

AUGUST 2026

WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



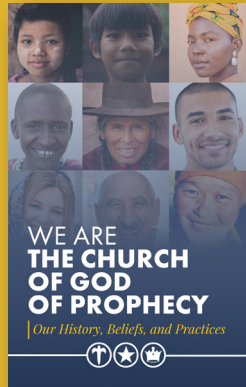
TESTIFY! Tell The Story

75 YEARS OF CAMPING MINISTRY

SNAPSHOTS OF A SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY PART 2
HAROLD HUNTER, PHD

BY A MOUNTAIN BROOK: A DREAM
OF YOUTH CAMP
MARSHA ROBINSON

CAMP MEMORIES



WE ARE THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

One Message. Every Nation. Every Language.

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CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

Global Communications

WHITE WING MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Executive Editor/Publisher: Tim Coalter
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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.

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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TESTIFY!

The Afterglow That Remains

On opening night of our International Assembly, the Parade of Nations moved across the floor—flag after flag, nation after nation—a living tapestry of the global Church. Each step told a story. Each banner represented lives, languages, and lands touched by the gospel. It was more than ceremony; it was a visible declaration that the kingdom of God is not confined to one place, one people, or one culture.

Before a single sermon was preached, we were already witnessing something profound.

Now, weeks removed from that gathering, we find ourselves living in what I would call the *afterglow*.

In the natural world, an afterglow is the light that lingers after the sun has set. It softens the sky, stretches across the horizon, and reminds us

that something radiant has just taken place. The source may no longer be visible in the same way, but its effects remain.

Scripture gives us a powerful picture of this kind of afterglow.

When Moses descended from Mount Sinai after being in the presence of God, the Bible tells us that his face shone with the glory of the Lord (Exodus 34:29–35). The radiance was so evident that the people were afraid to come near him. Eventually, Moses placed a veil over his face—not because the glory was absent, but because it was present.

That is afterglow—the visible evidence of having been in the presence of God.



Moses did not manufacture that radiance. He did not strive for it or perform for it. It was the natural result of encountering the Lord. And even as time passed, the glow of that encounter remained upon him.

In much the same way, what we experienced at the Assembly was not confined to those days on the calendar. The presence of God among us left an imprint—a spiritual radiance that continues even now.

The opening night Parade of Nations set the tone for that reality. As each nation passed before us, we were reminded that we are part of something far greater than ourselves. That awareness—that lingering clarity—is part of the afterglow. It is the realization that we are a Spirit-formed, globally connected people, and that what God is doing in one region is tied to what He is doing in another.

During the Assembly, there were powerful moments—worship that lifted us, preaching that stirred us, prayer that marked us. Yet often, it is in the days that follow that those moments begin to settle into meaning. What we experienced

corporately now calls for personal expression. That is the work of the afterglow.

Like Moses, we may not always be fully aware of what rests upon us, but others will see it. There should be something different about how we return—something in our perspective, our priorities, and our posture—not because we are trying to preserve an event, but because we have been shaped by an encounter.

The September *White Wing Messenger* will capture in words and many pictures what we experienced at the Assembly: moments of unity, reverence, joy, and divine movement. But the true afterglow is not confined to the pages of a magazine. It is carried in the lives of those who were there.

The question before us is not whether the Assembly mattered.

The question is whether its radiance remains.

If Moses's face shone as a result of being with God, then surely our lives should reflect something of His presence as well—not in a way that draws attention to ourselves, but in a way that points unmistakably to Him.

We cannot remain on the mountain—but we must not lose what happened there.

We carry it into our leadership.

We carry it into our churches.

We carry it into our witness before the world.

We move forward—not trying to recreate the moment, but faithfully stewarding what remains. And if we do, the afterglow will not fade into memory. Like the face of Moses, it will continue to shine, bearing witness that we have been with the Lord.

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



In Loving Memory
BISHOP ADRIAN L. VARLACK, SR.
FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD

HEARTFELT SYMPATHY

The International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy, together with Presiding Bishop Tim Coalter, announce with deep sadness the passing of Bishop Adrian L. Varlack, Sr., on August 4, 2026. We extend our heartfelt prayers and sympathy to the Varlack family and to the countless friends, colleagues, and spiritual sons and daughters around the world who were blessed by his remarkable life and ministry.

Bishop Varlack was a powerful, anointed preacher and one of the great statesmen of the Church of God of Prophecy. Larger than life in both presence and influence, he combined extraordinary wisdom with a keen historical mind and genuine kindness. He was beloved throughout our global fellowship and internationally respected not only within the Church of God of Prophecy but also among leaders of other organizations. His counsel was sought across denominational lines because of his integrity and scholarship.

For more than 50 years, Bishop Varlack faithfully served the Church in a variety of significant leadership roles: as church historian and consultant to the general overseer, Center for Biblical Leadership instructor, World Missions

secretary (director), a member and chairman of numerous Assembly committees, and in various advisory capacities that shaped the life and direction of the global Church. During pivotal moments in the Church's history, he was repeatedly entrusted with responsibilities requiring wisdom, discernment, and the confidence of the International Assembly and the International Presbytery.

As a global family, we celebrate a life marked by faithful service, scholarly excellence, spiritual wisdom, and steadfast devotion to the kingdom of God. While we mourn his passing, we rejoice in the assurance that he has now entered the joyous presence of the Savior whom he served so faithfully.

Please join the International Offices and the Office of the Presiding Bishop in praying for the Varlack family during this season of grief. May they know the abiding comfort and peace of the Holy Spirit, and may the Lord continue to honor the enduring legacy of Bishop Adrian L. Varlack, Sr., whose life has left an indelible mark on the Church of God of Prophecy and on the kingdom of God around the world.



Snapshots of a Spiritual Journey

Part 2

BISHOP HAROLD D. HUNTER, PHD



In Part 1 of this article, published in the July 2026 *White Wing Messenger*, Dr. Harold Hunter shared some background information that influenced the spiritual formation of A. J. Tomlinson and the trajectory of a multi-ethnic movement that would come to be known as the Church of God of Prophecy, a church for all nations.

Pentecost Linked to Reconciliation

Looking back, Tomlinson would say he became “more fully awakened” in January 1907 about the fledgling Pentecostal Movement. *The Last Great Conflict* would praise “Dr. Seamore”—actually W. J. Seymour, pastor of the legendary 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles—whose message of Pentecost that washed away the “color line” spread around the world.¹ The priority of Azusa Street was obvious when A. J. Tomlinson started *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* and later ran a series on Pentecostal history in *The Faithful Standard*.² Tomlinson preached on “the baptism with the Holy Ghost and Fire” at the 1907 Assembly, but his own personal Pentecost did not come for one full year.

Tomlinson invited G. B. Cashwell to preach in Cleveland at the conclusion of the 4th Assembly in 1908. A minister with the [Pentecostal] Holiness Church of North Carolina, Cashwell traveled to Los Angeles to experience the Pentecostal outpouring firsthand. Apparently, Cashwell’s latent racism resisted the message of racial reconciliation that was part and parcel of Seymour’s Azusa Street Mission. However, after five days of praying for deliverance, Cashwell consented to have Blacks lay hands on him, whereupon he received a fiery baptism in the Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues. When Cashwell preached in Cleveland on Sunday morning, January 12, 1908, Tomlinson would pen one of the most celebrated accounts of transportation in the Spirit that carried him into countries with ten different languages.³ Here, finally, the flame was lit for Tomlinson himself that would forever change the destiny of many related in one way or another to the Pentecostal branch of the Church of God movements.

Tomlinson personally carried this flame to many locations, but none more important than the

Pleasant Grove camp meeting in Florida. His diary dated May 22, 1909, announces the first of several visits by Tomlinson to this venue. Among those who received the Pentecostal message here were Edmund and Rebecca Barr. On May 31, 1909, Tomlinson would grant evangelist licenses to both of them. By November 1910, the Barrs took the same message to Edmund's native Bahamas, making African American Rebecca the first Church of God missionary.⁴ It was February 1911 when Tomlinson held his first international campaign in Nassau.

Later in 1911, New Mexico added a congregation of Mexican Americans in Raton. In his diary dated February 27, 1912, Tomlinson reports on a convention he attended in Raton that required a Spanish-speaking interpreter. The Assembly of 1913 would count three Spanish-speaking congregations in New Mexico. Juan B. Padilla, who first assisted T. F. Chávez while pastor of the original congregation in Raton, was ordained a bishop in 1913 and became pastor of Corrumpa, New Mexico. On July 3, 1936, A. J. Tomlinson would grant Church of God of Prophecy ministerial licenses to this same Juan Padilla.⁵ J. O. Sandoval, an evangelist in Colorado, wrote A. J. Tomlinson late in 1923, pledging his support. Sandoval's printed stationery read, "Iglesia de Dios, Oficina Principal en Cleveland, Tenn. A. J. Tomlinson, Sobreveedor."

At the 1915 Assembly, Edmund Barr began a two-year term as overseer of the "Colored" work in Florida. C. F. Bright was appointed overseer of Pennsylvania in 1919, then New Jersey in 1920. Tomlinson seemed agitated that, before 1919, Blacks were only called on extemporaneously during the Assemblies. At the 1917 Assembly, an unnamed person suggested that the *Church of God Evangel* should also be published in Spanish for "Mexicans and other Spanish-speaking people." A Native American from Oklahoma addressed the same Assembly.⁶ Tomlinson propelled this cause forward in his 1919 annual address by applying the apostle Paul's "one blood" to affirm a universal humanity. Tomlinson added, "Our dark-skinned brothers and sisters have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and we have long ago learned that God is no respecter of persons."⁷

African Americans like T. J. Richardson were part of the Council of Seventy and various Assembly committees starting in 1921. The number of Blacks present during these Assemblies is unknown, but it is known that they were relegated to segregated seating. In the 1922 General Assembly, A. J. Tomlinson pointed to the number of Blacks that were leaving the Church in order "to be perfectly free in every respect." A loss of 1,744 members was reported in 1921, with perhaps most of the Blacks going to the Church of God in Christ. Tomlinson lamented that "South of the Mason and Dixon line it is difficult to show them all the courtesy that we would like to" and exclaimed, "I do not like any separations between nationalities and races."⁸

The Church of Destiny

A. J. Tomlinson's diary is silent from September 2, 1921, until February 28, 1924, when he writes, "Much has happened since my last writing, and my time has been so taken that I have not had time."⁹ This is a considerable understatement about a tumultuous era that would see Tomlinson emerge as general overseer of the newly formed Church of God of Prophecy (CGP in this article). The turmoil was to Tomlinson a battlefield over theocratic government. For his heirs, the discussion has come to be framed with an emphasis on calling and gifting.

