

Called to Serve

• January 2012 •



FROM THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

2012: "The Year of the Lord's Favor"

Several weeks ago, around 4 a.m., I awakened from a dream in which the Lord had asked me, "George, if you had only one request, what would you ask of Me?"

For a few moments in that daze of half-sleep and half-awake, my mind rapidly considered two of the more famous requests of the Lord in Scripture: Solomon asked for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9; 2 Chronicles 1:10) and Jabez prayed for God to bless him, extend his territory, let God's hand be with him, keep him from harm and pain (1 Chronicles 4:10). Those are great requests, and I certainly want to pray those as did Solomon and Jabez.

But, I quickly set aside those requests and thought of my own, "Lord," I said, "if You can give me only one thing—grant me Your favor."

Only weeks later did I realize that I was not alone in my desire. I turned to Scripture and was amazed that the word *favor* occurs about 150 times. In making my request I had joined some notable persons from the Bible who either sought or experienced God's favor: Abel (in contrast to Cain), Noah, Moses, Naphtali, Samuel, David, Jehoahaz, Manasseh, Nehemiah, Hezekiah, and Mary (Genesis 4:4,5; Genesis 6:8; Exodus 32:11, 33:12, 34:9; Deuteronomy 33:23; 1 Samuel 2:26; 2 Samuel 15:25; 2 Kings 13:4; 2 Chronicles 33:12; Nehemiah 5:19, 13:31; Jeremiah 26:19; Luke 1:25,28,30).

Not only that, and most importantly, Jesus himself grew in favor with God and started His ministry by announcing "the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:19). Indeed, at His birth, the angels sang about the peace He would bring to those on whom God's favor rests (Luke 2:14).

So, I had asked for something that is intrinsic to God's character. He loves to show favor—and that favor is without favoritism (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9). His favor is given to all who call upon Him and He himself assures us, "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you." The apostle Paul joins his voice with the Lord's, "I

tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Isaiah 49:8).

We face the new year of 2012. What should we ask the Lord for that we desire over these next 12 months? For ourselves personally? For our families? For our churches? For the Assemblies of God both here in the United States and around the world?

“...now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”

I pray that we will walk in God's favor. I am mindful that He "opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

None of us are perfect people. I grew up in small churches where the theology of salvation led me to believe in eternal insecurity. I was positive that I would never be good enough for God, that each time I sinned I needed to get saved all over again. Those vestigial remains of my childhood still linger with me—even now that I know better, even now that I know God's grace is freely given and that righteousness is a gift from Him and not something I earn.

But, I don't ever want to take God's grace or favor for granted. Even though I am justified by grace through faith, I don't want anything in my life to be a discredit to the Lord who loves me. I want to walk in His favor.

If we make it our foremost desire to dwell in His favor, all will be well with us this year. I pray that you will walk in His favor no matter what this year may bring. Over these next months of 2012, you may experience success or reverse, health or sickness, healing or the death of a loved one, financial gain or loss, relocation to a better or less desired place—through whatever circumstances that come, "May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us" (Psalm 90:17)!

George O. Wood is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (USA).



BY GEORGE WOOD

School Consolidation Update

I am pleased to report that progress is ongoing in the consolidation of our three Springfield institutions—Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (AGTS), Central Bible College (CBC), and Evangel University (EU).

The Transitional Board of Trustees of the consolidated university, comprised of members of the three Boards of Directors of the institutions, met in November to consider matters related to the consolidation. This board elected an executive committee pro tem to lead during the consolidation process.



Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri

In my capacity as chairman of the board at AGTS, I was selected to serve as chair pro tem; John Lindell, who is chairman of the Evangel University board, was named vice-chair; and JoAnne Butrin, secretary of the CBC board, will serve as secretary. Serving with these three officers will be other members of the transitional Board of Trustees: Richard Dresselhaus and Charles McKinney (AGTS), Raymond Schmidgall and Stan Tharp (EU), and William Leach and George Westlake III (CBC).

Members of the Transitional Board also were chosen to serve on two ad hoc committees which will begin work immediately. The Committee on Mission and Core Values is chaired by Charles McKinney with members John Hershman (AGTS), William Leach and James Long (CBC), and Frank Cargill and Phyllis Wolfram (EU).

