JUNE 2025

WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



Building *Authentic* Relationships

RELATIONSHIPS: IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

CHARLOTTE ADAMS

BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS: EQUIPPING BELIEVERS WITH SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING, EMPATHY, AND GENUINE CARE

MARIE PROCTOR

RELATIONSHIPS CAN OPEN DOORS

BISHOP WALLACE PRATT

Arise Shine!

JUNE 13, 2025

We have a banner! It is our symbol of God's presence and guidance, upheld by the Holy Spirit’s truth, representing Christ's victory and triumph over evil. Today, and every day, we rally around it and celebrate his victory.



WHITE WING
MESSENGER
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

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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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BISHOP FRED FISHER, SR.

The following is an excerpt of a greeting Former General Overseer Bishop Fred Fisher delivered in 2012 to the General Assembly in Louisville, Kentucky. Bishop Fisher served as the fourth general overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy as well as evangelist, state overseer, general presbyter, and pastor. Bishop Fisher passed away May 13, 2024, and was honored in a subsequent White Wing Messenger. His wife, Betty, passed away this year. Her tribute is in this issue of the magazine.

FIRE AND FELLOWSHIP

Archeologists believe they have uncovered evidence that humans gathered around campfires thousands of years ago, sharing in fun and fellowship with friends and family.

Not being there, I cannot verify that as being fact. But all of us know that more than 2,000 years ago, in an Upper Room, Christ christened his church with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, likened unto fire, accompanied with a mighty rushing wind. It blew that group of people from the Upper Room into the streets of Jerusalem and onto the threshold of the world. Soon, 3,000, then 5,000, were added to their number. It was an occasion that changed the world. They turned the world upside down. Together.

Then, in the latter part of the 19th century, in a remote mountain region, a small group of hungry believers gathered in the Shearer School House and another visitation of the fire of God baptized this group—a group who desired to warm by this flaming fire of God—and this led to the birthing of the Church of God.

This small band of people traveled on ox-driven carts, on horseback, crossing creeks, forging rivers, journeying from the mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia, and coming to Cleveland, Tennessee. They were poorly educated and poorly financed, but from this early beginning, they are now operating in more than 130 countries of the world and on all seven continents.

Sister W. F. Bryant testified that she rode on an oxcart to attend the very first general assembly. Today, we travel from far and near, by jets, motor homes, cars, and vans; we gather in convention centers and hotels because the Holy Spirit keeps stoking the fire in our midst. He is calling us together as a family, to warm by this fire.

Paul wrote to the Romans and said, "I have desired to come and visit you, your faith is known and spoken of throughout the whole world. I have tried on two different occasions to come, but was hindered. Now, I am getting to come, and the first thing I will do is fill myself up with your fellowship."

He knew fellowship would be nourishing. Fellowship was necessary. He admonished the Romans, and us, to "weep with those who weep." So, we have wept with Haiti, who was demolished by earthquakes; we have wept with Hackleburg, Alabama, crushed by tornadoes; and [we have wept with] a myriad of other people and places who have suffered tragedies.

We wept when Africa lost their beloved general presbyter; we wept with bishops who lost their dear wives. Yes, these are causes for us to weep.

But Paul also admonished us to REJOICE! We rejoiced when General Presbyter Tim McCaleb rallied people who helped rebuild the Haiti orphanage and other structures. We rejoice and praise the Lord for those who give and those whose lives go on carrying the gospel. We rejoiced for Africa, who received a new general presbyter. We are a people who rejoice with each other!

The fire of God is roaring! The flames are leaping higher and higher. We, together, one family, can feel the warmth of life and love everywhere.

God has built a fire for us to gather around—in our churches, in our homes, in the marketplace, in restaurants—as we fill ourselves up with fellowship one with another.

I need you. I can't make it without you. Give me your love and fellowship. Let us gather around the fire of God and go out as firebrands, taking the gospel to the world. The Church of God of Prophecy can accommodate everyone—the young and the old can dance together; Southerners, Northerners, Midwesterners; those who speak English, Spanish, French, Afrikaans, Portuguese; those who live in Europe, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, Russia, Africa, Asia—everyone can gather around one fire, synergizing each other in Spirit-ignited fellowship.

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, wrote a song entitled, "SEND THE FIRE." The fourth verse says,

> To make our weak hearts strong and brave,
> Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
> To live a dying world to save,
> Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!
> Oh, see us on Thy altar lay
> Our lives, our all, this very day;
> To crown the off'ring now we pray,
> Send the fire, send the fire, send the fire!



News from URUGUAY

Uruguay Ministerial Retreat Report
Theme: I Press Toward the Mark

MELANIE SUÁREZ AND PAMELA MOREIRA | COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

With great joy in our hearts, we share what we experienced in our Ministerial Retreat the weekend of April 18–20 in the Betania Complex, department of Canelones, Uruguay.

National Bishop Marco Antonio Benavides convened this national meeting of local ministry leaders under the theme "I Press Toward the Mark," with an attendance of nine pastors and 47 leaders at this event.

Our guests were Bishop Elias Rodriguez and the national bishop of Colombia, Juan Carlos Correa, who were used for the glory of God. Bishop Rodriguez taught on the topic "The Call to Pastoral Ministry." He also shared the Word of God on Friday and Saturday nights and officiated the Lord's Supper and the Washing of Feet on Sunday morning.

Bishop Correa was also a great blessing to those in attendance during the event by teaching a class titled "The Pastor, Ethics, Integrity, and Convictions." He also shared the Word of God with us during our closing worship service.

These servants of God were used in a very special way, challenging the participants with the Word of God through the teachings and sermons. The Holy Spirit cleansed, sanctified, and filled our lives with his presence, giving us great joy, strength, and hope for better times ahead for the church in our nation under his guidance.

During the Ministerial Retreat, we were encouraged to keep pressing forward toward the goal, placing all our trust in God as he continues to bless his church in Uruguay.





















Reflecting the Heart of Jesus

A TRIBUTE TO KELLY MOORE COALTER

(1959–2025)

"You can't have faith and fear in the same sentence."

On February 2, 2025, surrounded by her beloved family and upheld by the prayers of her global Church of God of Prophecy family, Kelly Moore Coalter slipped peacefully into eternity. Her passing marked the end of a brief, courageous, and grace-filled battle with cancer—but her story will echo through the generations. To summarize Kelly's life with dates and accomplishments would be to only scratch the surface. She was a wife, mother, sister, Mia (as her grandchildren lovingly called her), friend, and servant-leader whose life radiated kindness, deep spiritual conviction, and authentic love. She lived her motto: "Reflect the heart of Jesus in everything you do."

A Life of Love and Ministry

Born in 1959 to Bob and Rene Moore in Rapid City, South Dakota, Kelly grew up with a heart for the people around her. From the earliest days of their marriage, Tim and Kelly Coalter served in ministry as a unified team. From national evangelism to 28 years of pastoral ministry, and on to state and international Church leadership, Kelly remained a steady, wise, and prayerful presence.

In 2022, when Bishop Coalter was appointed Presiding Bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy, Kelly's influence quietly expanded. As administrative assistant to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and as intercessor, confidant, and counselor to her husband, Kelly's serving reached beyond titles. Her travels took her to Nigeria, India, the Bahamas, and beyond—always with the same gentle, Christlike spirit.

The Ministry of Presence

Kelly had the gift of making people feel seen. Whether you were a longtime friend or someone meeting her for the first time, Kelly would pause, listen, and connect. She never rushed a conversation. Her warmth was not








"Reflect the heart of Jesus in everything you do."

manufactured; it came from her heart. She touched many lives with her handwritten notes, timely words, and compassionate prayers. In the final years of her own mother's life, Kelly curtailed her public ministry to care for her, again modeling a commitment to love and service.