The 1923 CGP records reveal a Black constituency in Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, New York, and Tennessee. From this point on, Blacks were present on all General Assembly programs, not only as singers, but also as preachers, leaders, and members of important committees. In 1924, the General Assembly passed a resolution against the Ku Klux Klan. When Stanley Ferguson died in 1934, A. J. Tomlinson ordered flags lowered to half-mast, and the church observed three days of mourning.

During the 1926 General Assembly, A. J. Tomlinson took up the question of Blacks having their own sub-organization within the larger organization. Tomlinson said that this approach had been imposed by the 1921 constitution, and it resulted in keeping the races apart. Since this constitution had been dismissed by CGP in 1923 with support from Ferguson and Richardson, the



segregated structure would be discontinued. Among the results of this decision were ministers put in prison for mixing races and others who suffered bodily harm for participating in mixed-race meetings.

Writing to the state overseers in advance of the 1932 General Assembly, Tomlinson said of the state marches that no one other than the overseer speaks “. . . except in states where there are Colored representatives or Indians or other races.”¹⁰ During this Assembly, Tomlinson would reaffirm that “the middle wall of partition is broken down between the races. . . .”¹¹ He appropriated Jeremiah’s “speckled bird” to exhort the union of “. . . the whites, the colored, the browns, the Indians, called the red men, the yellow race—and all under one government, one rule, one faith or doctrine—all one.” This language may sound obtuse to 21st-century ears, but it was a vehicle used to espouse a ministry of reconciliation.

That same Assembly featured sermons by Stanley Ferguson, J. R. Smith, and Olive B. Smith, while Francisco Olazábal and Patty K. Scotton led the annual healing service. Olazábal has been

compared favorably to Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn. Dubbed El Azteca, Olazábal joined the CGP on September 10, 1936, before a spellbound General Assembly, thus adding to the rolls a reported body of 50,000 Spanish-speaking adherents.¹² This union was never realized, though, because Olazábal died tragically in a 1937 automobile accident—this, despite the courting of Frank Olazábal in New York by Homer Tomlinson and A. J. Tomlinson’s appearances before the Council of Latin American Churches. In 1938, A. J. Tomlinson was joined by his son Homer, who spoke at this convention in Spanish. L. A. Moxley, a European American leader, preached on all races being joined in one body.¹³

Middle Wall of Partition

At the General Assembly in 1935, A. J. Tomlinson spoke of the “middle wall of partition” that had been “broken down by the cross” and spoke of the tragedy of the limited increase of Black membership. Mississippi, an example he cited, had 1,022,009 Blacks, and yet CGP had only one small Black church.¹⁴ The General Assembly in 1936 said that an orphanage must be opened for children of Color because the church is “for all races.” At the next General Assembly, W. M. Lowman and L. A. Moxley, European American leaders, preached sermons on reaching all races. Others who spoke that year were Dorothy Deadrick, J. R. Smith, and R. C. Smith. In 1938, C. H. Holly preached an Assembly sermon on bringing in all races, including Cubans. A. J. Tomlinson established churches in Puerto Rico in 1926 that were lost, but a successful campaign was completed there by 1940.

Tomlinson suffered a stroke in 1937 and soon thereafter turned his diaries over to his elder son, Homer, to write a history. In 1939, A. J. Tomlinson began to purchase land that evolved into a 216-acre biblical theme park located in Cherokee County, North Carolina. The erection of makeshift markers was recorded in Tomlinson’s diary on November 15, 1940. One marker at the newly named Fields of the Wood was “Prayed and Prevailed,” and another proclaimed “Arise shine, for thy light is come, June 13, 1903.” Like efforts culminated in a grand celebration held on September 7, 1941, when Tomlinson recounted in

detail the proceedings on June 13, 1903. When the group reached the steepest part of the mountain, they were greeted by a dramatic demonstration of the “Great Speckled Bird,” which emphasized the inclusion of all races. The group then sang the old country anthem by the same name as it had been revised by Homer A. Tomlinson and Sarah Dillon.

Tomlinson’s annual address during the 1941 General Assembly returned to the theme of breaking down the “middle wall of partition.”¹⁵ That same Assembly reported on work among Native Americans in South Dakota and featured a sermon by Ralph C. Scotton on “All Races in One Mighty Church with Christ the Head for All.” Scotton, who attended the inaugural session of Bible Training Camp two months earlier, was appointed Field Secretary No. 2 at this Assembly.

The 1942 General Assembly heard sermons from Dorothy Deadrick, Pattie K. Scotton, and Ralph Scotton on “Work Done by Colored People.” The 1943 General Assembly heard again from Dorothy Deadrick, Alvin Moss, and another Ralph Scotton sermon about Black progress. A. J. Tomlinson passed away less than one month after this General Assembly.¹⁶

Epilogue

On the 30th anniversary of June 13, 1903, Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson depicted himself on that earlier day as “. . . a ship at sea with no rudder by which it should be controlled.”¹⁷ Today, we pause, but for a moment, to reflect on the legacy of this towering pioneer of the Pentecostal Movement who found an anchor. As we look back, may we see the future more clearly.

¹ A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN: Walter E. Rogers, 1913), 137.

² See: *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (March 1 and March 15, 1910); “History of Pentecost,” *The Faithful Standard* 1:5 (Aug 1922).

³ A.J. Tomlinson, diary, vol. 2, January 13, 1908. Manuscripts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Cashwell experienced limited interracial church activity before going to the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles.

⁴ See Andrew Hudson, “The Pentecostal Construction of Race: Churches of God in the American Religious Frontier 1885-1995,” 2019 PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

⁵ Juan B. Padilla, Ministers’ Records, Church of God of Prophecy Archives.

⁶ *Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual Assembly of the Churches of God: Held at Harriman, Tenn., November 1-6, 1917*, 26, 30.

⁷ *Historical Annual Addresses: A.J. Tomlinson, compiled by Perry Gillum* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1970), 1:109.

⁸ *Historical Annual Addresses*, 1:197.

⁹ A.J. Tomlinson, diary, vol. 4, September 2, 1921. Manuscripts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The courts would name the new group Tomlinson Church of God, and it would not have survived were it not for the response by Ferguson in the Bahamas. See Harold D. Hunter, “Migration Built the Tomlinson Church of God Octagon: Waves from the ‘Sea Wader’ Strike the Empire,” Historical Society of Church of God Movement, May 23, 2024, North Cleveland Church of God, Cleveland, TN.

¹⁰ Lillie Duggar, *A.J. Tomlinson* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1964), 793.

¹¹ *Historical Annual Addresses: A.J. Tomlinson* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1971), 2:170.

¹² See Gastón Espinosa, “Borderland Religion: Los Angeles and the Origins of the Latino Pentecostal Movement in the U.S., Mexico and Puerto Rico, 1900-1945,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, September 1999. Espinosa missed that Olazábal actually joined the Church of God of Prophecy.

¹³ A.J. Tomlinson, diary, vol. 5, October 31, 1938. Manuscripts Division. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ *Historical Annual Addresses: A.J. Tomlinson* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1971), 2:250.

¹⁵ *Historical Annual Addresses: A.J. Tomlinson* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1971), 3:209.

¹⁶ Harold D. Hunter, “The Limited Impact of Pentecostal Interracialism on Systemic Racism in the USA,” *Spiritus* 6:1 (Spring 2021), 123–140.

¹⁷ A.J. Tomlinson, “I Took the Obligation Thirty Years Ago the Thirteenth Day of This June 1933,” *White Wing Messenger* 10:12 (June 17, 1933), 1.



HAROLD D. HUNTER, PHD
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

Dr. Harold D. Hunter is a renowned Pentecostal theologian, historian, and ecumenical leader. He most recently served within the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), but has deep ancestral ties to the Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP). At COGOP Assemblies, he has been recognized for presenting critical historical research and helping the denomination bridge its heritage with emerging modern scholarship. Dr. Hunter graduated from Tomlinson College, Lee University, and completed his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He pioneered the digitization of global Pentecostal history and co-founded the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives. He received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS) in 2022. He and his wife, Sondra Slater Hunter, have been married for more than 50 years.

75 YEARS OF CAMPING MINISTRY

By a Mountain Brook

A DREAM OF YOUTH CAMP

MARSHA ROBINSON

Seventy-five years ago, one woman listened to a whisper from God and dared to believe that young people deserved a place set apart to encounter Him. What began in 1951 as a simple act of obedience in the mountains of Wyoming has become one of the most influential ministries in the history of the Church of God of Prophecy. Today, thousands of men and women serving as pastors, missionaries, worship leaders, teachers, and faithful church members can trace their spiritual journey back to a youth camp altar, a late-night prayer meeting, a cabin devotion, or a life-changing moment hearing from God at camp.

Camping ministry has never been merely about recreation. From its earliest days, camp provided

something increasingly rare in a distracted world: uninterrupted time in the presence of God. There, young people stepped away from daily pressures and discovered who they were in Christ. Lifelong friendships were formed. Calls to ministry were answered. Hearts were healed. Lives were changed.