The second ad hoc committee is to draw up a presidential profile. This profile will be based on the vision for the comprehensive university, including its mission and core values. Following the work of this committee and its adoption, a presidential search committee will be appointed. The Presidential Profile Committee is chaired by James Bradford (AGTS), with

members Joy Wilson (AGTS), Rodger Gadd and Randall Ross (CBC), and Doug Clay and Stan Masters (EU).

Report from Presidents

At the November meeting, Evangel President Robert Spence reported briefly on the process of working with the Higher Learning Commission. A letter has been sent to the commission seeking their guidance on the measures the three schools need to take to move ahead with the consolidation. AGTS President Byron Klaus reported on a recent joint faculty meeting with Bible and theology faculty from the three schools as they begin the work of creating a unified curriculum for theology and ministry majors. CBC President Gary Denbow reported on the beginning of monthly joint prayer meetings which focus on the consolidation. Eventually, these prayer meetings will be live-streamed so alumni and others around the world can participate in the prayer time.

Tuition Relocation Fund to Assist Students

During its November meeting, the Executive Presbytery approved funds to be distributed over the next 4 years from the Consolidation Fund to assist students in relocating from Central Bible College into the consolidated Evangel University.



Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri

I am keenly aware of the importance of the godly heritage we have in all three institutions. We will be working to ensure to our donors, alumni, and prospective students that this legacy receives heightened awareness in all areas. I want to emphasize again that the consolidation is aimed at creating a world-class university which offers the best majors in every area,

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Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

including the liberal arts. The consolidation also will enhance cutting-edge ministerial training by offering the best in faculty, curriculum, and culture from the three schools to create a theology/ministry major for those students called to full-time ministry. I believe the learning experiences for our students will transform lives to meet twenty-first century challenges and service opportunities.

As we seek continued enrollment, we will place even greater emphasis on recruiting from the nearly 40 percent of our U.S. AG membership which are ethnic minorities. My hope is that all of our schools will increase their efforts to reach this important segment of prospective students.

The next meeting of the Transitional Board is set for May 30, 2012. Before then committees will work on projects including the enrollment plan, the advancement work, and the educational plan.

Pastors and youth ministers, could I ask you to encourage your young people to consider attending an Assemblies of God college or university? Please promote their going to www.colleges.ag.org to find enrollment and financial aid information on all of our colleges. Sometimes our students feel they cannot afford to attend; but if they were to go through the financial aid process, I believe many would realize they can

attend. Also, please let students called to vocational ministry know that the consolidated university welcomes them to inquire about the financial aid scholarship program that is being offered.

I am asking that the ministers of this Fellowship join me in seeking God's face and favor as we move forward with the consolidation. The ultimate goal of this effort is to provide the young people in our churches an enhanced education that will result in empowered global leaders to serve God wherever He calls them—be it in the church or the marketplace.

George O. Wood is general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (USA).



Road Trip Leadership

by George O. Wood

Mile after servant-hearted mile, George O. Wood encourages pastors, visits with churches, and reaches out to other leaders from coast to coast. In *Road Trip Leadership*, he shows you how to be a dynamic, spiritual leader whose feet are firmly

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BY L. ALTON GARRISON

The Reach Every Home Initiative

Studies estimate that nearly 75 percent of American women and 60 percent of American men will make New Year's resolutions this year. Dreams of weight loss or exercise strategies are likely being crafted at this very moment. Millions want a new life or at least some improvement for the life they have.

Unfortunately, less than one-third of each group will actually fulfill their dreams. However, there is no denying the desire that millions of people have to improve something in their lives.

If that many people wish they could live a bit better, would they be interested in steps that could transform their lives? Would the loving truth of the gospel be the life-changing discovery they are really longing for?

The Reach Every Home Initiative is the latest ministry tool from Discipleship Ministries and AG Healthy Church Resources. This electronic mapping tool will allow a pastor to identify the neighborhoods where his people live. It will then provide detailed information that will allow church members to reach out to their neighbors in an intentional way. It is ideal for planning prayer walks, neighborhood block parties, or any other evangelistic effort. The Reach Every Home Initiative can also provide much-needed demographic information such as lists of new neighbors, babies born, and a variety of other ministry opportunities to assist the local church. We have established a contract with the designers of this amazing software that will allow the local church to get started for an initial investment of only \$75!