Faith in the Fire

Kelly's cancer diagnosis seemed to come without warning. Yet, what emerged in those months was an even deeper testimony. She often said, "You can't have faith and fear in the same sentence," and she lived that truth. Each day was met with courage, each challenge with trust in God's sovereignty. Her peace did not come from denial but from a settled assurance. Even in her suffering, she remained a source of comfort for others. Her faith did not falter—it flourished.

Her Family, Her Heart

Kelly's greatest joy was found in her home. She was a devoted wife of 45 years to Bishop Tim Coalter; mother to Amber, Robyn, and Corey; and Mia to eight much-loved grandchildren. She attended games, celebrated milestones, and spoke truth into the lives of those she loved. Her sister Vickie, her family, and her church all testify to her role as the kind of woman who remembered birthdays, identified with the pain of others, and never let go of hope.

A Global Legacy

Tributes have poured in from around the world. Kelly did not seek a spotlight, yet she left an indelible imprint on thousands of people. Her impact was found in the everyday moments—meals shared, prayers offered, stories listened to with care. On February 7, hundreds gathered at the Peerless Road Church of God of Prophecy in Cleveland, Tennessee. Pastors Darren Schalk, Bishop Duke Stone, and Bishop George McLaughlin led a celebration of Kelly's life. Online viewers joined from across the globe. It was a sacred farewell—and a call to carry her legacy forward.

"What could possibly make heaven a more loving place?" Pastor Darren Schalk asked, opening the service. "If anyone could do that, it would be Kelly Coalter. It wasn't just humans she loved; it was anything that breathed. Even the cows behind her home had names."

Bishop George McLaughlin, long-time family friend, offered a stirring eulogy grounded in Scripture and soaked in memory. "She was one of my favorite people in the world," he said simply. "She had a magnetic personality. You wanted to be near her. Even in her final days, she was ministering. There was a man in the hospital who said no one had ever prayed for him—until Kelly."

"Tim and Kelly weren't just leaders," said Randy Adkins, a dear friend from their 16 years of ministry in Roanoke, Virginia. "They were family. Kelly never met a stranger. At restaurants, she'd walk to another table and ask what they were eating. Tim would just drop his head and say,












'Oh, Kelly. . . .'" The same themes emerged in every story: her loyalty, authenticity, and ability to draw others in. "She didn't need the spotlight," Randy said. "She was comfortable behind the scenes—but always made people feel like they were center stage."

Bishop Tim Coalter rose last in the service—not to speak as presiding bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy, but as a husband, a father, and a man in mourning. He began with a story from their granddaughter Grace, who recalled her Mia saying she would die on a Sunday before 10:00 a.m. ". . . because I want to be at church in heaven," she had said. And that is exactly when she passed. She was not a preacher, but she preached with her life.

Fittingly, the service concluded with a family tradition: the banging of pots and pans. Originating in Kelly's South Dakota roots, where the nearest neighbor could be miles away, she passed down a New Year's ritual to her children and grandchildren. At midnight every year, they would joyfully clang pans to ring in the New Year. And so, on that day, the congregation counted down from ten, and pans were clanged in celebration—this time not for a new year, but for the beginning of Kelly's eternity.

Echoes of a Life Well Lived

Kelly Moore Coalter was a kingdom woman. She did not just believe the gospel; she embodied it. Her legacy is the lives she touched, the prayers she prayed, and the love she modeled. And as we remember her, we are inspired to live more like her: loving deeply, listening well, serving quietly, and believing boldly. Her race is finished; ours continue—not in fear, but in the same faith she carried: faith in a Savior who welcomes his children home with joy.







Relationships:
IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

This world, this life, is not my home. I am only passing through. When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" he, without hesitation, responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and most important commandment" (Matthew 22:37–38 CSB). He said the second commandment is like the first one: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 39). Together, these two decrees are so important that Jesus said all of God's Law and the words of the prophets are accomplished in living them out. Jesus wanted you and me to understand that if we can get these two "loves" right, we will be just fine. In simple language, love God with everything you have in you and love others like you love yourself. The greatest commandments are built on authentic, intentional relationships with God and others.

What would happen in our world if we could somehow embrace and truly live these two commands? This sounds so simple! Jesus said that all the Law is wrapped up in these two relationships. Easy-peasy, right? Well, maybe not. As days have turned into decades much quicker than I could have imagined, with each passing year, I understand more and more the value of relationships.

The first church my husband and I had the privilege of pastoring was a precious group of on-fire Jesus lovers in north Mississippi. We were very young, energetic,

and excited to accomplish so many things. We went in like a bull in a China shop. We wanted to remodel, get a lighted sign, create additional parking, and the list went on and on. This group of believers loved us through our learning. They jumped in and joined this joyous journey.

There was a precious older couple there at that time who were in their 70s. They loved us and were constantly cheering us on. Their encouragement and kindness to this young girl (I was barely 20 years old) still brings tears to my eyes. Their faithful walk with the Lord, passion for Jesus, and prayer life made such an impression on me that I still think of them often. They not only loved us, but when Brother Wilmon prayed, it seemed that all of heaven stood at attention. They had the relationships right. One day as I am strolling the streets of gold, I want to sit down beside the crystal sea and tell this beloved couple what their love meant to me.

My husband, Billy, is the administrative bishop for the Georgia (US) Church of God of Prophecy churches. I travel all over the state with him as he ministers and conducts business for the Church. A couple of years ago, we drove to a North Georgia property where a COGOP church had once been. It had been closed for years, and a lady we had never met had an appointment with us at the site to sign a "lease-to-purchase" agreement. She had plans to start an independent church there.

From our first hello, I felt it was a God connection. She briefly shared her fascinating story: She was once a pastor, had worked in a hospital, earned a PhD, and was currently the owner of a construction company. Her story was captivating, but it was her spirit and passion for Jesus that drew us in like a magnet.

We concluded our business. As Billy and I got into our car, I started trying to convince him to tear up the lease-to-purchase agreement and ask her to join our COGOP family. I wanted him to invite her to plant this new church with us! He said, “Are you kidding? She will think I am insane if I go back in there with that kind of proposal.”

But the Lord kept putting us together. We went to her opening service and were blown







away that there was a full house on day one. I invited her to our Ladies Conference in 2024 to speak and share her powerful testimony. Then, our son invited her to speak at the Georgia fall youth event, Generation Unleashed (GU). At that event, my husband met with her and asked her to consider joining our Church family. She prayed about it for a few weeks, she met with her leadership team, and when the time was right, she came back to us with a resounding "Yes!" Pastor Lisa Dee and Free to Worship are now a part of the COGOP family. We were shocked and delighted to discover at the organization service (as her people just kept coming up to join) that Free to Worship is a church of 100 members! The power of relationship cannot be underestimated.

Understand, Jesus encourages us to simply love God first and most, all the while loving others, then the BEST NEWS EVER will be lived by example! Be aware, there is a liar among us, seeking to distract, destroy, and discourage these God-called relationships. Be sober and see his shenanigans. While God encourages us to cheer for others and lift them up, Satan distracts us with jealousy and greed, manipulating us to compare ourselves among ourselves and to use our words to dismantle the character of our neighbors. If he (Satan) is talking to us, he is speaking lies and half-truths—that is simply his language. His master plan is to divide and conquer.

Our Lord restores relationships! Recently, my husband and I were so delighted to have front row seats for a restoration that is so much more beautiful than simple words can express. Approximately 25 years ago, a number of our Church family left. Remember, it is the devil's job to divide and conquer. The young man that was the youth pastor of the church left at the same time. Then, about a year ago, the Lord began to deal with this gentleman. He was pastoring a wonderful independent church of about 140 people. As only the Lord can do, his church sat directly across the street from the church he had left as a young man. The Lord began to place an idea in his heart—he should contact our church and come home. After several meetings and heartfelt prayer, the Lord led that incredible group of Jesus followers back into this family. The devil divides, but God multiplies!