Much has changed since Elva Howard gathered the first campers in Story, Wyoming. The cabins, schedules, and activities may look different today, but the heartbeat remains the same. Today's camps feature creative worship, leadership development, discipleship training, sports, music, and ministry experiences designed to connect with a new generation. Yet across every

▲ PHOTOS First Youth Camp 1951, Dew Drops, Elva Howard

campground, retreat center, and youth gathering, one constant remains: young people are still encountering Jesus.

As we celebrate 75 years of the Camping Ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy, we honor the pioneers who invested their prayers, resources, and labor into this ministry. We also celebrate the countless testimonies that followed. For 75 years, camp has been a place where children and teenagers found salvation, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, discovered their calling, and learned that God was not only the God of their parents, but their God as well.

Several years ago, Elva Howard penned a simple booklet entitled *Dew Drops*, detailing some of her ministry experiences. Central to her stories is the birth of the camping ministry. The book contains so much more than a retelling of history. It is the testimony of what happens when God's people listen to and obey the voice of the Lord, modeling to young hearts that they, too, can hear His voice.

Following is the chapter, "A Dream Develops: Youth Camp," from *Dew Drops*:

"It is still amazing to me how God works, but I have learned through His Word when He purposes to work, nothing or no one can stop (hinder) it. I also learned He looks for someone who will obey Him and believe Him even when all circumstance are not favorable. No lasting endeavor ever begins with 'just happened to appear.'

"This was true with Youth Camp—this dream had been in my heart and the faraway recesses of my mind for a number of years. I lived in an area that was sparsely populated (church-wise). It was an era when few young people had accepted the challenge of Christian living. This meant that there were few or no young people at all, my age, in churches where my father pastored. Rather than this discouraging me and driving me into the world to join the others, it drove me into an insatiable search for God to satisfy an inner longing common to all young people.

"During these years, I became aware of a ministry to youth and became involved in teaching poverty-stricken children on Saturday afternoons. I called on the parents of these under-privileged children to see if they would be willing for their

children to come and hear Bible stories. Little did I know that this was God giving me an opportunity to study, prepare, and experience the challenges, disappointments, and successes of a teacher.

"Now being too old for teaching dolls at the windmill, here were real children, squirming and wiggling, to be taught about God. This function later was known as Gleaners, but at that time, it had no particular title.

"I first began thinking of youth worshipping in a 'nature setting' while on a family outing when I was young. We camped in the mountains near a sparkling, crystal-clear stream. The smell of the woods, the whisper of the breeze through the trees, the crackling of the underbrush as the deer sneaked through the campsite, along with the singing of the birds, gave me a spiritual sense of being. I felt God in His creations. Though only about 13 years of age at the time, I meditated on Him as the clear water rushed and swirled around me. I thought, 'How great it would be to have a group, like me, worshipping in similar surroundings.' However, I said nothing about this; it was my secret.

"A year passed, and again it was summertime. The temperature in our little city was over 100 degrees. It was nearing the July 4th celebration. A large carnival was coming to town. The pastor (my dad) began to think of the young people in his congregation. He did not want them to go to the carnival (that was a 'no, no' activity in those years), nor did he want them to feel they had had no 4th of July activity. He and my mother worked feverishly to prepare a camping trip. Everyone loaded into the back of a big truck, and we took off for the mountains. Mother cooked for all of these energetic youth with the help of one of the men members. Another adult initiated some fun activities while Dad centered on campfire worship and sunrise meditations. This was a memorable time for everyone.

"So once again, I found myself by the mountain brook, thinking on the grandeur and to know the God of the outdoors. We took long hikes up the mountain (Owl Creek Mountains), and there, also, I kept thinking of ways God could manifest Himself to those who worshipped in the outdoors. A dream was forming as the seeds had been

planted in fertile soil. It would be years, but, eventually, that seed would spring forth.

“Some 19 years later, in October 1945, I was appointed State Victory Leaders Secretary in Wyoming, a position in which I worked until September 1957. It was while serving in this capacity that I felt the need of special, spiritual help and fellowship for our young people. I wanted to see them trained in the Church work and for them to have opportunities to fellowship with each other.

“The dream, my safe-guarded secret, was taking form in my now adult (and more trained) mind. It began to intrude itself into my activities. I thought of it when I was alone; I dreamed of it in the night, and, finally, I revealed what had become my secret dream. My husband immediately became supportive. My cousin, Jack C. Decker, a pastor, zealously shared my enthusiasm, and plans began to formulate for the first youth camp in our Church organization.

“To finance this venture, we solicited wholesale houses and meat companies as well as flour mills and a sugar factory. Not all of these responded, but enough did to keep us going. Some, who were avid hunters, donated wild meat from their freezers. We accepted all of these gifts. We ground the meat into either hamburger or the makings for chili. The State Game and Fish Commission, at a huge lake near us, gave or threw away all the lake water fish because they devoured the trout. Since everyone knew we were preparing for a youth camp, with very little money, they readily told us of this, which we considered our good fortune.

“One of our members and her husband took me to the lake. What a sight! These huge fish had been trapped into a smaller area of the lake, and there we picked the fish up by tubs full. I was so excited at what the Lord had provided that I ran into the water, picking up the fish and shouting praises to God at the same time. To me, this was God supplying our needs.

“Little did I realize what it was going to be like to clean, fillet, and package these for the deep freeze. Stinky, yes, but aren’t all fish stories?

“Days before the time set for the camp, my kitchen was in a buzz. Ladies came in and helped make



cookies, cakes, pies, and such, which we froze. All of this seemed to be the cheaper way to feed the campers. An old, temperamental mimeograph machine was set up, and all the materials for the camp, including the lessons, were run off. Sometimes, we wondered which had the most ink—the tank of the machine, the paper, or us. At any rate, it was great work . . . it wasn’t from sun to sun; it was from sun to after midnight. But who cared? We were making steps toward the fulfillment of a dream, which had been buried in the soul of an individual who believed God would do all He had promised.

“Joseph dreamed, and his dreams kept him going. Tired? Of course, we were tired and sometimes things looked bad, but always, I could see young people fellowshiping and worshipping God somewhere in the great outdoors.

“August 5, 1951, the gates of the Presbyterian Campground at Story, Wyoming (a small resort in the Big Horn Mountains), swung wide to the first youth camp. What a day it was as excited young people came. They didn’t know what it was all about, but they were there. Before the week was over, just like all succeeding camps, the blessings had fallen.

“Much could be said about this campsite. The dorms were rustic mountain cabins, little more than a shelter. One could lie on the bunk and be



▲ **PHOTO** First Youth Camp 1951, *Dew Drops*, Elva Howard

lulled to sleep by the roar of the swift-moving mountain stream nearby. It was good to make friends with this stream . . . it was the wash basin. Can you imagine (divorced from our now modern facilities) what it would look like early in the morning to see a group of campers washing their faces, as well as brushing their teeth, along this stream? Don't say 'ugh' too fast because in the afternoon, when temperatures were at a high peak, it was a great place for a water fight.

"And what about showers? There was one lone shower house. This was a luxury, since the proprietors had installed this first one during the beginning of the season. Now all we had to do was designate the shower times for the boys' cabins and for the girls' cabins. All went well until the hot water turned cold. So what? We did have a shower house. The next year, we would have indoor plumbing, but for this first year, it was the famous, old outhouse.

"What a sight at night to see flashlights on the path; for sure, they were not out there by themselves; there was someone on that path besides the mountain squirrels, gophers, deer, and such.

"But who cared about lone shower houses, outhouses, or such when it was such fun to be together? Through those first nights, giggles rang out in the air, blending with the singing of the brook. It was just fun being there.

"That laughing brook had many purposes, for it was here on a Saturday afternoon that a calm spread over the deep portions, and many, who during the week had allowed the Lord Jesus Christ into their lives, followed the officiating minister into a meaningful baptismal service.

"From the beginning, the State Overseers of Wyoming, G. C. Decker, and South Dakota, F. E. Van De Venter, were very supportive. They willingly did anything that needed to be done: ran errands for special needs, sold refreshments, cut wood for cooking, and volunteered for whatever else was needful to make this activity worthwhile to the youth of their states. Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota participated the following years.

"For these young people from small churches, who had such few times to fellowship with others their age, this was an oasis in their year—a time of refreshing, a time to make friends, and a time of learning the truths of God's Word.

"Camp was now a reality—my dream had come true! I never thought of it becoming something for young people throughout the church. My dream was to fill a need for this group. I was praising God that He had heard my prayer and was filling a need, and this was a beginning."



MARSHA ROBINSON
MANAGING EDITOR

Marsha Robinson is the publications coordinator for the International Offices and managing editor of the *White Wing Messenger*. She is a contributing writer for the Regal Books anthology, *I Believe in Miracles*, and writes an online devotional, *The Fragrance of Flowers*. Marsha is an ordained COGOP minister actively working in prison ministry and community chaplaincy. Marsha serves as International Assembly Chief Clerk.



CAMP MEMORIES

CAMP MEMORIES



DEBBIE FREEMAN
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

Going to Camp Lowman in Leesville, Virginia, shaped the person I have become. As a camper and as a worker, I saw countless young men and women find and accept their calling into ministry at camp. After I started teaching public school, I continued to work in camp in the summers. I remember working in the kitchen with a man who drove a garbage truck. He got six weeks of vacation a year and spent half of those working youth camp. When we were at youth camp, we were all family. It didn't matter what occupation we had when we went back home. What mattered was that we were there to help young people find Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him.

