on the bed and curled up with my 37-pound black standard poodle, Mayflower.

As she lay there in my embrace, I scratched her, kissed all over her soft, poofy head, and told her that she was such a good girl. She took in every word as I gushed them out:

“You’re such a good girl. You’re Mommy’s baby. I love you.”

Her eyes caught mine as she begged for more: *You’re Mommy’s good girl!*

I began to smile and almost laughed out loud as I recalled her shenanigans that very morning. She chewed up some tissues that had been sitting on a side table. A couple of days ago, I came home to find my favorite pen gnawed to bits. And then there was an event a few weeks back when she made a feast of my throat lozenges with xylitol—landing us a trip to the vet with a \$200 bill for the prize.

The truth is, she’s not really a good girl. She’s a spoiled-rotten mess of fluff.

Her character flaws? She bullies her big brother, Remi—an 80-pound standard who could easily put her in her place but won’t because he’s a gentleman. She steals food, barks a lot, begs relentlessly, is headstrong, and does not always do what she is told.

And yet, laying there with my arms around her, all those accusations faded away.

It’s funny just how quickly I forget her imperfections and begin showering her with words she so loves to hear:

“You’re such a good girl; you’re my baby!”

My thoughts brought me to a standstill as I began to wonder if that is just how God sees me.

I recalled a Bible verse I had recently memorized that talks about how God forgives us when we confess our sins to Him. Not only does He forgive, but He makes us new—even righteous.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NIV).

How He can forgive our sins and call us righteous has me perplexed.

Me? Righteous?





I mean, I can accept the title of *forgiven*, but I have a hard time calling myself righteous. How is that even possible? I mess up every day. I make mistakes. I'm not always loving or careful with my words. I have a self-centered nature, and I'm stubborn . . . just like my rotten Mayflower!

And yet my God—my heavenly Father—quickly forgives me, wraps His loving arms around me, and calls me righteous.

He calls me His child.

How does the King of kings—the Lord of all creation—forget so quickly what a mess I am?

This questioning brings to mind another Bible verse found in the book of Isaiah: “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25).

Wow! He chooses not to remember my sins.

Can God forget? No. It is His choice not to remember. I have always thought of forgetfulness as a weakness, but maybe sometimes it is a strength. God can do anything He wants to do, yet He loves us so much that when we repent of our wrongdoings—over and over again—He chooses not to remember them.

That kind of love blows me away.

But then I think about Mayflower. In all of her misbehavior and spoiled-rotten ways, I love her. I forgive her quickly. And I call her “good girl.”

I call her *mine*.

So maybe righteousness isn't about being perfect, as I've always believed.

Maybe it's about belonging to God—being fully known, forgiven, and loved by Him—and finally learning to relinquish guilt and self-condemnation. Maybe it's about believing Him when He calls me forgiven—when He calls me His own.

If I can have this kind of love toward Mayflower, how much MORE does my heavenly Father love me?

He invites me to stop arguing with His grace and simply receive it—to rest in being loved, forgiven, and claimed as His own. Not because I've earned it, but because His mercy is that great.

Today, I am choosing to believe Him. I'm choosing to be grateful.

I'm choosing to rest in a grace that is so big that it wraps its arms around me and says, **“I love you. You are mine.”**

Even on my most spoiled-rotten days.

■ DEE LANCASTER

After earning her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Studies from Lee University, Dee Lancaster taught with Cleveland City Schools for eight years before launching Kindermusik with Dee, an early childhood music and movement program she has led for over 24 years. She is also the co-owner of ROCKY POPS, LLC, a gourmet popsicle company, and enjoys life in Tennessee with her family and very spoiled dogs.

Training in Truth for the Mission

“Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7b–8 NIV).

All professional boards and most employers require some kind of training before an individual is permitted to engage in a particular occupation. There are several reasons for this, but the most important include safety concerns, efficiency, and productivity. No employer wants an employee who is inept at the task he or she has been hired to do. Now, if secular organizations value training, why is it that some believe it is okay to engage in ministry without preparation?

Now let me be clear, you do not need a degree or a certificate to engage in ministry. However, if you have been called by God into the ministry, you should prepare yourself for the task at hand. The fact is, we cannot fulfill the mission Christ has given His church without properly training for the mission. This is why we must train ourselves to be godly. To be godly does not mean becoming spiritual, having a special connection with God, or even knowing the Scriptures well. To be godly means that “[we] are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

How do we train ourselves to become godly?