We cannot take any credit for this homecoming. It was all God's doing, placing desires in the hearts of men to unite rather than divide—and they listened! A few weeks ago, this united church had their first service back in the newly renovated original building with nearly 200 in attendance. ONLY GOD! This past Sunday, I received a report from one of the members that there were so many people filled with the Holy Spirit at this church, they lost count.

God has called you and me to love like we have never been wronged. That is the way God loves. Listen, even when we feel we have a lot to say. That is how God listens. And like our Father God, forgive like we have never been hurt, so we can give with a generous and cheerful heart.

If we are looking for fair, it will not be found in the gospel. It does not seem fair that we are to love as fiercely and selflessly as we are instructed to love, knowing it may not be returned to us. But we love anyway! It does not seem fitting or reasonable or comprehensible that the God of all creation would constrain his limitlessness and live as an embryo inside a young virgin girl for nine months. It was not fair that our Lord left the grandeur of heaven to come to this earth and make his home among his creation. It is not right or just that the Creator allowed his creation to spit on him, curse him, strip him of his clothes, and nail him to a cross. Relationships are hard work, but they are worth it.

We cannot take anything in our hands from this life to the eternal one. We will all go just like we came, holding onto nothing. But John so graciously reminds us in his Gospel that if we will lift Jesus up, he will draw all men unto himself. We lift Jesus up by showing the world that we are following his instructions—that we love God with everything we've got, and we love others as much as we love ourselves. Relationships matter.



CHARLOTTE ADAMS
GEORGIA

Charlotte Adams wears many hats. She is the administrative assistant in the Georgia COGOP state office, Camp Echeconnee business manager, Georgia Women's Ministry and Ladies' Retreat director, and editor of the Georgia COGOP News. She is a wife, mother, grandmother, minister, and passionate Christ follower.



A Life Fully Lived

A TRIBUTE TO
DR. BETTY JANE FISHER
(1934–2025)

On April 18, 2025, in Rockingham, North Carolina, family, friends, and ministry leaders gathered to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Betty Jane Fisher—teacher, advocate, trailblazer, and beloved matriarch in the Church of God of Prophecy. The service was more than a memorial; it was a vibrant celebration filled with worship and testimonies, a reflection of the life Betty Fisher lived with intensity, integrity, and unfaltering faith.

Betty's journey began humbly in the low country of South Carolina. Born prematurely in a logging camp, she weighed just three pounds at birth and was fed with an eyedropper by her adoptive parents, Mamaw and Papaw Button. From that precarious beginning emerged a woman of fierce spirit and purpose.

As her daughter Vonnie said of her mother during the celebration, "She was a redhead who succeeded," and the tenacity of that redhead carried her from speech contests and sewing factories to global ministry and doctoral honors.

During the service, a picture was painted of a woman who excelled in every role—wife, mother, church leader, counselor, and advocate for women in ministry. Betty Jane married Fred Fisher at sixteen and served beside him in pastoral and state leadership for over seven decades. Their ministry together spanned continents, and wherever they went, Betty taught, encouraged, and uplifted others. "Who would have thought a girl like me from Richland, South Carolina, would end up going to all the places I've been?" she often said. Indeed, she journeyed from small sanctuaries to large conventions and International Assemblies, always pouring herself out for the sake of the gospel.

Sister Fisher's story includes accounts of uncommon courage and determination on the mission field—sleeping on bunk beds guarded by men with machine guns; teaching one, lone student for three hours because "he drove a long way to get here"; and pressing forward in spite of great difficulty. After one particularly long and grueling flight in a small, twin-engine plane, the Fishers were given specific instructions: When the plane lands, run as fast as you can across the dirt runway to catch the next plane. Bishop Fisher said, "Betty, I just don't think I can make it. I don't have the strength to run." She squared her shoulders and boldly proclaimed, "Oh yes, we can, Fred. Someone in this Church is praying for us right now, and we can do it." Bishop Fisher recounted later, "We landed, came down those steps. And when my feet hit the ground, the Holy Ghost slipped his arms and hands under my arms and carried me and Betty all the way across that dirt runway to the next plane."

Sister Fisher ran other races with determination, as well. She once said that if she had to walk across the graduation stage with a cane, she would—and she did, earning her PhD at age 72.

Those in attendance at the celebration of her life caught a glimpse of the humor and humanity in Betty Fisher: her love of grammar, her strategic eye for clearance sales, her firm belief that "if the Lord wants you to have it, it'll still be there when you go back." Betty worked factory jobs to put her husband and children through college and graduate school before pursuing her own education. Her voice graced the Church's radio broadcast after she trained to soften her South Carolina accent. She wrote, taught, counseled, edited, and composed—quietly shaping a movement while keeping others front and center.

Though she never held ministerial credentials, Betty Fisher lived a call to ministry that defied boundaries. Her impact is still felt in the lives of countless pastors' wives, women leaders, and ministers whom she championed. She was among the early and outspoken advocates for full ministerial empowerment of women in the Church of God of Prophecy, and the fruit of her labor is evident today in congregations led by women across the globe.

Her daughter said near the end of the service, "She used to read to me; then I started reading to her. She drove me everywhere; then I began to drive her. She fed me; then I fed her." The sacred symmetry of their lives—the "circle of life" as Vonnie called it—was full of devotion and gentle grace. In the last weeks of Betty's life, Vonnie witnessed her mother's spirit shine even as her body weakened. At one moment between wakefulness and eternity, Betty's face lit up, arms opened wide, lips forming a kiss—an unmistakable gesture of welcome and joy. "That was classic Betty," her daughter said.

The service concluded with worship, jubilation, and praise—just as Betty would have wanted. Scripture was read, songs were sung, hands were lifted high. Church leaders honored Betty's legacy, not as a historical footnote but as a living, breathing example of holiness and bold obedience. As one speaker said, she had a seamless ministry partnership with Bishop Fred Fisher. Where he led with presence, she led with preparation. Where he led with conviction and spoke with vision, she reinforced every effort with spiritual depth and practical care. Her contributions—visible and invisible—remain foundational to the Church's story.

In her final years, Betty continued to mentor and model faithfulness. She remained real, transparent, and unwavering in her love for God's people. She was, as many described her, "a force of nature." Yet her greatest force was love—expressed in handwritten cards, warm hugs, and her fierce belief in those God called to serve.

To the Church of God of Prophecy, Betty Jane Fisher leaves a legacy not only of doctrinal depth and unparalleled service but of sincere friendship and sacrificial living. She stood beside leaders, but more importantly, she lifted up the broken, welcomed the overlooked, and stirred the hearts of those who had grown weary in well-doing.

We will miss her beauty, her fiery voice, and her steadfast hands. But we will not forget. Her deeds follow her. Her labor was not in vain. And in the cloud of witnesses that surrounds us still, we know she is there—smiling, hands lifted, voice raised.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You have entered the joy of your Lord.

Building Authentic Relationships:
Equipping Believers with Skills for Effective Listening, Empathy, and Genuine Care



Can Pentecostalism and contemplation co-exist? This is the question that surfaces when I ponder equipping believers with skills for effective listening, empathy, and genuine care in their interactions with others. Another way to ask this question is, “Can one be both Pentecostal and contemplative?” I would enthusiastically say, “Yes!” but you will have to decide for yourself. This reflection flows out of my own experience of being a contemplative Pentecostal. If all of life is spiritual, and I believe that it is, then each of us is on a spiritual journey. How this journey unfolds is different for us all, yet there are moments or seasons when our journey intertwines with another. When this happens, we get a front row seat to the reality of our relationship with Christ. Our interaction with others is a great indication of how we embody our relationship with Christ. We are forever growing and changing, and so is our relationship with Christ.