I remember one day when I had slipped into the chapel to pray. Our state artist had created an incredible Styrofoam stand-up board that was displayed on the stage. It pictured people from all around the world whose skin colors were as varied as their attire. As I looked up, it was as if those people came to life. I felt like the Lord placed a mission call on my life. In 1992, I was able to go on a mission trip to Greece and Bulgaria. I came home enlightened and changed. I eventually spent 16 years teaching in metro Atlanta. My students came from a variety of countries, and for a time, they were my mission field. My husband and I had a son during that time. He was also my mission field.

A surprise came about 4 years ago. The Lord opened the opportunity for me to serve as registrar

for Spirit and Life Seminary. My church family has broadened from the United States to Africa, Canada, Central America, South America, Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. Thanks to Google Translate, I can communicate daily with my church family in Spanish and French. I am hoping that Korean or Chinese won't be too far off. God often begins to order our steps as young people seeking Him at youth camp, and He continues to guide those steps for the remainder of our lives. What a gift youth camp is to the Church!

CHERISHED MEMORIES OF YOUTH CAMP



JANICE MILLER
GALLATIN, TENNESSEE

One of the greatest privileges of my childhood was observing the camp directors and leaders in action—watching them coordinate schedules, organize staff, prepare facilities, estimate food and supply needs, and create meaningful experiences for hundreds of campers. I learned to appreciate the sacrifices directors and volunteers make to invest in young people. I also learned that no task is insignificant when it contributes to the work of God. I was beyond thrilled when I was allowed to help stock the shelves and organize the treats in the concession stand, and I dreamed of the day I would be old enough to stand at the window, take orders, and hand campers their favorite snacks. Looking back now, I realize that camp was doing more than creating happy memories; God was planting seeds of faith and preparing me for responsibilities I would carry later in life.

My thoughts return often to the beautiful, peaceful campgrounds in Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, and Kentucky—places where lifelong friendships were forged and spiritual foundations were strengthened. Recently I looked at memorabilia from the mid-1960s at Camp Hickory Hills in Madison, Tennessee. Before daily selfies and social media posts were a thing, we had annual picture day at camp. It was not uncommon for girls to wear hair rollers all day in order to look their best for the evening service. The only problem was that the official camp photo was taken during the day. Today, in shoeboxes and photo albums all over the state of Tennessee, there are permanent records of our generation looking like we were preparing for a hair spray commercial. Money can't buy memories like this.

YOUTH CAMP



EVELYN BATHE
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

Youth camp—Wow! Grateful doesn't begin to describe how I feel about my own experiences in church youth camps. My deep love for God's Word was awakened by Teacher Billy Murray in North Carolina youth camps. How can I forget when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in one of our nightly services? Even now, I can feel the same feeling of the atmosphere being charged with His mighty power! The long-lasting friendships that were forged at camp, even to this day, are nurturing, and they still continue to grow and minister to me. Many of the staff members who gave their time were spiritual mentors to me and I felt genuine love and acceptance by them. And meeting my future husband at camp was one of the best perks and the greatest blessings of my life. Together we have worked in youth camps, directed them, and continue to be passionate about the ministry of church youth camps. From cold showers taken from a water hose rigged up behind a shed, to trapping a bat in my quilt in the girls' cabin, to outdoor campfire services where I deepened my dedication to God, to mentoring other young girls in their walk with Christ—these are memories that

will warm my heart always, thanks to the passion of a godly and visionary lady, Elva Howard, who would not let go of a dream the Lord had given to her. We who love the youth camp ministry will be forever indebted to her willingness to follow God's dream!

WHERE EVERYTHING CHANGED



SCOTT GILLUM
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

Youth camp has a way of reaching young hearts at the very moment they are most open to being shaped. In that sacred space—away from routine, noise, and the expectations that press in—students often discover who they are, what they believe, and how deeply God is pursuing them. It's where friendships form quickly, worship feels alive, and Holy Spirit speaks with surprising clarity. Repeatedly, camp becomes a turning point: a place where callings awaken, wounds begin to heal, and faith becomes personal rather than inherited.

For many young people, camp is the first time they sense God not as an idea but as a living presence. The rhythms of grace and worship, the power of His presence and preaching, and the quiet moments woven into camp life create an atmosphere where the heart can finally breathe. Away from the noise of home and school, students begin to hear the gentle tug of the Spirit calling them deeper.

My own turning point came when I was twelve. That week in a California youth camp changed the trajectory of my life. Surrounded by others seeking God, I felt the unmistakable pull to surrender fully to Christ. I was baptized in water, and knew I wanted to become a member of my local church. Yet God was doing even more. In those same days, I sensed a stirring I didn't yet have language for: a calling into ministry, a holy nudge, a quiet certainty that God was setting my feet on a path that would shape the rest of my life—my "high road journey." Camp became the birthplace of both my intimate walk with Jesus and my lifelong calling.

Camp awakens purpose in young hearts—some called to ministry, others to missions, others simply

to live boldly in Christ. The Spirit-filled environment creates space for God to speak with conviction and clarity. And beyond the spiritual moments, camp forms friendships that anchor young people for years through late-night conversations, altar moments, and team challenges.

The true impact of youth camp is seen in the years that follow, as students return home with renewed confidence, stronger faith, and a clearer sense of God's calling. For many, it becomes the moment they look back on and say, "That's where everything changed."

Certainly, when Jesus showed up in a California Youth Camp, I was changed forever. That's my testimony!

CAMP MEMORY



CHAD LAMBERT
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

As I recall my most vivid camp memories, my mind always gravitates to the beauty and authenticity of the worship. The sense of God's presence as campers, gathered around the altar and lifting hands and voices to the Lord, moved me in ways I didn't fully understand at the time. I simply knew this was something special.

My family moved from Ohio to Virginia when I was eight years old. As I began to attend camp in my new state, I encountered new people, new scenery, and even new songs. In my particular camp, there was a time of learning new music each afternoon. This music session was led by Debbie Freeman—or as she was known at the time, Debbie Shewbridge. She so thoughtfully taught meaning behind lyrics, new melodies, and ensured campers weren't just singing songs by rote but from their hearts.

As time went on, Debbie encouraged me to play the piano for these sessions as she sang and taught. She took time to work with me individually during breaks in the schedule, ensuring I could support her teaching times adequately. Her confidence in my unseasoned ability had a profound impact on me, and as I look back, I can see her faith in God's plan for my life before I ever could.

I am forever grateful for the Debbie Freemans of camping ministry who took time away from their jobs and families to pour into my life. May the Lord continue calling us to mentor and develop the generation that is to come and carry His gospel further than we could imagine.

MEMORIES FROM OREGON YOUTH CAMP



KATHERINE OSBORN
KILGORE, TEXAS

I am one of those who got saved in my teens but did not have the opportunity to go to summer camp until I was 17. (The first year, I was newly saved, and my parents knew nothing about this "church" I had found. The second year, I was "tied" to a hospital bed for almost a month after a serious car wreck.) Thus, my first camp experience occurred when I was 17, and it had a significant impact on my life.

Oregon Youth Camp, at the time that I attended, was held at a beautiful, rustic campground near Silver Creek Falls. Our camp directors, Ed and Karen McKenzie, planned a special event that took us on a hike through the trees, creeks, and hills around the campground. (Sadly, I don't remember if this particular hike took us to the falls, but the terrain was beautiful nonetheless.) It did require us to cross several wooden bridges along the way. As we did, we did a symbolic "burning of bridges" representing past sins, habits, hurts, and bitterness that were part of our "old life." That event stayed with me through the years. In times of discouragement and struggle, I was reminded that the old life was gone, there was nothing to go back to, and I needed to move forward.

The second event, which likely occurred the next summer, had to do with an outdoor dedication service. From what I recall, we had candles lined up in the shape of a large cross on the hillside. Campers were directed to different sections of the cross if they felt a calling to a particular area of ministry. My calling directed me to the foot of the cross. As I prayed there with numerous other campers, I remember the Spirit descending on me, transporting me into the presence of Jesus. The people around

me seemed nonexistent as I felt like I was literally at the feet of Jesus. The encounter was real. I knew I belonged to Jesus—called and chosen by Him—and He had a plan for my life. That was 50 years ago. I have stumbled a few times (maybe more than a few) along the way, but this assurance of belonging to Him has remained.

CAMP MEMORY



LINDSEY SCHREIBER
LEBANON, TENNESSEE

A few years ago, I was serving as a cabin leader at camp. One of the campers, a girl of about 15, came to camp dressed as a boy, presented as a boy, and asked others to use male pronouns when speaking to her or referring to her. I made a mental note that the camper never directly asked me to use those pronouns. I remember wondering why.

As can be expected, there were tense moments around this young person as we proceeded through camp. In a small-group setting, someone referred to her by her birth name—her female name. An angry retort came from the camper: “That’s my dead name!” The room fell silent.

She continued to be defensive and angry, but I sensed something deeper was happening. Several times during the week, the Holy Spirit placed a picture in my mind of a sky full of clouds that parted each time I saw the image.

One evening, during the “call to worship” portion of the service, a talk was given centering on the story of Lazarus. I remember wondering why that particular Bible account was highlighted. I did not consciously form the thought that it was out of place, exactly, but a certain, strange stirring was going on in my heart.

At the end of that service, the camper took the hand of another cabin leader, and they started walking toward the altar. That leader looked around to me and, without saying anything, let me know she wanted me to go with them. I heard the Lord say, “This is your chance,” and I saw the parting clouds “vision” again. Convinced that all of this was the Lord’s doing, I said directly to Him (under my breath or in my mind), “Lord, I want to speak to *her*, not

the spirit that is troubling her.” I can’t recall saying anything like that to the Lord before.

When we got to the altar, I began asking questions: “Did you hear that story tonight about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead? Do you think that was saying anything to you?” She nodded. I proceeded. “You talked the other day about your dead name. The Lord is calling you by your name. He is calling you back to life!”