First, we must keep our **focus on the truth of God’s Word**. In the same way a physician specializes in his or her area of expertise, we, as ministers, must remain focused on our field of study and practice, which is the Word of God. When people come to you seeking soul care and wisdom, what will you give them? The Bible says that as evening approached after Jesus ministered to crowds of people, the disciples came to Jesus and encouraged Him to send them away to buy food.

But Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat” (Matthew 14:16).

We cannot simply offer advice or encouragement, for our opinions have no power, our thoughts have no authority, and our ideas have no foundation if they are not rooted in Christ. The avoidance of human ideologies and fables was obviously on the mind of the apostle Paul when he wisely advised Timothy, “Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales” (1 Timothy 4:7).

Apparently, the reason Paul had to emphasize this was because there were false teachers at the time who were teaching Christians to follow rules that were either not found in Scripture or were no longer required under the grace of Christ. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul describes these so called “teachers” as those who “abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (v. 1). May God help us to stay focused on His truth, for the power of God’s truth is what will set people free (John 8:32).

Secondly, we must **continuously improve our delivery of the truth of God’s Word**. In the same way doctors must complete a residency to put into practice what they have learned under direct supervision, ministers must be held accountable to mentors, elders of the church, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make sure they are preaching the unadulterated truth of God’s Word. Indeed, Paul served as Timothy’s mentor, guiding him as he put into practice what he had learned. This is why Paul advised Timothy to beware the temptation to preach what people want to hear. He said, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Our churches cannot afford to replace the gospel with platitudes, eloquence, inspiring thoughts, or speeches that stir up good feelings, for a church that loses the gospel of Christ has lost its power, has lost its usefulness, has lost its purpose, and has lost its soul! May the Lord forgive us for the times we have strayed from the perfect truth of His Word! The gospel of Christ does not need

our eloquence, our charisma, or our clarification. The assignment we have been given is simply to “preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). May God help us to preach His truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Thirdly, we must **be nourished by the truth of God’s Word**. In the same way all doctors must go to medical school to learn what it means to practice medicine skillfully, ministers must themselves be nourished by the Word they use to nourish others. You may have heard of the saying, “You can’t give what you don’t have.” Such is the case when it comes to soul care.

God’s Word gives us life. This is why Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

God’s Word nourishes our souls, and only by being connected to the truth of God’s Word can we bear much fruit. If you are not being nourished by the truth of God’s Word, your ministry will have no life. Let God’s Word bring life to your soul and, through you, give life to others.

God’s Word provides direction. This is why the psalmist said, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, [and] a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105). God’s Word teaches us how to become like Christ. God’s Word leads us on the right path—the path of righteousness—and empowers us to bring others along the right path, too. Let God’s Word direct you!

God’s Word sanctifies us. This is why Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (v. 17). God’s Word transforms us. We cannot remain the same when the light of Scripture reveals who we are without Christ and why we fall short. This is why we strive to be more like Him. Let God’s Word sanctify you!

Paul encouraged Timothy, saying, “If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus,



▲ Bishop Levi Clarke preaches with an interpreter at the Africa Leadership Conference.

nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” (1 Timothy 4:6). I encourage you today to train in truth for the mission. If you feel the call of God on your life, do not be satisfied with merely attending church services to receive a word from the Lord. Do not be satisfied with logging into your Bible app to read your scripture for the day. Do not be satisfied with relying on the spiritual strength of others to keep your faith going.

Train in truth for the mission! We have work to do! The lost need to hear the truth. And we need to be ready with the truth of God’s Word to provide what they need. If other professions can take the time required to train for their mission here on earth, why can’t we take the time to train for a mission with eternal consequences?

I urge you, if the Spirit is inspiring you to enroll at Spirit and Life Seminary, complete the application. If God has laid it on your heart to pursue graduate studies, stop procrastinating and go to amdcogop.org to get information. If God is calling you to prepare for ministry, then do what it takes to prepare for the task. Train in truth for the mission!

BISHOP MICHAEL A. HERNANDEZ, DMIN
ACCREDITED MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AND SPIRIT & LIFE SEMINARY PRESIDENT





REACHING SEEKERS AT EASTER: Digital Invitation Strategies that Work



Easter might be the only Sunday of the year when Mark, a young dad in your town, wakes up already planning to visit a church. He is not sure what he believes, but he is sure his kids need some kind of spiritual foundation. So, he searches “church near me” on his phone, scrolls for a few seconds, checks a couple of websites and social media posts, and then chooses the church that feels most welcoming, clear, and prepared for him.