The spiritual journey of a believer is a beautiful testimony of God’s faithfulness and grace. This type of beauty does not imply that one is free from struggle or hardship, but quite the contrary. The beauty of one’s testimony is forged out of the struggles and hardships that come with growing spiritually and emotionally. Many believers who yield to this forging process become more adaptable and resilient as the beauty of their testimony unfolds around them. They also become more comfortable with mystery and open to God in new ways. They move in oneness with the Spirit and are not tossed to and fro as those with shallow roots. Their roots grow deep into the heartbeat of God, where all of life begins to look rather different.

Where is the path these believers travel on where this forging takes place? I would be lying to say I have easy steps or a formula for this process to unfold, and it would be unwise for me to tell you to do as I have done. You see, the spiritual journey for each of us differs in so many ways. If I could share one place where everyone could start, it would be to begin where you are now. The present is always a perfect time to grow roots deep into the heartbeat of God.

Personally, I have found a variety of spiritual disciplines to be helpful in my spiritual growth. Silence, solitude, meditation, centering prayer, daily examen, and confession are just a few among many. Developing a rule of life as a framework to promote spiritual growth has has been a valuable resource for me as well, since I have the tendency to engage in spiritual disciplines as if they were the goal rather than a means to help me encounter God. I have also found meeting with a spiritual director

It is out of this encounter with God that I am transformed and where I become a place where holy listening is practiced, empathy is present, and people are genuinely cared for.

once a month to be helpful. These sessions have been a place of holy listening where I learn to be attentive and receptive to God's presence in my own life and begin to see others and the world around me in new ways.

I remember my early spiritual journey of seeking salvation in Christ. This was indeed a heartfelt moment, but nothing really changed in me (or for me), or so it seemed. To be honest, I had many of these moments. It was not until I began the ongoing work of spiritual formation that I became a witness to God's work and presence in my life. Even then, I did not feel capable of guiding others, but I did not let that stop me. The greatest resource I used to disciple others was my own vulnerability and authenticity. Of course, I did not know then what I was doing, but I was sincere in my desire to know God and to seek out other believers whose journey was also being forged.

With growth on one's spiritual journey, challenges are inevitable. One challenge for me was having many spiritual giants to look up to but lacking individuals who practiced holy listening, empathy, and genuine care. Although at the time I did not know this was something I needed, I sensed a deep longing for more. More of "what" I did not know, but this longing led me to a more contemplative approach to my own spirituality. This contemplative approach began to seep into many other facets of my life. The more reflective and still I became, the more I felt the Spirit of God igniting something deep within. I began to listen more and talk less. I also began to recognize God's presence in me, in others, in the world around me, and yes, even in the mundane! It is as if I had to learn *how* to see, rather than *what* to see.

This new way of seeing opens life-giving opportunities for me to be with God. My level of empathy increases as well as my ability to hold compassionate space for others. In this contemplative space, I become more sensitive to the Spirit's work in me. Holy awe and wonder permeate every part of my being, and I am smitten again by God's glorious love. This contemplative approach to spirituality ignites the Pentecostal part of me, and I feel the "fire" that is "shut up in my bones" (Jer 20:9). And just like the prophet Jeremiah, I cannot keep it in. It is out of this encounter with God that I am transformed and where I become a place where holy listening is practiced, empathy is present, and people are genuinely cared for. In this place, I get to witness the transformation of others by Jesus, the Christ, our risen Savior. For me, this contemplative pairing with Pentecostal fire has been the vehicle that has led to maturing in Christ, becoming emotionally and spiritually healthy, and building authentic relationships.



MARIE PROCTOR
LANCASTER, SOUTH CAROLINA

Marie Proctor is an ordained minister in the Church of God of Prophecy. She recently transitioned from pastoral ministry to work with individuals and small groups as a spiritual director. Her previous role as a pastor (2013–2024), along with serving the women of South Carolina as Women's Ministries director (2010–2019), is what led her to the ministry of spiritual direction (2022 to present). She loves spending time with her family and finding the quiet, serene places that God has woven into each day.

RELATIONSHIPS



CAN OPEN DOORS

My father was a "church planter extraordinaire" in a time when there were no modern church planting programs or organizations. He lived and taught us children to live by one relational principle that he repeated from the Holy Bible on a regular basis, a scripture found in Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV): *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* Certainly, Dad never had difficulty in making friends with almost anyone. He planted new churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Montana, and Utah—seven in all. They were started by his unflappable nature that enabled him to build relationships with everyone in his neighborhood, at his workplace, or even on the road when stopping to help someone in distress. Yes, he rooted this relational principle in me that developed into a heritage of building relationships that have opened doors in so many places.

When I began to pastor, I embraced a conviction to lead people to Jesus Christ each year, not just through preaching in the pulpit, but by winning friends with whom I could build relationships. By doing so, doors were opened to lead them to faith in the Lord. To accomplish such a passionate desire, the Spirit illuminated that childhood scriptural principle that my father had instilled in me and revealed how I needed to develop certain genuine elements that would help fertilize friendships into growing relationships that could become fruitful ground for new life. These elements were *risk*, *love*, *comfortability*, *trust*, and *faith*. Some observations from the life of Jesus Christ found in the Gospels are relevant in regard to these elements:

1. Jesus was not an ordinary rabbi of his times. He was never afraid to "take a risk" when meeting or encountering people, no matter their age, gender, race, class, status, resistance, or sin.

2. His "loving nature" opened doors others could never have walked through in order to reach people. This love was apparent in the way mothers brought their children to see him and to be touched by him (Mark 10:13).

3. The third element that convicted me early on in my life pertained to an element I call "comfortability." Being friendly is only a surface connection with another person unless that man or woman, boy or girl, begins to feel comfortable around you. When people feel comfortable, there is no reluctance, distance, or nervousness in being in your presence. Jesus had this kind of nature—people felt this "comfortability" whenever they were with him, like the Samaritan woman at the well and Zaccheus at dinner.

4. Another factor that builds a genuine and steadfast relationship comes from developing a very refined quality where a person will "trust" you and share with you their heart or true self. The lack of this element keeps many from embracing us, hindering our ability to impact their lives. When Jesus knelt in the dust beside that guilty adulteress in her shame and despair, she knew that he could be trusted, and she believed in him.

5. The fifth element is where building a friendship becomes a life-changing relationship. This is where the friend can see, hear, feel, and share "your faith" in God. We catch a glimpse of this at the crucifixion of Jesus. Through a microcosm of time, the repentant thief on the cross moved from being an alienated enemy into a relationship of faith in the crucified Lord (Luke 23:39–43).

Keeping in mind these five elements that have guided my life in regard to the importance of friendships that grow into faith relationships, I want to share five experiences from my pastoral years:

In my first pastoral assignment in Wyoming (at age 21), my wife and I were sent to a very tiny and dying older congregation. Within a few weeks, a young teenager was passing by outside on the sidewalk by our small mobile home. I said hello and we struck up a conversation. After a couple of weeks, I invited him to join me downstairs in the church to play table tennis. Three or four times each week, we played and talked about the Lord, and I was able to lead him to Christ. Before we left that church, he had become so dedicated that his Christian growth was beyond his years. I only heard once from him a few years later; he had a wife and family, they were solid

members in their local church, and he was serving as a youth leader. Some would have thought we were just young and wasting time (playing table tennis), but I was determined to build a relationship and help this young man to be more than a churchgoer; I wanted him to be a mature disciple for the rest of his life.