A great sense of breakthrough came when she expressed a longing that apparently had been buried beneath years of confusion: “I want to give my mom her daughter back.” We walked through a powerful, heartfelt prayer consecrating her life to Jesus. Immediately after, I asked her name and how she wished to be addressed. She used her birth name and female pronouns.

After service, she wanted to contact her mother. She joyously testified to her mother that she had given her life to Christ. The mother asked to speak to me. She wanted to know if I believed this was a sincere turn toward the Lord. I told her I was absolutely sure it was. The mother shared with me that she believed her daughter’s confusion was a result of being sexually assaulted—a grievous offense that had profoundly affected her sense of identity. My heart was broken for this young woman. I also rejoiced because I knew that God had started a healing journey that night.

Later, the teen shared that she had been dressing as a boy for three years but had always known it was not who she truly was. The family had previously attended an affirming church, where her transgender identity had been accepted and reinforced. Even after they moved to a more traditional church, no one spoke directly to the girl about her confusion or encouraged her to seek the Lord for answers. I know people are often at a loss to know what to do sometimes. But I also know the Lord orchestrated that week at camp to meet her where she was.

The young lady asked to be baptized. As we stood in the water together, I had the tremendous and joyful privilege to say, “I baptize this, my sister, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” My sister. I am so glad that God knows us, calls us by name, and makes us whole.



STEADFAST THROUGH THE SEASONS

A TRIBUTE TO BISHOP DR. CLAYTON MARTIN



There is a unique kind of leadership required to shepherd a region made up not of neighboring communities, but of islands scattered across thousands of miles of ocean. The Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands are breathtakingly beautiful, yet those who call them home know they are also places where life can change overnight. A hurricane can erase years of work in a matter of hours. Economic uncertainty can reshape communities. Political shifts, migration, and the changing realities of ministry continually present new challenges. Through every season, however, God has faithfully raised up leaders whose steady presence reminds His people that while circumstances may change, Christ remains the same. For the past 16 years, Bishop Dr. Clayton Martin has been one of those leaders.

When he was appointed general presbyter for the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands in 2010, Bishop Martin assumed responsibility for one of the Church of God of Prophecy's most geographically expansive and culturally diverse ministry areas. Stretching across 27 nations, speaking six major languages, and encompassing hundreds of congregations spread throughout the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean region, the assignment required far more than administrative oversight. It demanded a shepherd who could unify without uniformity, honoring the rich diversity of each nation while continually reminding them that they were one family, one mission, and one church in Jesus Christ. That has become the defining characteristic of his ministry.

Long before he was known throughout the international Church, Clayton Martin was simply a young man whose life was transformed by Christ. After becoming a Christian in 1972, he immersed himself in the life of the Church of God of Prophecy, serving wherever there was opportunity. His passion for ministry became evident early through his involvement in youth ministry and, especially, the camping ministry, where countless young lives were influenced through his leadership. Those formative years established patterns that would remain throughout his ministry: a love for people, a heart for discipleship, and an unwavering commitment to helping others discover God's purpose for their lives.

In May 1987, Bishop Martin entered full-time ministry when he was appointed pastor of the Church of God of Prophecy in George Town, Grand Cayman. What began as a pastoral assignment became the foundation for decades of increasingly significant leadership. His pastoral heart never diminished as his responsibilities grew. Whether serving a local congregation, overseeing multiple nations, or eventually providing leadership for an entire region, he approached every assignment with the conviction that ministry is first and foremost about people.

His gifts for leadership and administration soon became evident, and in 1998 he was appointed national overseer for Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Guyana, and French Guiana. During 12 years in that role, he helped strengthen churches, encourage pastors, develop leaders, and guide ministry across nations with distinct cultures and unique challenges. Those years prepared him well for the broader assignment that would follow and demonstrated his remarkable ability to lead with both conviction and compassion.

Throughout every stage of that journey, Bishop Martin has been joined by his faithful partner in ministry, Dr. Sonia Martin. More than simply accompanying her husband, she has shared fully in the calling God placed upon their family. A teacher by profession, she has faithfully served the Church through Sunday school ministry, media and broadcasting, teaching, leadership, and theological service, including her work on the Church's Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee. Together, the Martins have traveled extensively throughout the islands, preaching, teaching, encouraging pastors, strengthening congregations, and quietly demonstrating what a shared calling in ministry can accomplish. Their partnership has reflected not only mutual devotion to one another but a common commitment to advancing the kingdom of God wherever He has called them.

Their family has also been an important part of that testimony. Together they have raised their daughter, Sheree Kimberly Elizabeth, while balancing the demands of international ministry with the priorities of home and family. Those who know the Martins understand that their ministry has never been an individual pursuit but a shared



calling, one embraced together with grace, humility, and sacrifice.

As general presbyter, Bishop Martin's leadership has coincided with years marked by unprecedented challenges. Throughout his tenure, devastating hurricanes swept repeatedly across portions of the Caribbean, leaving churches damaged, homes destroyed, and entire communities facing unimaginable loss. Economic instability tested families and congregations alike. Political transitions affected nations across the region, while migration changed the landscape of many local churches. Then came the global COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting worship, travel, fellowship, and ministry in ways few could have imagined. Through every season of uncertainty, Bishop Martin remained a reassuring presence.

He encouraged pastors whose congregations had been displaced. He reminded churches that

although buildings could be damaged, the Church itself remained strong. He fostered cooperation among nations, helped coordinate ministry during difficult circumstances, and continually pointed God's people toward hope rather than fear. Rather than allowing adversity to define the region, he encouraged believers to see every challenge as another opportunity for God to demonstrate His faithfulness.

Steadiness is often an overlooked quality in leadership because it rarely captures headlines, yet it is precisely what God's people need when circumstances become uncertain. Throughout 16 years of regional leadership, Bishop Martin demonstrated that faithful leadership is not measured by dramatic moments but by consistent presence, showing up, standing firm, speaking hope, and leading with confidence rooted in Christ.

That confidence has never been rooted in personality or position but in a deep trust in God's faithfulness. Those who have served alongside him know that his calm demeanor has never been mistaken for complacency. Rather, it reflects a settled assurance that while seasons inevitably change, the mission of the church does not. Pastors still need encouragement. Congregations still need shepherding. Communities still need the gospel. Young leaders still need mentoring. The work of the kingdom continues, and faithful servants simply continue doing what God has called them to do.

Under Bishop Martin's leadership, the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands have continued to flourish. Today the region encompasses more than 131,000 members worshipping in over 830 churches, served by nearly 1,700 credentialed ministers. In recent years alone, thousands have come to Christ, thousands have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and thousands more have entered the waters of baptism as evidence that the Spirit of God continues to move powerfully throughout the islands. These numbers represent far more than statistics. They tell the story of lives transformed, churches strengthened, and communities impacted by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While his administrative responsibilities have been significant, Bishop Martin has never ceased to be a preacher, teacher, and shepherd. He has traveled tirelessly throughout the islands, often visiting places few outside the region ever see. Whether ministering in a large national convention or encouraging a small congregation on a remote island, he has consistently brought the same message of hope, biblical faithfulness, evangelism, discipleship, prayer, and stewardship. His conviction has always been that every church matters because every soul matters to God.

His commitment to lifelong learning has further strengthened his ministry. Earning a Bachelor of Arts in Religion, a Master of Arts in Religion, and eventually a Doctor of Ministry degree, Bishop Martin has demonstrated that effective leadership requires both spiritual depth and intellectual growth. Yet those academic accomplishments have never overshadowed the humility with which

he serves. Instead, they have equipped him to teach, disciple, and lead with wisdom grounded in both Scripture and experience.

Perhaps no statement captures Bishop Martin's philosophy of life more clearly than the conviction he has often expressed: "The measure of life is not in its duration, but its donation." That principle has been evident throughout every season of his ministry. Rather than seeking recognition, he has consistently sought opportunities to give—to give his time, his wisdom, his strength, his prayers, and his life in service to Christ and His church.

The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58 NKJV). Those words have described Bishop Martin's ministry with remarkable accuracy. Through changing seasons, changing responsibilities, and changing circumstances, he has remained steadfast because his confidence has rested not in changing conditions but in the unchanging faithfulness of God.

As Bishop Dr. Clayton Martin concludes his service as general presbyter for the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands, he leaves behind far more than 16 years of faithful leadership. He leaves stronger churches, encouraged pastors, developed leaders, healthier ministries, and countless lives touched by the gospel through his influence. Alongside Dr. Sonia Martin, whose faithful partnership has strengthened every step of the journey, he leaves a legacy of humble service that will continue to bear fruit for generations to come.

The Caribbean is stronger because of his leadership. The Church of God of Prophecy is richer because of his example. Most importantly, the kingdom of God has advanced because one man answered the Lord's call more than five decades ago and has spent his life faithfully following the Chief Shepherd. As he enters a new season of ministry, the global Church honors Bishop Dr. Clayton Martin with gratitude, thanksgiving, and the prayer that the words he has long desired to hear will one day be spoken by the Master Himself: "Well done, good and faithful servant."



FAITHFUL ACROSS FRONTIERS HONORING BISHOP CLAYTON ENDECOTT



For nearly three decades as general presbyter for Wider Europe and the Middle East as well as more than four decades of missionary service before and during that assignment, Bishop Clayton Endecott has quietly helped shape one of the most complex and culturally diverse ministry regions in the Church of God of Prophecy. His influence can be found in churches planted, leaders developed, nations opened, theological conversations engaged, and generations of believers equipped to carry the gospel where it is often difficult, and sometimes dangerous, to do so. As he concludes this chapter of leadership, the Church pauses not simply to recognize years of service, but to honor a life consistently surrendered to the purposes of God.