The question is, when Mark starts searching, will your church be ready to meet him online?

Research continues to show that Easter is one of the most attended Sundays of the year for churches of every size. A recent Lifeway Research survey found that 90 percent of Protestant pastors say Easter is their highest, second-highest, or third-highest attended service of the year, with 52 percent naming it as the single highest.

Pew Research has also reported that Google searches for the word “church” peak in the week of Easter more than at any other time of the year. In other words, people like Mark are already looking for you, and your digital presence either helps them find their way to your doors or quietly directs them somewhere else.

Having a digital presence does not require a full-time staff or a big budget—just a willing team, a smartphone, and a clear plan. Here are practical, low-cost digital strategies designed especially for small churches to help you prepare for those like Mark, who will be searching for a place to worship this Easter.

Share Your Easter Message Online

Before you promote anything, make it crystal clear what you are inviting people to and why it matters.

- Create a simple Easter landing page or main website section that clearly lists service times, location, children’s ministry details, and what to expect (dress, length of service, etc.).
- Use one short, hope-filled headline everywhere (for example: “Hope Lives Here This Easter” or “Finding Your Way Back to God”).
- Make sure your Google Business Profile is updated with current service times and a brief Easter description because many people will see that before they ever visit your website.

◀ Peerless Church, Cleveland, Tennessee



- For a small church, even a basic, free website platform and an up-to-date Google profile can make the difference between being visible or invisible when seekers search “church near me.”

Equip Your People for Personal Digital Invitations

Personal invitation is still the most effective outreach strategy, and technology can multiply it. Studies show that when churches combine special days like Easter with intentional invitation efforts, attendance increases significantly. Try these simple tools:

- Create a shareable Easter graphic (using free tools like Canva) with your service times and website. Text it or email it to members and ask them to share it on their own social media.
- Write two or three short invitation scripts your people can copy/paste into a text, Facebook message, or DM (Direct Message); for example, “Hey our church is doing a special Easter service for families this year. I’d love for you to join us—want to come sit with me?”
- Encourage members to tag your church and use a simple hashtag (like #EasterAtCOGOP) so that their friends see multiple touchpoints.

This approach costs almost nothing, but it activates your whole congregation as a digital invitation team.

Use Social Media Stories and Short Videos

You do not need cinematic quality to reach people—authenticity beats perfection. Short videos and stories can help seekers see faces, hear voices, and feel what it might be like to attend. Consider these ideas for posting:

- A 30 to 60 second video from the pastor personally inviting people to Easter, speaking directly to those who feel far from God or unsure about church
- Short testimonies from one or two members about how God met them during a previous Easter season
- Behind-the-scenes clips of kids rehearsing a song, volunteers preparing the building, or the worship team practicing

Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube favor video content, and many churches report strong engagement when they share simple, heartfelt invitation videos for Easter. Ask your people

to like, comment, and share—every interaction helps your message reach further for free.

Make It Easy to Plan a Visit

For seekers, the biggest barrier to visiting your church is often not theology but uncertainty.

They wonder, “Will my kids be safe? Will I know where to go? Will I feel out of place?”

A simple “Plan Your Visit” tool can answer those questions before they ever arrive:

- Add a brief form to your website or a link in your social posts where guests can share their name, number of children, and which Sunday they plan to attend.
- Promise a personal touch: “If you fill this out, someone from our team will text you before Sunday, meet you at the door, and help you find your way.”
- Use free tools like Google Forms, Jotform (free tier), or a simple email link; you do not need complex church software to do this.

Churches that intentionally prepare for guests, especially on high-attendance days like Easter, see better guest experiences and improved chances that visitors will return.

Collect Contact Information Kindly and Clearly

You cannot follow up with guests for whom you do not have contact information. Easter is a prime opportunity to gently ask for basic information without making people feel pressured. Low-cost options include the following:

- A simple connection card in the seat or bulletin, with a QR code that links to an online form for those who prefer digital
- A brief announcement from a leader or the pastor explaining why you collect cards: to say thank you, pray for needs, and share about next steps—not to spam anyone
- A small gift for turning in the card (for example, a candy bag for kids, a simple devotional booklet, a donation to a local charity, or a coffee voucher donated by a local shop)

Research on guest retention emphasizes that intentional follow-up during the first weeks after a visit is essential to helping newcomers connect and



stay. The goal is relationship, not data; the form simply opens the door.