A few years later, when I was 25 and my wife Judy was pregnant with our second child, we went to replant a new church on the central coast of California. We had no congregation, no church building, no salary, and no place to live. We finally found a former member who talked to her husband (an unbeliever), and he reluctantly let us stay the first month with them. He was 35 years old and had never attended church in his life. In fact, he made it clear that he wanted nothing to do with Jesus or the church. To make this story brief, he found out that I could drive a tractor since I was 12. Occasionally, he began to let me plow in the fields he supervised on a big lettuce farm. One day as we were planting his family garden next to his house, I took the risk of telling him about Jesus. We were both down on our knees in the dirt. As I planted the seeds in the furrows that he was opening in front of me, I began to see droplets of tears in those rows he was making. At 36, he was crying for the first time, and there on his knees, he gave his life to Jesus.

A few years later, when I was 28, we were pastoring in the bayou country of Louisiana. We had a woman and her two grandkids who attended our church. She often warned me to stay clear of her mean husband. He was a tugboat captain and an alligator hunter. He and his brother had a notorious reputation, and even the game wardens feared them. In order to reach him, I realized it would have to be in his environment. One day I stopped by and saw him unloading caged snapping turtles. I walked up and offered to go alligator hunting with him. He laughed at me and shared a few expletives. To make another story shorter, I eventually convinced him to let me go along. It was the first of many excursions down the bayous to fish, shrimp, hunt, and even catch alligators. On a trip back home one night, having earned his friendship and trust, I began to share about Jesus and invited him to know my best friend. He broke down and gave his life to the Lord. The change in his life was unbelievable; he quit alcohol, pipe smoking, chewing, and using profanity, and he started bringing his wife and grandchildren to church. He became a tower in the community for his friendliness, faith in Jesus, and devotion to the church.

At the age of 32, my wife and I settled into a new pastorate in Iowa. We had a dedicated lady in our church whose husband had just celebrated his fortieth birthday. He was not a Christian and refused to attend church. Two months after we came, he got very sick. She called to tell me that she feared he was dying, but he was refusing to go to the hospital. Going to their house, I found him almost unconscious with a dangerous fever. She and I began to pray for him. After a period of time, God's power came into that room and healed him instantly.





As he lay there thanking me for praying, I began to tell him how the same faith needed for healing could save him. At first, he seemed upset, but within a few minutes, he joined me in a sinner's prayer. He gave his heart to Jesus that day and came to church the next Sunday. His conversion impacted others, and his turnaround in behavior and faithfulness to God led him to become a great leader.

The last story occurred when I was 43 and pastoring in Arizona. Our church was not very large when we started, but I began to visit homes in our neighborhood. A young woman called me one Monday to see if I would go visit her mother. Upon arriving at the house the next evening, I found a room full of family and neighbors waiting in curiosity to hear what I was going to say. We visited, ate some snacks, laughed together, and then I took a risk in that atmosphere to begin talking about Jesus to this mother, her husband and three children, two grandchildren, and a grandmother, as well as three neighbors. Moved by the words about Jesus, ten people that night accepted the Lord as their Savior. This family, with whom we are still friends to this day, not only attended our next Sunday service, but they became some of the greatest workers for Christ I have ever been around. Their passion for Jesus led more than twenty other people to attend our church and become believers that year.

I could share many other accounts of how simply making friends developed into lasting relationships that opened doors for receiving Jesus Christ. Perhaps those stories will wait for another day. Having led many to Jesus through friendships that grew into trusting relationships and having planted or having led teams to plant 45 new churches through using those five elements—risk, love, comfortability, trust, and faith—this methodology continues to be my greeting card to impact others. The Gospel of Mark leaves us with this insightful narrative from the ministry of Jesus on this topic:

> Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples, for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:15–17 NKJV)



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

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

Faithful Friendship: The Key to Relational Evangelism



Rosaria Butterfield was a tenured Syracuse University professor specializing in feminist studies and alternate lifestyle theories. She was an outspoken critic of Christianity, viewing Christians as oppressive and outdated. While researching the religious right for a book project, she wrote an op-ed article critical of Promise Keepers, a Christian men's movement.

A local pastor, Ken Smith, read her article and contacted Rosaria via mail. His letter, rather than condemning, was thoughtful and kind. He even invited her to his home for dinner. When she came, Rosaria found that Ken and his wife, Floy, were genuinely compassionate and wanted to hear her thoughts. Rather than confront her lifestyle, they openly dialogued about their differences. Through it all, they maintained a gracious and hospitable spirit, significantly impacting her.

Over the next two years, she continued to meet with Pastor Ken and Floy, engaging in deep discussions about faith, the Bible, and life. She eventually surrendered her heart to Jesus, leaving her previous lifestyle choice. Today, she is a pastor's wife, conference speaker, and author, advocating for biblical hospitality and relational evangelism.[1]

Mission and Method

Tim Chester, in *A Meal with Jesus*, points out a phrase used twice in the book of Luke concerning Jesus: "The Son of Man came. . . ." One of these, found in Luke 19:10, describes Jesus' mission statement: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (NIV). This explains what Jesus came to do—his mission. The second, Luke 7:34, describes his strategy to accomplish his mission: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking. . . ." This was how he did it—his method.[2]

Peter, who frequently heard Jesus' mission statement and witnessed how he carried it out, must have understood the driving force behind his mission and his strategy. He wrote, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). It is easy to miss two key points in Peter's instruction. First, when he encourages us to "be prepared to give an answer," it is assumed that someone will ask the reason for our hope! It is doubtful any of us have ever walked into a store, sat in a restaurant, or stood in a line, and had a stranger walk up and ask, "I notice there is something different about you. Can you tell me why you have hope?" Peter implies we should develop an intimate relationship with people so that they will notice our hope in Christ.

Second, he says we must do this "with gentleness and respect." While there is certainly a time and a place for prophetic confrontation, we should respect the dignity of each individual and treat them in a manner that reflects that dignity.

Developing Relationships With Non-Believers

The apostle Paul provided an excellent template for relational evangelism when he was in Athens. In Acts 17:16, Luke wrote, "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols." Athens was steeped in intellectualism and philosophy, embraced religious pluralism, and had extremely liberal views of sexuality. It would have been easy to criticize and condemn.

Instead, Paul employed a fourfold relational strategy. First, he treated the Athenians respectfully: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye **men** of Athens. . . ." (v. 22 KJV, emphasis added). He did not challenge them as ungodly or ignorant, but fellow humans.

Next, he took the time to study their lifestyles. "For as I



passed by, and **beheld** . . .” (v. 23). Paul was interested in who they were and observed their culture.

Third, he found common ground with them. Verse 23 continues, “For as I passed by, and beheld **your devotions**. . . .” Rather than assault their false gods, Paul affirmed that they seemed to have a heart for spirituality.

Finally, he studied and understood their beliefs. In verse 28, he quoted two Greek poets, Epimendes and Aratus, “For in him we live and move and have our being. **As some of your own poets have said**, ‘We are his offspring’” (NIV). Don’t miss the implication! He could quote their philosophers because he had taken the time to get to know them.

Who Is My Neighbor?

To follow Paul’s model, Peter’s encouragement, and Jesus’ example of relational evangelism, we need only look at the question Jesus was asked in Luke 10:29—“Who is my neighbor?” He responded with the story of the Good Samaritan. We often interpret that story by explaining that our neighbor is anyone with a need.

But what if Jesus meant . . . our actual neighbor? Jesus’ strategy to fulfill his mission by eating and drinking with the lost, Peter’s encouragement to be prepared to answer why we have hope, and Paul’s components of evangelism with the Athenians provide the template for how we “love our neighbor as ourselves” (Luke 10:27).

Developing relational evangelism does not require a lot of creativity, but it does require intentionality. Let me make a few suggestions to stimulate your inspiration:

1. Invite a neighbor for a meal once a month. As we have seen, Jesus was a master at table evangelism.

2. If you live in a college or university town, partner with a Christian student group to host a late-night coffee study session during finals week in your church building.

3. Frequent the same business—e.g., barber, beauty salon, dry cleaner, restaurant, coffee shop, etc.—and intentionally develop a relationship with the workers.