At the center of that story has been the faithful partnership of his wife, Wanda. Together they have embraced every season of ministry, serving side by side through pastoral ministry, missionary work, and international leadership. One year after graduating from Tomlinson College, Clayton and Wanda were married and entered pastoral ministry. They began serving in Joliet, Illinois, later ministering in California before spending six fruitful years pastoring in Pekin, Illinois, where their first two sons were born. During those years, Brother Endecott was ordained as a bishop and began serving as a district overseer, but God was already preparing them for something much larger.

In 1983, with two young sons and what was intended to be a two-year commitment, the Endecotts moved to Langen, Germany, to pastor a congregation composed primarily of American military families. Few could have imagined that what began as a temporary assignment would become a lifetime calling.

Rather than remaining within the comfort of an English-speaking ministry, Clayton and Wanda immersed themselves in German culture. They learned the language, built relationships within the community, and reached young people through street evangelism and a Christian coffeehouse ministry known as the *Teestube*. Out of those early relationships grew something extraordinary.

In 1989, a German-speaking congregation was born in the Endecotts' apartment. From

those modest beginnings emerged a thriving movement. Today, multiple flourishing churches, additional church plants, and numerous mission works trace their spiritual heritage back to that simple act of obedience. Many of today's pastors and leaders were once teenagers disciplined under Clayton and Wanda's patient investment in young lives, reflecting Bishop Endecott's longstanding conviction that the future of the Church is built through developing leaders rather than simply establishing congregations.

That commitment to leadership development would shape not only Germany but an entire region. Young believers became mature disciples. Disciples became ministers. Ministers became church planters. Church planters became national overseers. Through that steady multiplication of leaders, the kingdom continued to expand in ways that no single ministry could have accomplished alone.

In 1993 Bishop Endecott was appointed overseer of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Finland. His responsibilities would eventually expand to include Hungary, Romania, Georgia,



Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Ukraine, Israel, and additional nations across the region. Then, in 1998, when the Church of God of Prophecy adopted its plurality model of international leadership, he was selected as one of the denomination's first general presbyters, serving the vast region of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Middle East.

Few ministry assignments have required navigating greater diversity. Within this single area are ancient Christian communities and newly planted congregations, thriving democracies and nations experiencing conflict, dozens of languages, countless cultures, and an extraordinary range of political and religious realities. Some ministries flourish publicly, while others advance quietly and wisely. Shepherding such a region has required more than administrative skill; it has demanded discernment, patience, cultural humility, theological depth, and unwavering dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Those who have served alongside Bishop Endecott have consistently seen those qualities reflected in his leadership. He has been known as a careful listener before becoming a decisive leader, one who values local voices while maintaining a broad global vision and who approaches complicated situations with thoughtful wisdom rather than quick conclusions.

His preparation for such leadership reflects an unusual combination of pastoral experience and academic pursuit. After earning degrees in philosophy and psychology, he pursued graduate work at the University of Illinois before God's call redirected his path toward Europe. In Germany, he continued studying biblical languages and theology at Goethe University and later pursued doctoral studies in Pentecostal constructive theology through Bangor University in Wales. His academic interests never became detached from ministry but instead strengthened his ability to serve the Church thoughtfully while engaging both theological scholarship and practical ministry.

That theological credibility also opened doors beyond denominational boundaries. Bishop Endecott served on the official Pentecostal-



Catholic Dialogues initiated through the Vatican and participated in numerous German and international committees dedicated to fostering understanding among Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical believers. He also served on the board of the European Theological Seminary in Germany, investing in theological education for future generations of ministers.

Yet those who know him best are just as likely to speak of personal conversations as they are of impressive accomplishments. They remember encouragement offered at precisely the right moment, thoughtful questions that challenged them to grow, and a pastor who believed in them before they fully recognized God's calling in their own lives.

One testimony from the Middle East illustrates this well. A young leader recalled that when opportunities for theological education seemed



impossible, “Brother Clayton and his family saw in me what I could not see in myself.” That investment not only changed one man’s future but strengthened the ministry of an entire community during seasons of conflict and uncertainty. Stories like this have been repeated throughout the region, revealing one of Bishop Endecott’s greatest gifts: recognizing God’s calling in others and helping them develop it.

Throughout these decades of ministry, Wanda has faithfully shared in the work. Whether adapting to new cultures, opening their home, supporting ministry initiatives, or encouraging pastors and families across the region, she has been a steady partner whose quiet faithfulness has complemented her husband’s leadership. Together they have modeled a life devoted to God’s calling.

Their family likewise became part of that testimony. What began with two young sons arriving in Germany eventually became a family of four children, all of whom have married and served in churches throughout Germany and Europe. Today, their growing number of grandchildren continue that legacy of faith and service, providing one more reminder that ministry

extends beyond public leadership into the lives of future generations.

Looking across the years, statistics tell only part of the story. Churches have multiplied, new nations have been opened, leaders have been trained, and the Church has expanded throughout the region under Bishop Endecott’s leadership. Yet numbers alone cannot measure spiritual influence. They cannot account for late-night conversations with discouraged pastors, prayers offered in hospital rooms or around conference tables, the courage required to minister through political upheaval and war, or the countless quiet acts of faithfulness that rarely appear in reports but are fully known to God.

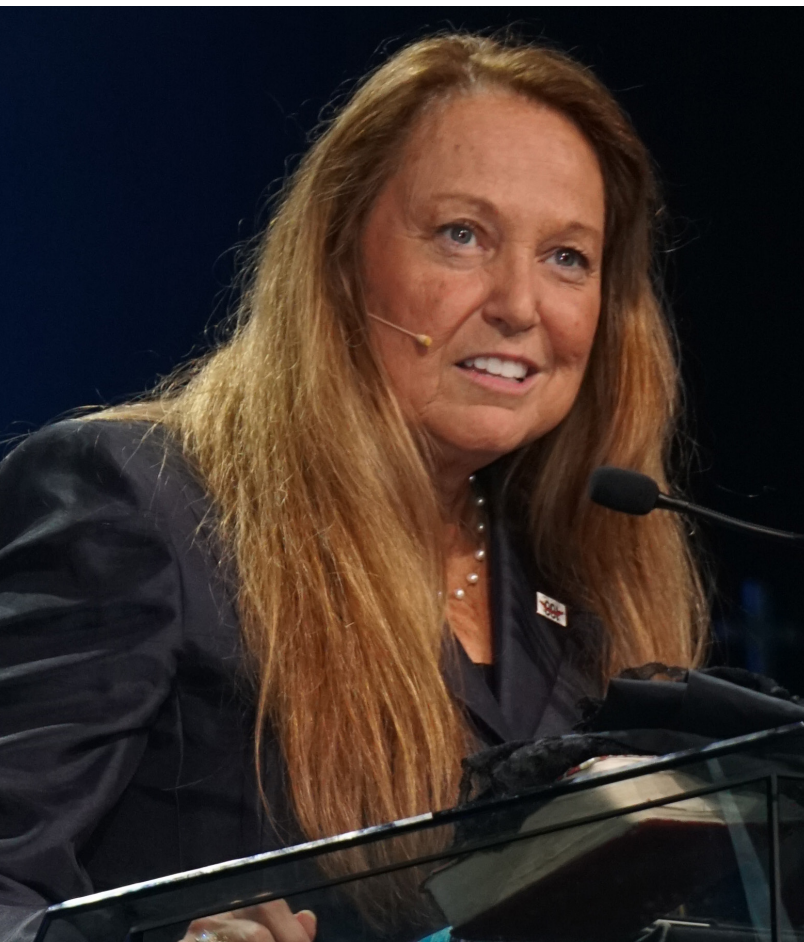
As Bishop Endecott transitions from his role as general presbyter, the churches of Wider Europe and the Middle East stand as living testimony to what God can accomplish through ordinary people who simply continue saying yes to His call. His leadership has consistently pointed people toward Christ, invested in emerging leaders, and strengthened the mission of the Church across one of the world’s most challenging ministry fields.

His guiding verse has long been Joshua 24:15: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Those words have not merely been quoted throughout his ministry; they have been lived across continents, cultures, and generations. Future pastors will preach in churches the Endecotts helped establish. Future missionaries will serve in nations they helped open. Future leaders will disciple others because someone first recognized God’s calling in their lives and took the time to invest in them. That is the enduring legacy of Bishop Clayton Endecott—a legacy measured not only by years of faithful service, but by lives transformed, churches strengthened, and generations prepared to carry the gospel forward. For that example, the Church of God of Prophecy offers its deepest gratitude.

Thank you, Bishop Clayton Endecott, for faithfully serving Christ, His church, and the nations. Your life reminds us that the most enduring ministries are not built on recognition, but on steadfast obedience to God’s call.



DR. CATHERINE PAYNE
A LIFE POURED OUT IN SERVICE



For more than five decades, Dr. Catherine Payne has faithfully answered God's call to serve His people. Whether ministering to a congregation, encouraging a missionary, mentoring a young leader, or responding to a crisis halfway around the world, her life has been marked by an unwavering commitment to the gospel and a deep love for the Church of God of Prophecy.

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, on June 22, 1956, Cathy's ministry journey began early. As a young woman serving in Norview, Virginia, she became involved in youth and children's ministries, developing a passion for serving that would shape the course of her life. Alongside her husband, John, she embraced God's call to evangelistic ministry, traveling throughout Virginia and beyond from 1977 to 1985. Those years on the road cultivated a heart for people and a dependence on God's faithfulness that would remain central to her ministry for the rest of her life.

In 1985, Cathy and John relocated to Bakersfield, California, where they served as co-pastors of the local Church of God of Prophecy congregation for eight years. During this season, Cathy also served as California State Youth and Children's Ministries director, investing in the lives of young people while helping strengthen local churches throughout the state. Never content to stop learning, she earned her associate degree with honors from Bakersfield College while balancing the demands of ministry and family.