A recent Discipleship Ministries survey among Assemblies of God churches revealed some disturbing statistics. Almost two-thirds of our pastors agreed that less than 30 percent of their people were actively involved in outreach. Only 17 percent of our pastors strongly agreed that the people who attended the church were comfortable in sharing their faith.

Studies tell us that many people in our churches have little desire or intention of sharing their faith with others. They seldom view their neighborhoods as mission fields. And no matter how many sermons compel them to "lift their eyes" toward the harvest, they fail to see the biblical imperative.

“...when evangelism is a face, the love Christ has placed in our heart is more easily activated in ways that compel us to action.”

When evangelism is a task, it can easily become daunting and even intimidating. But when evangelism is a face, the love Christ has placed in our heart is more easily activated in ways that compel us to action.

Pastors need tools that can bring the mandate of evangelism into achievable focus. The Reach Every Home Initiative is designed to be just that for churches of all sizes.

If you are looking for ways to get your people moving forward with the gospel, consider how the Reach Every Home Initiative might help. The life-changing dreams in your community are waiting for the real impact your church and its people can make.

L. Alton Garrison is assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (USA).

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BY JAMES T. BRADFORD

Giving Your Preaching a 2012 Upgrade

How about giving your preaching an upgrade in 2012? According to 2 Timothy 3:16, all Scripture is “God-breathed” and “useful” for *teaching* (what we need to believe), *rebuking* (what we need to stop doing), *correcting* (what we need to start doing) and *training* (what we need to become). That makes communicating God’s Word one of our most important priorities as spiritual leaders.

Here are some upgrade suggestions for your preaching in 2012.

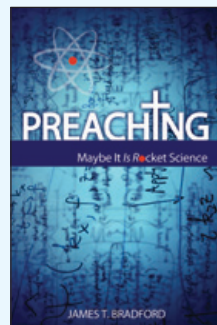
- Increase the time you take for sermon preparation by 10 or 20 percent. Give one thing you do each week away to someone else in order to spend more time studying and praying.
- Focus on finding the single thread of truth that connects all the verses in the passage you are preaching on. Try to express that one central truth in the message title.
- After studying the text, pray in the Spirit over both the text and your congregation. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you specific applications. How does the text directly relate to the lives of the real people who will be listening to you that week? Remember that good preaching ultimately answers two questions: What? and So What?
- Keeping it simple, and develop the central truth of the passage in the form of an outline that follows the direction of the text. Structure that directional flow into a few key ideas that organize and unfold the central truth that the text teaches. Develop the message flow like you would a story, one point leading naturally to the next.
- Work to transform your key points into applicational concepts. Try to avoid having 95 percent exegetical content with 5 percent application thrown in at the end. Bring people’s life situations into every main point of the development of the central truth. Keep the applications practical, doable (not too vague or too many), and always consistent with the central truth.
- Avoid meandering or including too many ideas. Go from beginning to conclusion in as straight a line as possible. Edit out ideas or tangents that do not relate to that one central truth. After your first draft of the outline, be ruthless and prune, prune, prune!
- Support every key point with the text itself. Try to avoid referring to the text at the beginning and never mentioning it again. If some points don’t relate to the text, prune some more.
- Don’t make any main points without illustrating them. Finding the right story, life illustration, visual aid, prop, or video clip can be time consuming but invaluable. Pray for creativity.

Constantly be looking for sermon illustrations in everyday situations, books, media, and people’s experiences.

- Reword your key points to be interesting and memorable. Start the message by capturing attention and helping people find themselves in the story. Let the message build in interest with why questions, tension, urgency, and emotional connection.
- While being applicationally practical, don’t forget to balance human response with God’s grace. Keep elevating God’s greatness and power. Don’t compromise on sin but always end with gospel-centered hope. Keep the Cross of Christ in focus, no matter what the topic or text.
- Pace the message with stories, humor, pauses, or creative transitions between points.
- Unless you are a world-class communicator, consider cutting your normal sermon time by five to ten minutes, focusing on anointed impact rather than needless length.
- Listen to other great communicators, not to imitate them but to learn from them.