4. Partner with other church members and volunteer with the local Booster Club to run the concession stand at a few high school ball games. This is a golden opportunity for small churches. It costs nothing but your time, and it allows the parents of athletes to watch their children play in the games.

Being a faithful friend does not require a lot of money or tremendous creativity. It just takes putting yourself in a position where someone asks, “What is the reason for your hope?”



BISHOP DUKE STONE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BISHOP

[1] Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

[2] John Mark Comer, *Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become like Him, Do as He Did*, (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2024).

THE THEOLOGY OF *Stewardship*: A Call for Accountability

The theology of stewardship invites us to rethink our relationship with material things, the environment, and life. This approach challenges us to see each resource as a holy gift entrusted to us to be administered with wisdom, justice, and love.

1. **The Biblical and Theological Foundation (Genesis 2:15)**

   From the divine command to care for the Garden of Eden to the teachings of the parables, the Bible reminds us that earthly possessions are only temporary. Every resource we possess is a divine gift. This perspective calls us to stewardship accountability.

2. **Environmental Stewardship: Caring for Creation (Psalm 24:1)**

   Stewardship extends beyond the personal, encompassing our responsibility toward the earth. Excessive resource exploitation and environmental deterioration are contrary to the divine mandate to preserve creation. In the face of climate change and the depletion of our ecosystems, it is urgent to adopt a conscious and responsible attitude that respects and protects the natural legacy that has been entrusted to us.

3. **Ethical Use of Economic Resources (1 Timothy 6:10)**

   Without ethical reflection, wealth accumulation can lead to materialism and greed. The theology of stewardship proposes an economy based on solidarity, equality, and social justice. Economic resources should be channeled to promote collective well-being and foster mercy.

4. **Time and Gift Management (Ephesians 5:15–16)**

   Managing time and gifts well means investing in activities that enhance our personal and church growth.

The theology of stewardship is about living with purpose, awareness, and commitment. When we embrace this call, we become responsible stewards of all God has entrusted to us.



BISHOP RICARDO HINSBIS ESPINOZA
PARAGUAY NATIONAL BISHOP AND GLOBAL STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER

Reflections on *Relationships*



The topic of relationships is one of those subjects where people come to the table with their own unique definitions and varied experiences. Additionally, each person may identify different aspects of relationships that they deem important. I can imagine going around a classroom of students, hearing each person provide their point of view, and being impressed by how varied the discussion points are. In my opinion, that is to be expected. If each person is a one of a kind, it makes sense that each relationship and the views thereof would also be unique. The classroom discussion comes around to me as I sit there racking my brain, trying to exact what relationships are from my perspective. Having compiled my experiences to this point, the things I have learned, and the perspectives I have chosen to hold moving forward, my answer would be that relationships are a responsibility.

The Experiences

I struggled with relationships and interactions with people growing up. A number of these resulted in various forms of hurt, and for a time afterward, the solution to avoiding the hurt was to avoid relationships. I excelled at distrust and keeping others an arm's length away. I chose paths where I could set myself up to succeed with as little reliance on others as possible. For a time, I thought I could make it through life that way, and it worked for a little while. As most stories go when we try doing things our own way (the wrong way), there came a point where it was obvious that something was not how it was supposed to be. The self-serving direction was not fulfilling, growth was stagnated, and frankly, it grew tiresome to have an extremely limited circle of belonging.

The Learning

It was at this point that I began to learn there are levels to the responsibilities within relationships, the first being that we have a responsibility to have relationships. Many things can only be attained, experienced, felt, and learned through community. Part of the learning for me was recognizing that this responsibility also meant continuing to create relationships and engage with others regardless of the hurt. I once heard a talk on the subject where the point was made that our hurt can seem trivial compared to the hurt Jesus went through willingly. He was betrayed by Judas and denied by Peter, yet knowing all this, Jesus developed a brotherhood with them. Thus, the hurt meant learning there was a responsibility to reconcile with those who caused it, or in some cases, to reconcile with those whom I had hurt. Through community, we have access to healthy support systems, opportunities to pour out and be poured into, and sometimes we even have fun. As I sought to build relationships, I experienced new levels of fulfillment, had chances to serve, and a comfort in knowing I was not alone.

Another part of the learning process was recognizing that I had a responsibility to grow myself. There were times I looked at other relationships and wanted something exactly like what I saw or wanted to be like those people I observed. I had to take ownership and accept that I am the person I am, but life also offers us areas and opportunities for growth and self-improvement. I had to be intentional on strengthening my weaknesses and reinforcing my strengths (a process that is still ongoing). There is no point in being something I am not, but I can expand and grow who I am. Through that growth, I have learned that I can connect with individuals and a broader spectrum of people more effectively and more easily. This also means others could see the growth in me, and this, in turn, led to new forms of growth in others.

The last important item to mention here is that I learned there is a responsibility for maintaining relationships. For a long time, this was a challenge for me—the relationships had to come to me. I was not an initiator, and I was not one to reach out to keep the bonds of a relationship strong. Thus, many relationships came and went; they were not long-lasting because I was not making the effort to help them to last. Sometimes we can feel a relationship drifting apart and shift the blame, thinking the fault lies with the other person. The grass is



only greener where you water it, and I had to learn how to put in the effort to maintain and grow relationships. That also meant learning that not every relationship is going to last because the other person has equal responsibility to maintain it.

The Perspective

The perspective I chose for moving forward is that relationships are vital. I accepted that the views I had early on were clearly wrong, and while I am still not strong at everything I have mentioned, I take responsibility for improving those areas. As a leader in multiple arenas, I learned early on that a key aspect of building quality teams is having quality relationships within those teams. Of course, the business and duty side have requirements that need to be aligned, but the true trust, commitment, and unity of the team is developed within relationships. This is especially true within ministry—while there is the "job" aspect with its list of things that need to be accomplished, the meat of what is truly important is realized within the relationships because even though the duty is great, our duty to people is greater. This "duty" includes things like accountability, genuine encouragement, mentorship, intercession, and quality fellowship. All of these things can occur on a general level, but the trust that can be given and received within these is on a much deeper level when it occurs within a quality relationship.

I know I still have a long way to go, but I am committed to and have a responsibility for this journey. We each have a responsibility to continue forging on, building relationships, and growing. It is not always pleasant, and maybe there is still plenty to be learned the hard way. Despite it all, though, I am thankful for the lessons I have learned, the experiences I have had, and the relationships I have been able to forge.



JACOB COLEMAN
ACCREDITED MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE



2025 Spirit and Life Seminary
GRADUATION FESTIVITIES

It is hard to believe another year has come and gone, and 17 more students have completed their programs at Spirit and Life Seminary (SLS). May 16, 2025, got off to an early start with students gathering in the Ministry Training Center (MTC) at the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices at 8:00 a.m. Several variations of Spanish permeated the room, accompanied by sprinkles of English and lots of smiles. Students greeted one another and found their seats for rehearsal. They practiced walking across the stage where they would receive their diplomas the following day.

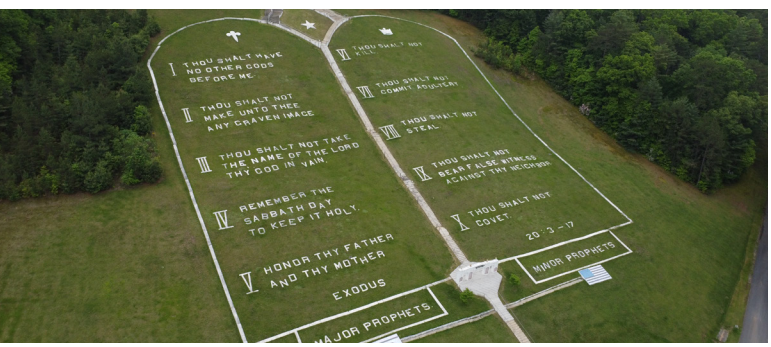
At 9:00, our guests dispersed to board two passenger vans and left for Fields of the Wood in Murphy, North Carolina. I had the opportunity to practice a few Spanish words en route and learned some of the concerns folks from cultures outside the United States share. I even had a chance to practice a little French with an SLS student's son who had spent 16 years in Quebec.