In 1993, Cathy accepted an appointment that would influence generations of women around the world. Moving to Cleveland, Tennessee, she became the Church of God of Prophecy International Director of Women's Ministries, a role she would serve with distinction for 19 years. Through conferences and retreats she helped countless women discover their gifts and deepen their faith in God.

Then, in 2012, she began a new chapter as coordinator of Global Missions Ministries. What followed was an expansion of an already remarkable ministry. Over the years, her responsibilities have taken her to more than 130 nations, connecting her with leaders, pastors, missionaries, and congregations across every inhabited continent. Her work has strengthened

partnerships, encouraged indigenous ministry, supported church planting efforts, assisted orphan care initiatives, and helped tell the story of what God is doing throughout the global Church.

Her academic accomplishments reflect the same commitment to excellence that characterizes her ministry. Cathy earned a Master of Divinity with a concentration in Biblical Studies from Pentecostal Theological Seminary in 2013 and a Doctor of Ministry in Global Pentecostalism from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2018.

Cathy is a powerful and effective communicator. Many still remember her evening message during the 2018 International Assembly in Chattanooga, a message that left a lasting impression on those who heard it. Others recall the moving healing service she led during another International Assembly, where she shared her testimony and then led worshippers through times of prayer and healing. Through events such as Mission Encounter and the Mission Breakfast, she has consistently provided opportunities for the Church to hear the testimonies of leaders from around the world, believing that stories of God's faithfulness inspire faith and vision for the future.

Yet perhaps her greatest contribution cannot be measured by degrees or miles traveled. Around the world, many leaders affectionately call her "Mom." That simple title may be the clearest reflection of her ministry. Like a mother, she is available when people need her most. Pastors and national leaders know they can call her at any hour, and she will answer. She laughs with them during times of celebration. She weeps with them during seasons of loss. When a crisis arises, she immediately begins making phone calls and seeking practical solutions. Her concern is never limited to a project or a program; it is always centered on people.

Those who work alongside her have witnessed countless acts of quiet sacrifice. She arrives early. She stays late. She carries burdens that few others see. She advocates for leaders facing impossible circumstances. She remembers names, families, and prayer requests. She rejoices when churches flourish and hurts when they suffer. Her ministry is one of heartfelt love and tireless service.

Cathy was married to her faithful husband, John, for 47 years until his passing in September 2023. Together they built a ministry partnership that touched countless lives. She is the proud mother of their son, Christopher, and grandmother to five beloved grandchildren: Alexander, Caden, Jonathan, and identical twin granddaughters, Ashley and Aubrey.

Looking back over more than 50 years of ministry, there is a consistent theme woven throughout every chapter of Cathy Payne's story: a willingness to say yes to God and yes to people. Whether serving in a local church, leading an international ministry, standing behind a pulpit, or answering a late-night phone call from a leader in need, she has devoted her life to serving Christ and the Church of God of Prophecy.

At the end of the day, what many will remember most is not simply what Cathy Payne accomplished, but how she made people feel: valued, encouraged, and loved. Her legacy is found in the countless lives she has touched around the world and in the leaders who are stronger because she believed in them, prayed for them, and walked beside them. Cathy Payne has faithfully served the Lord, and the global Church of God of Prophecy is better because she did.

TRIBUTE: THE Cathy Payne



STEPHANIE ROBERTS
GLOBAL MISSIONS
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

In 2016, a friend told me about a job opening with Global Missions. At the time, I wasn't looking for another position. I genuinely loved my job at White Wing Christian Bookstore and felt content where I was. Still, the opportunity lingered in the back of my mind. For weeks, I debated whether I should apply.



The truth is that I had almost convinced myself not to. Part of my hesitation was that the position meant working with "THE Cathy Payne."

Now, if you grew up in the Church of God of Prophecy, chances are you knew the name Cathy Payne. I certainly did. My home church had a vibrant women's ministry, and every year the ladies would travel to Lake Barkley for Ladies' Retreat. They would return home refreshed, inspired, and full of stories, laughter, and joy. As a young girl, those retreats seemed almost magical, and Cathy Payne was one of the names I heard again and again. Long before I ever met her, I knew of her influence and leadership.

So, when I learned the position would place me under her leadership, I was intimidated. To me, Cathy Payne wasn't just a ministry leader. She was one of the most respected women in our church movement whose influence reached far beyond the churches she served.

As the application deadline drew near, I had pretty much settled on not applying. Then something unexpected happened.

Cathy Payne walked into my office.

She asked if I would consider applying for the position.

I was stunned. I could not believe that someone I had admired from a distance for so many years would personally seek me out. Looking back, I have realized something: You can't just say no to Cathy Payne—not because she is forceful, but because she has a remarkable way of seeing potential in people before they see it in themselves.



And thankfully for me, she didn't take my first hesitation as a final answer.

Looking back now, I can't help but smile at how intimidated I was by "THE Cathy Payne."

Over the past ten years, I have had the privilege of seeing the woman behind the reputation. I have watched her minister to people from every walk of life, and I have learned that no one leaves her presence without feeling seen, loved, and encouraged. Her radiant smile and warm hugs have a way of making people feel like they belong. She has a gift for telling stories that captivate your attention and point your heart back to the faithfulness of God. To Cathy, no one is a stranger because everyone is family. It is no surprise that so many of our international brothers and sisters lovingly call her "Mom" or "Mama Cathy."

While countless people have experienced Cathy's ministry, I consider it one of God's greatest gifts that I have experienced it personally.

Over the past decade, Cathy has walked beside me through seasons of transition, uncertainty, and growth. She has prayed with me, counseled me, and cheered me on when I needed encouragement the most. Time and again, she has reminded me that I am valuable, not only to this ministry but to the kingdom of God. Her belief in me often came before I fully believed in myself.

I experienced this firsthand during my very first International Assembly. I had only been with Global Missions for three months, and one of my biggest responsibilities was planning Mission Encounter. The pressure of organizing such a large event in such a short amount of time felt overwhelming.

I knew how important it was not only to those attending but also to our international brothers and sisters who had traveled so far to represent their nations.

On the morning of the event, I realized I had failed to assign a booth for two of our African brothers who had not yet been officially appointed. When they came to me asking where their booth was, my heart sank. I was devastated. I tried to hold myself together, but eventually I slipped behind our booth and cried.

It didn't take long for Cathy to find me.

She gently placed her hands on my shoulders, looked me in the eyes, and said, "It's okay. We'll find a solution."

And that's exactly what we did. We walked through the event space together until we found an empty booth that was not going to be used. Cathy grabbed a black Sharpie, turned the booth sign over to the blank side, and wrote the names of the two nations in big letters. In a matter of minutes, what had felt like an impossible failure became a solvable problem.

That moment has stayed with me for ten years. Cathy did not make me feel ashamed of my mistake. She helped me find a solution, reminded me that mistakes don't define us, and showed me what gracious leadership looks like.

I have also had the privilege of witnessing her faith through seasons of profound personal loss. From saying goodbye to her mother to losing the love of her life, I have watched Cathy grieve with honesty and vulnerability. She never pretended the pain wasn't real. Yet, even in her deepest sorrow, she never stopped proclaiming the goodness and faithfulness of God. Watching her live out her faith in those moments may have been one of the greatest lessons she ever taught me.

The young woman who was once afraid to work for "THE Cathy Payne" could never have imagined that she would one day call her mentor, friend, and someone I consider family. I will always be grateful that she walked into my office that day and refused to let me miss what God had planned for me.

TRIBUTE TO CATHY PAYNE: The Woman Behind the Name



SHELLY WILBANKS
GLOBAL MISSIONS
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

During the International Assemblies of my childhood, I was usually “working” alongside my dad behind the scenes. So, while I had known of Cathy Payne, I didn’t really know her. It wasn’t until Cathy moved to Cleveland to lead Women’s Ministries that I began to know the woman behind the name.

Several years later, while I was working at the White Wing Bookstore, a position opened in Women’s Ministries. I applied, but I didn’t get the job. A few years later, after Cathy moved into Global Missions, another position became available. I applied again, and I didn’t get that one, either.

What happened next, however, has stayed with me ever since. Cathy came to the mall where I was working to tell me face to face that she had chosen someone else. She could have made a phone call or sent an email, but instead, she took the time to personally deliver the news. Before she left, she told me she would be praying for me. At the time, I appreciated the kindness, but I had no idea how significant those words would become.

Not long afterward, I left the White Wing Bookstore and spent eleven months unemployed. Those months were some of the hardest of my life. I felt worthless and betrayed, and I questioned my abilities, my value, and even my future. When I finally found another job, it wasn’t because it was

what I wanted to do. It was simply something to pay the bills while I searched for something else.

Then I heard that Cathy needed to fill another position. I remember questioning myself: *Why am I even considering this? She’s already told me no twice.* But something kept nudging me to apply, so I did. This time, I got the job.

When I joined the Global Missions team, I wasn’t bringing my best self to work. I was broken, bruised, discouraged, and carrying the weight of months of rejection and self-doubt. More than a job, I needed healing.

For the next two years, Cathy consistently poured encouragement into my life. She reminded me of my value—not just to her, not just to the Global Missions team, and not just to the Church of God of Prophecy, but as a person. Through encouraging words, genuine belief in me, and a willingness to invest in my life, God used her to heal the broken and battered person I had become. She saw value in me long before I could see it in myself.

Twelve years later, she is still pouring into my life. She never really stopped; the encouragement simply became less frequent because, perhaps, she could see the healing taking place. Now it comes more randomly, but always at exactly the right moment. It is as though she somehow knows when my confidence is wavering or when I need to be reminded that I am capable and valued. Those moments rarely feel as though they are coming from a supervisor. They come from a friend.

So, when I think about Cathy Payne’s influence on my life, I think of someone who invested in a person, not just an employee. I think of someone who spoke life into a heart that desperately needed to hear it. I think of someone who helped restore confidence that had been lost and who continues, even today, to offer encouragement with remarkable timing and genuine care. For that, and for the friend she has become, I will always be grateful.