Follow Up Within 24 to 48 Hours—With Care

Many churches work hard to attract guests for Easter but miss the crucial step of quick, personal follow-up. Easter-only attendance often becomes the norm when visitors do not feel noticed. For a small church, a simple follow-up system can look like this:

- Within 24 to 48 hours, send a personal text or email thanking guests for coming, referencing something specific about the service—for example, “We loved having you and your kids with us at the 10 a.m. service yesterday.”
- Include one clear “next step” such as attending an upcoming sermon series, a newcomers’ luncheon, or an invitation to return the following Sunday.
- Within the next week, send a second touch—maybe a short video from the pastor, a link to the Easter sermon, or a question like, “How can we be praying for you this week?”

Studies on guest retention suggest that consistent, personal follow-up over the first 30 days significantly increases the likelihood that a visitor will become a regular attender. For small churches, this can be done entirely through free texting, calling, and email tools, with a simple spreadsheet to track responses.

Think Beyond One Sunday: Invite Seekers into a Journey

Easter may be the doorway, but discipleship is the destination. Digital tools can help you invite seekers into an ongoing journey of exploring faith. You might consider these options:

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- Launch a short, four-week “Discovering Jesus” sermon series after Easter and promote it during the holiday service and online.
- Offer a simple email or text-based “Next Steps” devotional (one short Scripture and reflection per week) that guests can opt in to.
- Use your social media to highlight small groups, kids’ ministries, or community service opportunities where newcomers can build relationships.

Recent reports note that interest in faith and spiritual questions remains strong, especially among younger adults who often begin their exploration online before setting foot in a church.

By providing a gentle, clear pathway beyond Easter Sunday, you honor that spiritual hunger and invite people toward deeper transformation. You do not need a large worship center, professional studio, or marketing budget to reach seekers this Easter. You need a clear message, a few simple digital tools, and a church family willing to prayerfully and personally extend invitations.

If you prepare your online presence, equip your people to invite, share authentic stories and videos, make visiting easy, collect contact information, follow up promptly, and offer an ongoing journey, your church will be ready when people like Mark start searching.

Some will scroll past.

But others will see your invitation, sense genuine warmth and hope, and take a step of faith through your doors—and by God’s grace, into the life of your church and the kingdom.

BISHOP SHAUN MCKINLEY, PHD
GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





▲ *Replica of site where Jesus was crucified*



▲ *Replica of the empty tomb*

FIELDS OF THE WOOD HE IS RISEN!

Our Fields of the Wood stands as a declaration of the truth that Jesus lived, died, and rose again. As we observe a concentrated focus on the hope that we have in Jesus, we are thankful to have a place that portrays the biblical account of this event.

As we walk through Fields of the Wood, we encounter Golgotha, marked with the empty crosses symbolic of the place where Christ was crucified. Just a few paces over, one can step into the replica of the tomb where Jesus's body was laid and see that it is empty. The grave clothes are representative of the reality that death could not hold Him.

Our staff invites all who can to come and enjoy a time of reflection on our wondrous hope—He is risen! Because He lives, you and I live today.

The living testimony is experienced daily on our historical property. It is you, our readership and donors, that assist us in emphasizing the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through this ministry, we give hope to a world that needs to know that Jesus is risen.

Help us continue this declaration with our historical properties by donating at fowrenew.org.

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





HERITAGE MINISTRIES

2026 HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

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

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PARADIGM *SHIFT*

In 2025, France celebrated 40 years of witness as the Church of God of Prophecy. We are acutely aware of the challenge: What will be our witness in the next 40 years? Will there still be faith? If so, we will need to pass on the mantle to the next generation.

So, what will 2026 hold? We do not believe God is looking for a church, a family, a household, or an individual with their own mission, goals, and vision already planned out. God already has a MISSION! Is it possible we could have missed it up till now? Matthew 28:18–20 (LSB) states, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

God is so invested in His MISSION that the Father sent the Son (John 3:16).

God is so invested in His MISSION that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17a).

God is so invested in His MISSION that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have sent the church (Acts 1:8).

We are all “On Mission”—in church, at home, at work, in school, in the community—and the mission is to GO.