We arrived at Fields of the Wood around 10:00 and soon headed to the First Assembly House. Heritage Ministries Director Todd Bagley shared a brief history of the time period in which the Church of God of Prophecy came into being. He mentioned that the people who wanted to burn the meeting house—a place where the Holy Spirit revival was changing lives for the better—lived during a time when burning a church was considered taboo. As a means around this taboo, this group of people tore the building down first and then burned it. The faith of our forefathers was severely tested, but with God's help, they persevered and passed the test. That is why we are still here today!

Returning to the Fields of the Wood, we drove up behind Prayer Mountain, where A. J. Tomlinson sought God's will for his life. We saw several visitors who were not part of our group. Children walked the stairs as they enjoyed the park and time with their families. We walked down











from Prayer Mountain and into the second floor of the house located just past the Arise Shine Marker and the Pavilion.

Leadership Development and Discipleship provided the funds for us to enjoy a lovely catered meal of barbequed pork, chicken, green beans, macaroni and cheese, coleslaw, and rolls. (Are you hungry yet?) As we finished lunch, SLS Admissions Manager Carimet Sidney shared flyers with the SLS graduates and information about continuing education options at Pentecostal Theological Seminary. SLS students were excited to learn of opportunities and options for pursuing a master's degree. After all, the more we learn, the more we realize how much we don't know (an idea attributed to Albert Einstein).

The next adventure was a drive up Ten Commandment Mountain to the All-Nations Cross. Students and their accompanying family members enjoyed photo opportunities and searched for the flags of their homelands. When students from the Dominican Republic could not locate their flag, one noticed a hole in the concrete without a flagpole. She determined that was the location of her flag—it was just missing. We chuckled at her humor.

Our next gathering was in front of the Bible that stands atop Ten Commandment Mountain. A buzzing was heard as a drone took our photo and allowed us to wave in video-style. Those of us who were feeling spry walked down multiple flights of stairs to return to the lower level of the park, while others rode the vans back down the mountain. Then it was time for shopping in the gift shop and a farewell photo at the newly restored Fields of the Wood gate before traveling back to Cleveland, Tennessee.

Once back at the International Offices, we were greeted by Dr. Shaun McKinley, Executive Director of Global Communications, and Sarah Rising, Executive Secretary for Finance and Administration. They took our SLS graduates and families on a tour of the International Offices and the SLS offices in the Majestic Building. We were welcomed by Presiding Bishop Tim Coalter and scads of personnel who serve the entire Church of God of Prophecy movement.

May 17—the "big day"—started back at the MTC at 8:00 a.m. Students met in the Murray room to don their graduation gowns, honor cords, mortar boards, and tassels. The photographer captured joy, excitement, and maybe a tad of nervousness.







At 9:50, the students were joined by the SLS Board of Directors, faculty members, and staff behind the big black curtains to march in to "Pomp and Circumstance." Cameras flashed as family and friends welcomed us to the commencement ceremony.

President Dr. Michael Hernandez welcomed us as he reiterated the announcement that Spirit and Life Seminary is now fully accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS). We sang our new alma mater, "His Spirit Gives Life," the lyrics (written by me) of which pertain to our school and students. Bishop Ebli De la Rosa received an award for his legacy of leadership in assisting students in the Southeast Spanish region who are training to serve the Church of God of Prophecy. Hanny Vidal received the Alumnus of the Year award for all her efforts in spreading the word about SLS in the Dominican Republic.

Student speakers included Silvia House of Florida, Francisco Carrasco Peréz of Dominican Republic, and Stephen Parrish of Georgia. Bishop Dr. Shaun McKinley gave the commencement address, reminding students that this biblical/theological foundation they have gained at SLS is much like the launch pad for a rocket. The launch pad is not built just to look pretty or be admired. It is built to launch a rocket. The foundational training acquired at SLS is not merely to be celebrated as an accomplishment; it is meant to be a launchpad for ministry. Like the thrust of a rocket, we must "launch" with what we have learned to serve, invest in others, share the message of Christ, and build the kingdom of God and the church of which we are a part.

We are therefore proud to release from the launch pad the members of the fourth graduating class (Summer 2024–Spring 2025) of Spirit and Life Seminary:

Certificate in Ministry and Theological Studies

Celina Amaya
Ruth Aquino
Mavernie Canterbury
Francisco Carrasco Pérez
José de los Santos
Alexander Feliz
Elie Fleurime
Luis Garcia
Silvia House
William Mendoza
Micah Mojica
Amarelis del Carmen Ramirez Peña
Caridad Sidney
William Sidney
Norma Walters

Bachelor in Ministry and Theological Studies

Emily George
Stephen Parrish

We now have 59 SLS alumni and an active enrollment of 275. We hope you are as excited as we are to see what the future holds for Spirit and Life Seminary. Help us spread the word and thank you for your support!

Visit us at https://spiritandlifeseminary.org.



DEBBIE FREEMAN
SPIRIT AND LIFE SEMINARY REGISTRAR AND DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES



Union Grove Church of God of Prophecy

MOOREVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

A Century of Light:

Union Grove Church of God of Prophecy Celebrates 100 Years of Ministry

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." —Isaiah 60:1

As Union Grove Church of God of Prophecy marks its centennial milestone, the congregation stands in awe of all that the Lord has done. From humble beginnings in a Mississippi home to a thriving ministry that has birthed multiple churches and facilities, this legacy is one written in prayer, perseverance, and powerful moves of God.

Where It All Began

The earliest chapters of Union Grove's story were preserved not in official records—many of which were lost in a fire at Clerk Mollie Parker's home—but in the memories of faithful witnesses. It was the end of World War I, and the nation was reeling toward the Great Depression, when God planted a seed of revival in the hearts of a few believers.

One such believer was Diathuller Mitchell of Red Bay, Alabama, who had recently received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Her brother, Archie Parker, was gravely ill with tuberculosis. At her request, Brother Joe Holley and Sister Elizabeth White came to pray for him. They laid hands on Archie, and he recovered, living many more years. That spark ignited a fire.

From Prayer Meeting to Movement

As revival swept through homes—first at Harve Mitchell's, then Ollie Hopkins'—many were saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. Sister Hazel Mitchell vividly recalled those meetings, sharing how people would gather to see the "holy rollers" and witness miraculous healings. Even as a child, Hazel experienced God's healing power when she recovered from a serious illness after trusting God.

By Easter Sunday 1919, the small congregation had baptized their first members in a nearby pond and formally organized the church in the Hopkins home. They had little money but abundant faith.

Growth Through the Generations

Early pioneer ministers like Richard Moxley, Frank Smidley, Elmer Wigginton, and others served the flock faithfully. As the ministry grew, the congregation moved from a rough-edged plank building (donated by the Parkers) to a more established sanctuary across the road. Though a devastating tornado in 1936 severely damaged the church, it was rebuilt by God's grace and the congregation's resolve. Over the decades, under the leadership of pastors like Clyde Nelson, J. C. Woods, Gene Douglas, and Andrew Cook, the church expanded facilities to meet growing needs: classrooms, auditoriums, a fellowship hall, cemetery, playground, and pavilion.

A Flourishing Future

Under the guidance of Bishop James Akins and Bishop Billy Adams, the church built the current 400-seat auditorium, modern classrooms, administrative offices, and a gymnasium. During Bishop Ryan Napalo's leadership, Union Grove has continued to blossom with new youth facilities and extensive renovations, ensuring that future generations have space to grow, worship, and serve. In 2019, as part of the centennial celebration, the church constructed a 100th Anniversary Pavilion, with engraved bricks contributed by families as a symbol of unity and remembrance. This sacred space now stands across from the current sanctuary—on the very ground where the second church once stood.