May the Lord anoint you as you preach the Word with increasing effectiveness in 2012!

James T. Bradford is general secretary of the Assemblies of God (USA).



Preaching: Maybe It Is Rocket Science

by James T. Bradford

Explore the science behind life-changing preaching—the kind of preaching that molds congregations and communities—with the help of this guide by James T. Bradford. His background in rocket science lends a unique perspective. See how to apply principles of engineering to enhance your sermon preparation and meet your congregation’s spiritual needs.

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BY GREGORY M. MUNDIS

The Importance of World Missions in 2012

“The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit.”

—Melvin Hodges, twentieth century AGWM missiologist

That missionary Holy Spirit is still leading and even driving our mission. For generations of Assemblies of God members, adherents, children, youth, executive and lead pastors, evangelists, teachers, and missionaries, the modern twentieth century outpouring of the Holy Spirit has not been a historical reality as much as it has been an experiential reality. What else can account for the unprecedented worldwide growth of the Assemblies of God? Sixty-four million worldwide members, 350,000 churches, and over 362,000 pastors in 97 years surely reflect the veracity of the unanimously passed resolution of 1914 in the second General Council committing the Pentecostal Movement “to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.” Our 2,740 missionaries supported by our great U.S. Fellowship have committed themselves in obedience to the Holy Spirit to preach and model the gospel in 248 countries, territories, and provinces of our world.



its own people and then reach beyond its borders.

“We must mobilize all our resources.”

—Peter Kuzmic, president of the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, Croatia

“You don’t measure yourself by your success but you measure yourself against the unfinished task.”

—Loren Triplett, former AGWM executive director

Recently the news media recorded that the seventh billion person was born. The world population consisting of over 1.5 billion Muslims, 600 million Buddhists, 1 billion Hindus and untold numbers of animists and secularists, many of whom live in countries openly and adversely resistant to any Christian influence, need to hear the gospel. We are told (depending on the source) there are over 7,000 people groups among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the people group. As we look at these staggering statistics through our missiological lens, we see the millions and even billions that have limited or no access at all to the gospel message.

Twice every year, Assemblies of God World Missions hosts candidates from districts and churches across our Fellowship who are called by God to go as missionaries around the world. Once every year we commission these candidates to

go and preach the gospel “unto the ends of the earth.” These candidates in increasing numbers are going to the peoples who have limited access to the gospel. The missionary Spirit is preparing and calling a generation of cross-cultural missionaries who possess the gifts, skills, savvy, passion, commitment, and calling to go and pioneer where the Church does not exist or where it is so weak that it needs missionaries to help it reach

I believe God has positioned Assemblies of God World Missions “for such a time as this.”

- We have an unprecedented worldwide Pentecostal network to engage the challenge of people who have limited access to the gospel.
- We have an ever-increasing number of cross-cultural missionary candidates willing to go and share their lives in preaching the gospel to the lost.
- We have a U.S. church, energized by the missionary Spirit, to not only plant churches in the States but also to commit themselves to planting the church around the world.
- We have an executive committee within Assemblies of God World Missions who are renewed in their passion, determined in their mission, leveraging their partnerships, and empowered by the missionary Spirit.
- We have a 360-degree missions emphasis with a missionary Spirit-inspired focus on those who have limited or no access to the gospel.

The executive committee of Assemblies of God World Missions is committed to using our resources (people, finances, etc.), leveraging our partnerships, and following the leading of the Spirit to reach the one and the masses with the gospel.

Gregory M. Mundis is executive director of AG World Missions.