Blessing follows obedience (see Genesis 26:1–6, 12). After many struggles in France (where the Church was birthed in 1984)—after going through its *Esek* (quarrel; contention) and *Sitnah* (hostility and opposition)—God has made room or *Rehoboth* (wide places; open spaces), an open door where the gospel can be preached. We now have seven preaching points and two more developing. Isaac knew how to unstop the wells that his father had dug, until eventually he learned to dig wells for himself at *Beersheba* (well of the oath; well of seven; see Genesis 26:18–25.) God has promised to bless us in France, but the real test will be the passing of the baton to a new generation that will know God for itself and learn how to dig its own wells when the pioneers have gone.

Everywhere Abraham went, he did two things: He built an altar and he dug a well, both of which speak of worship and Holy Spirit leadership. Isaac copied this example, and the world had to testify, “We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you” (Genesis 26:28 NKJV), and “You are now the blessed of the Lord” (v. 29).

At the 100th International Assembly in 2018, I was inspired by a prophetic report by a general



▲ Christine and her sons

▲ Christine and Jean-Jacques

presbyter who said, “You do not plan for revival when revival comes; you plan for revival **before** revival comes.” He followed up by stating that 300 leaders had been trained! We have adopted this strategy in France by using the Minister’s Development Program to develop a pool of leaders who are qualified and experienced from which new pastors for new churches that have been planted will be drawn. We have also established a specialized training and development arm—the French version of Spirit and Life Seminary called *Institut Francophone de Théologie Éspirit et Vie (IFTEV)* with Director Pastor Jean-Renel Amesfort—focusing on leadership development. We have graduated the first French cohort of 13 leaders, out of which ministers have been licensed and ordained; a second French cohort of 26 leaders is being developed. Also, our first Spanish cohort is nearing completion, with seven students set to graduate. We are thankful for the support of Bishop Edgar Rossini Ortiz, the national bishop of Spain, Portugal, and Italy, for coordinating the Spanish program.

ALSACE

The work in Alsace was pioneered by Stephen and Rose Oladipo 20 years ago when Stephen was told in a dream to go to Ottrott. Not knowing where it was (Alsace region of France), he sent his wife, Rose, who went to the region and began street ministry that has grown into two churches, 60 members, and now requires licensed ministers. Notably, all six licensed ministers (three in Alsace

and three in Paris) are workers and servant leaders. They are as follows:

Cristine Bilz

Married to Jean-Jacques, they have three adult children and are members of the Church in Barr, Alsace. This local church started 20 years ago, and 40 percent of its members are from the indigenous population. Christine was one of the first to join. She has made history by being the first French national to become licensed and has recently become one of the local pastors, substituting for the senior pastors when called upon.

▼ Cristine Bilz





▲ Open-air ministry in Alsace with Bishop Gena and Sister Larissa of Belarus and Ukraine
 ▶ Scheila LouisJean



Christine has been the national secretary for the Church in France for the last eight years. She is responsible for drafting model legal constitutions (especially important for new fields), policies, and procedures, while maintaining accurate records. She handles the administrative affairs of the Church (e.g., minutes and reports) and helps train and guide local church secretaries.

Christine is passionate about the Lord in a gentle yet stable and firm way. She is passionate for people and recently conducted her first funeral service.

▼ Scheila LouisJean



Scheila LouisJean

Married to Richard for six years, Scheila is the mother of three children. Part of the original membership of the Church in Barr, she and her husband pioneered the work in Hochfelden, 60 kilometers (37.9 miles) away. Through many trials—health, relationships, family responsibilities, and distance from church—she has persevered, and the local church was born.

Her calling includes pastoral ministry alongside her husband, serving women and families, hospitality, worship, and intercessory prayer. Her daughter attends the local university and is the youth ministries director.

The Church at Hochfelden, 80 percent which are indigenous, started with 22 members and has now grown to 30. Couples who were living together have gotten married or are being challenged about their lifestyle as the Holy Spirit convicts.

Richard LouisJean

Richard, a building contractor by trade, is married to Scheila and was recently appointed senior pastor of the Hochfelden Church. He was a long-standing member of the Church in Haiti and continued to serve when he migrated to France, and Alsace in particular.

Richard served under Senior Pastor Stephen Oladipo and his wife, Pastor Rose Oladipo, learning to follow before being qualified to lead. He has disciplined himself to a life of studying the



▲ Richard LouisJean

Word of God and obedience to the Holy Spirit. This has given him confidence to not only be a pioneer but to become a servant leader in a cross-cultural environment.

Notably, following in the footsteps of his mentor Rose Oladipo, who caters for the local mayor, Richard has also reached out to his mayor. He has held civic gospel concerts with the mayor in attendance, sending a clear message: “We are here to pray for you and the town and to be a blessing.”