A Legacy that Extends

Union Grove has been the root of other impactful congregations, including Unity Church, Union View (now closed), and the churches in Tupelo and Verona. The fruit of this one church continues to nourish the body of Christ far beyond its walls.

Today, Union Grove stands completely debt-free, able to invest freely in ministry and mission. The congregation waves its banner high—not just in celebration of the past, but in faith for the future.

Celebrating a Century of Blessing

As we commemorate 100 years of Union Grove, we thank God for provision, power, and presence. The *White Wing Messenger* honors the faithfulness of God and the endurance of his people.

The light has indeed come, and the glory of the Lord is still rising upon Union Grove.



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION PROGRAM
100
YEARS OF MINISTRY
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

Gold Valley Church of God of Prophecy

MIDDLESEX, NORTH CAROLINA

A Century of Faithfulness:

Gold Valley Church Celebrates 100 Years

With grateful hearts and joyful celebration, Gold Valley Church of God of Prophecy in Middlesex, North Carolina, marks its 100th anniversary, honoring a century of unwavering faith, community impact, and spiritual growth.

Founded on October 1, 1917, by Blant Brantley, the church began as a small gathering of believers with a big vision—bringing the hope of the gospel to their rural community. In the 1950s, under the leadership of D. H. McCullen, the church moved to its current location on NC-231, where it continues to serve as a beacon of light and love.

Over the decades, 24 pastors have shepherded the congregation, each building on the foundation of those before them. Today, Pastor Larry Whited leads the flock with dedication, vision, and a deep love for the people of Middlesex.

A Church for Every Generation

Gold Valley is more than a historic church—it is a thriving, multigenerational community. Ministries flourish under the care of passionate leaders and volunteers who believe that church is not just a place, but a purpose.

The children's ministry (led by Lisa Hopkins) meets most Sundays and offers age-appropriate Bible teaching, joyful worship, and hands-on learning experiences. The goal? To help young hearts know the Word of God and live out his love. Faith is not only taught—it is lived out loud in laughter, crafts, and memory verses that stick long after Sunday is over.

Youth group gathers every Sunday night from 5:30–7:00 p.m., led by Youth Pastor Lynn Cash, whose mission is to cultivate a hunger in young people for loving God and serving others. This is not just another hangout—it is a launchpad for discovering God-given identity and purpose in both church and community.

"Senior Friends," directed by Fan Whitley and Betty Joyner, brings together the church's seasoned saints for fellowship, prayer, and joyful connection. Whether it is a devotional gathering, a meal, or simply shared stories, these meetings are filled with warmth, wisdom, and laughter—the living testimony of faith that has stood the test of time.

Reflecting and Rejoicing

As Gold Valley looks back over 100 years, there is much to celebrate—lives transformed, families restored, callings discovered, and community served. But even more, the church is looking forward—to new growth, deeper discipleship, and an even wider embrace of their mission.

With banners raised high and hearts lifted even higher, Gold Valley Church of God of Prophecy stands today as proof of God's enduring faithfulness. And as another century begins, they are ready—because here in Middlesex, the gospel still has power, the Spirit still moves, and the light still shines.

Heritage and Legacy:
. . . CONTINUED



"The heritage you pass on is what you give to someone. The legacy is what you do in someone as it has to do with character, values, spiritual understanding, and commitment to Christ."

– Dr. James Dobson

Many of us have seen those television episodes that end with a black screen and the white letters running across it that say, "To be continued." This means that there is another part of the same episode that remains yet to be seen. Usually, we must wait another week before we are afforded the opportunity to hear or see the rest of the story. Our heritage and our legacy are very similar. We are currently the generation that possesses our heritage and legacy, making it a part of who we are. In other words, we, the Church of God of Prophecy, are a "movement" whose continual motion moves towards a destination, goal, or purpose. All those before us worked toward seeing the world come to know Christ. As our first general overseer, Bishop A. J. Tomlinson, said in our infancy, "We shall girdle the globe with salvation and holiness unto the Lord." In 1994, the International Assembly adopted the theme "Turning to the Harvest." Presently, our theme is "On Misson: Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit." The next generation, if the Lord tarries, will have a theme of their own to push them forward in this same endeavor. The continuation of this theme demonstrates the shared commonality we have with those who came before us. We are part of the same movement, with the same shared destination, with the same goal in mind: to reconcile the world to Jesus Christ through the power of his Spirit!



Dr. James Dobson, quoted at the beginning of this article, makes a distinction between heritage and legacy: "The heritage you pass on is what you **give** to someone. The legacy is what you **do** in someone as it has to do with character, values, spiritual understanding, and commitment to Christ." Our forebearers left us both a heritage and a legacy. They left us our heritage, giving us the foundations and fundamentals of our faith in Christ through their writings on the Word of God. They left us a legacy in demonstrating to us their determination, desire, and commitment to the Lord and his work that we are now partakers in. These that came before us were true heroes of the faith, and their work must carry on because, as we should realize, their work has now become our own. This legacy and heritage we now possess will one day be passed on to another generation.

Our ancient fathers, the apostles of the early church, gave us through their accounts "a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, **. . .** which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:1–2). This Word and this work were meant to be passed on. Luke was writing this to Theophilus, who was the next generation that would carry on the work of reconciling the world to Christ. He wrote to him for the purpose of "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee [Theophilus] in order **. . .** that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:3–4). Paul instructed many throughout the New Testament, but in his letter to Timothy, he admonished him to observe all the doctrine, teaching, and obligations that had been passed to him from the other apostles; and Paul himself was now passing it on to a young Timothy: "I charge thee **. . . ,** Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . . But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1–2, 5). Timothy already had a shared heritage and legacy from his mother, Lois, and grandmother Eunice, but the work of his family before him became his own. It was up to him to continue in the faith. The faith of those before us will not save us, but our faith in Christ must become our own.

From our early years of brush arbor revivals to the earliest wooden plank church buildings, from the small brick church buildings to the concrete block church buildings and to the modern conveniences of our churches now, we must remember that our heritage and our legacy continue because we share the work that those before us were once working to accomplish. May we not fail them, but most importantly, may we not fail the Lord of the harvest; our service to him must become paramount. Our heritage, our legacy, and our work to reconcile the world to Christ is . . . **to be continued**.



PASTOR JACOB PHARR
GOLDEN, MISSISSIPPI

IN HIS PRESENCE

DECEASED MINISTERS | REPORTED AS OF JUNE 1, 2025

JOSUE C. JIMENEZ
California
January 23, 2025
Licensed minister for 59 years

KURTIS R. DISBROW
Maryland
March 6, 2025
Licensed minister for 2 years

JAMES T. COX
Tennessee
October 19, 2017
Licensed minister for 40 years

LEONARD E. WAGNER
Kansas
April 14, 2025
Licensed minister for 62 years

ANNIE MITCHELL
North Carolina
March 20, 2025
Licensed minister for 18 years

BOBBIE J. HENRY
Tennessee
December 16, 2019
Licensed minister for 18 years

SHIRLEY A. VICKS
Louisiana
March 21, 2025
Licensed minister for 46 years

REGENIA L. COLLIER
Tennessee
March 28, 2025
Licensed minister for 37 years

MICHAEL MCMILLAN
Wyoming
April 22, 2025
Licensed minister for 52 years

HERITAGE MINISTRIES

FIRE DAMAGE REPORT



DONATE ANY AMOUNT

The fire at our maintenance shop caused significant structural and loss of equipment. The total loss is estimated at $512,000. After insurance payment, we are left with a loss of $235,739.

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