A SHEPHERD OF THE NEXT GENERATION A TESTIMONY OF BISHOP KIRK RISING



Some leaders leave behind impressive programs. Others are remembered for conferences, strategies, or organizational accomplishments. While those achievements certainly have their place, the truest measure of ministry is found in people. Long after events have concluded and titles have changed, the lives shaped through faithful leadership continue to bear fruit for generations. That is the legacy of Bishop Kirk Rising.

As he concludes his service as International Youth Ministries director for the Church of God of Prophecy, the global Church celebrates not only years of faithful leadership but also a ministry that has consistently looked beyond the present to invest in the future. Throughout decades of service, Bishop Rising has believed that young people are not merely the future of the Church, they are an essential part of the “now” of the Church. More importantly, he has possessed the rare ability to see God’s potential in young men and women long before they recognized it in themselves. That ability has defined his ministry.

Long before he assumed international leadership, Kirk Rising developed a heart for discipling young people through local church ministry, youth leadership, and missionary service. His assignments carried him from the United States to Germany and French Polynesia, where he discovered firsthand that although cultures differ, the call of Christ remains the same. Young people everywhere long for purpose, belonging, and opportunities to serve. Those experiences shaped a ministry philosophy that would later influence thousands of churches across the Church of God of Prophecy.

Before becoming International Youth Ministries director, Bishop Rising faithfully served as a youth pastor and as a state youth director, investing countless hours in camps, retreats, leadership conferences, discipleship gatherings, and local congregations. Those who worked alongside him quickly recognized that he viewed every event as something greater than an event. Every retreat became an opportunity to call young people into deeper discipleship. Every camp became fertile ground for future pastors, missionaries, evangelists,

worship leaders, teachers, and church planters. Every conversation became an opportunity to encourage someone who was still discovering God’s purpose for his or her life.

When Bishop Rising accepted the responsibility of leading International Youth Ministries, he carried that same philosophy onto the global stage. Rather than focusing primarily on programs, he emphasized people. Rather than asking how the Church could simply attract young people, he continually challenged leaders to disciple them. During his tenure, the Church of God of Prophecy continued its remarkable growth around the world, and International Youth Ministries reflected that expanding global vision. Bishop Rising encouraged ministry that crossed cultural boundaries while remaining rooted in biblical truth. He championed leadership development that equipped national and regional leaders to minister effectively within their own cultures while remaining united in doctrine, mission, and purpose. Young leaders from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, North America, and the Pacific increasingly found themselves connected by a shared calling to advance the kingdom of God.

Bishop Rising’s leadership continually reminded the Church that youth ministry is not a department operating on the margins of church life. It is one of the Church’s greatest investments in the generations to come. Every teenager who discovers a call to ministry, every young adult who chooses faithful discipleship, and every emerging leader who is mentored with wisdom becomes



part of a legacy that extends far beyond a single generation.

Across the world today are pastors who first sensed God's calling while participating in youth ministry. There are missionaries serving among unreached peoples, evangelists proclaiming the gospel, worship leaders leading congregations into God's presence, and faithful church members quietly serving in local congregations because someone believed in them before they fully believed in themselves. While every story has its own unique path, many have been influenced by the leadership, encouragement, and vision that Bishop Rising has consistently demonstrated.

Throughout those years of ministry, Bishop Rising has never served alone. Beside him has been his wife, Sarah, whose faithful partnership has strengthened every season of their journey together. Like so many ministry spouses whose influence is often expressed quietly rather than publicly, Sarah has shared in the demands of travel, the rhythms of international ministry, the hospitality extended to leaders from around the world, and the countless unseen moments of encouragement that sustain those serving in God's kingdom. Together they have demonstrated that ministry is most effective when it flows from a shared commitment to Christ.

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy, "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2 NKJV). That simple pattern of faithful disciples making faithful disciples has always been at the heart of Bishop Rising's ministry. He has understood that leadership is never about creating followers for oneself. It is about preparing others to follow Christ and equipping them to lead those who come after them.

Perhaps that is why his influence has been so enduring. Programs eventually change. Ministry methods evolve. New technologies reshape communication. Yet the timeless work of discipling young believers remains unchanged. Through changing cultures and changing generations, Bishop Rising has remained committed to that enduring mission, calling young people to lives marked by prayer, holiness, biblical discipleship,



evangelism, servant leadership, and a passion for the mission of God.

As this season of international leadership comes to a close, the Church of God of Prophecy gives thanks for a ministry that has consistently invested in what matters most. Bishop Kirk Rising leaves behind far more than years of faithful service. He leaves leaders who are now mentoring others, pastors who are shepherding congregations, missionaries carrying the gospel to the nations, and countless young men and women who discovered that God could use their lives because someone believed He already was.

Together, Kirk and Sarah Rising have modeled what it means to invest faithfully in the next generation. Their ministry reminds us that the Church does not secure its future merely by preserving its past. It does so by recognizing God's call in young people, walking beside them with patience and wisdom, and releasing them to fulfill His purpose.

The influence of Bishop Kirk Rising cannot ultimately be measured by miles traveled, conferences conducted, or years of service. It is measured in transformed lives. It is seen in every leader who now encourages another, every disciple who now makes disciples, and every young believer who steps forward in faith because someone first saw God's hand upon their life.

For that enduring legacy, the Church of God of Prophecy offers its heartfelt gratitude to Bishop Kirk Rising and Sarah for their faithful service, their unwavering commitment to the next generation, and their steadfast devotion to Jesus Christ.



FAITHFULLY EQUIPPING THE CHURCH
HONORING THE MINISTRY OF
BISHOP DR. MICHAEL HERNANDEZ





Throughout the history of the Church, God has called men and women to different expressions of ministry. Some are called primarily to evangelize. Others shepherd congregations, plant churches, or serve in administrative leadership. Still others are entrusted with the important work of preparing and equipping those who will, in turn, serve the people of God. While that work often takes place behind the scenes, its influence extends far beyond the classroom, shaping leaders whose ministries will impact generations to come.

For many years, Bishop Dr. Michael Hernandez has devoted himself to that calling.

At the International Offices, he served as World Language coordinator, a member of the Assembly Task Force, and a contributor to the Minister's Development Program, which became a requirement for ministerial licensure. More recently, through his service as president of Spirit and Life Seminary and director of Accredited Ministry Development (AMD), he has invested in the preparation of ministers, encouraged lifelong learning, and helped strengthen theological education within the Church of God of Prophecy.

The entire AMD staff worked tirelessly under Bishop Hernandez's leadership to complete the requirements for certification from the Association for Hispanic Theological Education. Spirit and Life Seminary was granted this certification on March 29, 2022. Three years later, the seminary was further awarded accredited status with the

Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.

Throughout Bishop Hernandez's years of leadership, Spirit and Life Seminary continued its mission of providing accessible, Christ-centered theological education for ministers and church leaders around the world. As the Church of God of Prophecy has expanded across nations and cultures, the need for well-prepared leaders has grown alongside it. Helping create opportunities for biblical and ministerial training has therefore remained an important contribution to the life of the global Church.

His work in Accredited Ministry Development likewise reflected a commitment to helping ministers pursue continuing education and professional development. Through partnerships, academic initiatives, and leadership development opportunities, Bishop Hernandez encouraged ministers to view learning not as preparation for ministry alone, but as a lifelong responsibility. That emphasis has benefited many who desired to deepen both their understanding of Scripture and their effectiveness in ministry.

Those who have served in educational leadership understand that the work extends well beyond curriculum and administration. It involves encouraging students, mentoring emerging leaders, and supporting faculty. In our context, it means helping create an environment where learning serves and bolsters the mission of the

Church of God of Prophecy. While many of those contributions occur quietly and away from public attention, they nevertheless play an important role in strengthening ministry throughout the denomination.

Throughout these years of service, Bishop Hernandez has not walked that journey alone. Beside him has been his wife, Kara, whose partnership and encouragement have accompanied him through the many responsibilities that come with international ministry. Like so many ministry spouses, she has shared in both the visible and unseen aspects of serving the Church, offering support, hospitality, and encouragement along the way. Their shared commitment has been an important part of their years of ministry together.

The work of preparing leaders is rarely measured by a single accomplishment. Its fruit is more often seen over time in the lives of pastors who shepherd congregations faithfully, missionaries who carry the gospel to new places, teachers who open God's Word with wisdom, and leaders who continue investing in others. Every opportunity to equip another servant of Christ has the potential to influence ministries and communities far beyond what any one person can fully see.

As Bishop Hernandez concludes this chapter of his ministry with the Church of God of Prophecy, we recognize his years of service in theological education and ministerial development with

gratitude. Leadership transitions are a natural part of the life of every organization, creating opportunities for new assignments while building upon foundations laid by those who have served before. God continually guides His people through such seasons, faithfully leading both individuals and ministries into the work He has prepared for them.

We are grateful for Bishop Hernandez's contributions to ministerial education, for his investment in developing leaders, and for the ways he has served the Church through World Language, Spirit and Life Seminary, and Accredited Ministry Development. We also recognize with appreciation the partnership Kara has shared throughout these years of ministry. As Michael and Kara begin a new season, we pray that the Lord will continue to guide their steps, grant them wisdom, and open doors for meaningful opportunities to serve. May they know His peace as they look to the future, His strength for every new assignment, and His continued blessing upon their family.

The Church of God of Prophecy remains committed to preparing leaders for faithful ministry in every generation, and we move forward with confidence that God continues to direct His church according to His purpose. We thank Bishop Dr. Michael Hernandez for his years of service, and we extend our sincere prayers and best wishes to him and Kara as they pursue the next chapter of God's calling upon their lives.





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