PARIS

Lumène Laujar

Lumène is a long-standing member (some 16 years) of our mother church in Paris, Villeneuve-le-Roi, where Pastor Claudette Longin is senior pastor. She came to know the Lord in a spectacular display of power by the Holy Spirit when Bishop Daniel Longin was still alive—seven demons were cast out of her! Now she lives for Jesus Christ with her husband, Lubin, and daughters, Julie and Ludy, who are all Christians.

An evangelist and intercessory prayer leader, she serves in the local church as part of the evangelism team and in the national “Fishers of Men” ministries, travelling to the regional capitals of France to preach the Word and sow seeds to expand the kingdom of God. She is very serious about her calling.



▲ Lumène Laujar

Stéphanie Duverly

Stéphanie has been married to Dudal for 14 years, and they have three children together. As a couple, they place all on the altar of God in His service. On both the local and national level, Stéphanie serves as Children’s Ministries director. She has also partnered with *Chrétien de France* to help run an annual children’s camp for children in the community who would not be able to have a holiday. There, the children receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and have a fun time!

Stéphanie, along with her husband, empowers local leaders through visits to Alsace and Toulouse, the two other major regional centers of our church. She, in turn, is empowered by regularly attending Europe-wide events like “Get Plugged In.”

She is “on fire” with God’s anointing; some have witnessed the Holy Spirit fall at youth camp and numbers of young people get saved and delivered. Strategically, Stéphanie is at the “cutting edge” of winning the next generation for Christ in France.

Dudal Duverly

Youth Pastor Dudal came to the Church of God of Prophecy through the camping ministry in France, eventually becoming a member in 2012. He, along with his wife, Stéphanie, now serves as the director of the camp, taking over from Pastor



▲ Stéphanie Duverly

Daniel Cadet and his wife, Carlene, who had pioneered it in 1995.

Since then, they have expanded the camping ministry internationally, taking the camp to Luxemburg, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and many regions in France.

They have kept interest alive through camp reunions (called *retrouvailles*), youth retreats, leadership training, and conferences. In addition, numbers of young people (up to 20) have attended Europe's "Get Plugged In" conference with them. The camp has developed a Bible school, with Pastor Amesfort as the main teacher, complete with exams and prizes to encourage learning. A bridge has now been formed into France's MDP program, with a strong proportion of MDP cohort #2 candidates having come through youth camp.

Not only is Brother Dudal instrumental in discipling our young people but also in developing systems to manage youth programs. For example, the CRM system called AssoConnect is being rolled out to the wider Church community so every church may keep records of members, aid communication, and promote key information, like prayer strategies, throughout the organization.



▲ Dudal Duverly

Conclusion

All of the foregoing is an investment in the future generation in preparation for the paradigm shift. Before every major move of God in the Bible, God raised up "vision-bearers" who carried God's coming vision, BEFORE its time. They were usually out of step with their time—seeing and experiencing a future paradigm while living in the current. These ministers and young people are preparing for God's next move while being faithful now. Please pray for this change management process, and the leaders of this process, because change must come. As God brings the changes, we need to be ready, despite the opposition of the status quo and the enemy.

Acknowledgements

Bishop Clayton Endecott, for his leadership and support

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Bishop Gena and Sister Larissa, for their support in ordaining ministers in Alsace (October 2025)

Sister Tessa Dietze



BISHOP MIKE WILSON
FRANCE NATIONAL BISHOP

CHURCH *of* GOD *of* PROPHECY

NEW CHURCH PLANTS

The Church of God of Prophecy is on the move!
The following new church plant was reported in March 2026.



U.S. – NORTH CAROLINA

China Grove Iglesia de Dios de la Profecia

Southeast Spanish Region

October 25, 2025





IN HIS PRESENCE

DECEASED MINISTERS | REPORTED AS OF MARCH 1, 2026

KAREN MARLOW

California

January 30, 2026

Licensed minister for 43 years

GROVER C. FOGARTY

Florida

January 25, 2026

Licensed minister for 63 years

CARL G. BANNISTER

Florida

January 13, 2026

Licensed minister for 19 years

HYACINTH L. REYNOLDS

Florida

February 12, 2026

Licensed minister for 12 years

ROBERT S. PRICE

Virginia

February 12, 2026

Licensed minister for 46 years



HERITAGE MINISTRIES

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MARSHA ROBINSON

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Episode 8: Designing Digital Evangelism

Episode 7: The Call: To Send and Support
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