BY DOUGLAS E. CLAY

Living Inside Out in 2012

“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.” –Albert Schweitzer

When we read the Gospels, one of the most striking observations is that Jesus consistently turned things upside down and inside out. He blew people’s expectations away! In that culture (just like ours), people valued beauty, wealth, and power. But who were the ones who responded to Jesus and experienced His love and acceptance? The outcasts, prostitutes, hated tax collectors, the blind, the lame, and the foreigners—not those on top of the cultural ladder: the religious leaders, the wealthy, and the powerful. Over and over again, we see this flip. Jesus welcomed a prostitute who experienced His forgiveness into the home of a smug, self-righteous Pharisee. A half-breed Samaritan is the hero of a story by helping a Jew who had been beaten and robbed. But two Jewish leaders refused to offer a hand to the injured man. A tax collector, considered a traitor by the Jews, prayed at the temple next to a Pharisee. The Pharisee was confident that he was good enough to merit God’s favor, but he was wrong. The contrite tax collector was the one who went away justified and forgiven by God.

To make sure He made His point crystal clear, Jesus explained this principle again on the night He was betrayed. After Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper and predicted His death yet again, His closest disciples began arguing about who would be the greatest in the future Kingdom. The scene would be comical if it weren’t so poignant. The Son of God had stepped out of the majesty of heaven to suffer and die for us, but in His hour of need, His men jockeyed for position because they assumed the next day He was going to be


made king and rule the world. They wanted to be sure to have the best positions in His cabinet! Luke paints the picture for us: “A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’ ” (Luke 22:24-30).

Did you catch that? Jesus told them, “But I am among you as one who serves.” Did anyone ever deserve to be served more than God’s Son, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe? But if He chose to humble himself to serve—to the point of death—what should our attitude and role be? Surely, if we intend to follow Jesus and follow His example, we will become selfless servants, too. That night, Jesus demonstrated what it means to serve by picking up a towel and bowl of water to wash His disciples’ feet. That was the role of the lowest servant in a home, and it showed the degree of selflessness He wants for us. He told them to go

and wash one another’s feet.

Years ago, the church I pastored had endured tremendous conflict for many years before I arrived. Families were furious with other families, and there was conflict within many families. It was a mess. I knew I couldn’t talk our way out of this problem. They needed a tangible display of God’s grace. The Lord led me to ask the leaders and staff to come for a





Continued on page 8



Dreaming in 3D
by Doug Clay

Inspire yourself and your congregation to find and follow God’s dream. Too often, disappointments and distractions push us away from God’s best, but in *Dreaming in 3D*, author Doug Clay helps us stay on track. God gives each of us unique experiences, relationships, and talents. God will use even failures to teach life’s most important lessons, deepen our faith, impart wisdom, and strengthen us so we can make a difference in other’s lives. Questions at the end of each chapter help create thoughtful discussion for small groups and classes.

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meeting. This was a huge risk. I acknowledged the reality of the pain and anger in their lives, and I said, “I want to redefine leadership among us. We can’t live with power struggles and resentment any longer.” At that moment, my wife Gail, brought in some bowls of water and towels, and I went from person to person washing their feet. I looked up at each person and apologized for any hurt anyone in authority had caused them. The expression on each person’s face changed from guarded anger to grateful love. No amount of teaching could have made the difference—only a tangible expression of loving, forgiving service.



BY ZOLLIE L. SMITH, JR.

The Cause of God: “That None Perish”

The greatest excitement any pastor can experience comes from knowing, without reservation, that he or she is leading their assigned congregation according to the perfect will of God. Of course, that should be the norm; after all, Jesus built His Church with a specific mission, birthed out of God’s love for humankind.

Love has its roots and foundation in and through God. The word love is used so routinely today it is somewhat meaningless. However, *agape* love, God’s kind, is unconditional love and it will never become meaningless. John, known as the love disciple stated, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The word *love* describes precisely who God is as it relates to His being. It is essential to understand and appreciate the love of God for people if the church is going to be the church a perishing America is crying out for.

The only action God could take to alleviate the eternal destiny of the perishing was the giving of His Son, Jesus (John 3:16). I call it: The Cause of God—That None Perish! It is this cause that defines the birth and mission of the Church. Every leader in the Church must embrace “The Cause of God” through the love of God that morphs into compassionate love for perishing souls. God’s love for humankind was captured by Peter when he stated, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). There can be no question that God gave so that none perish. He gave gifts to His Church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers with a specific purpose to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. The ministry has been defined as the ministry of reconciliation, sometimes called the Great Commission. In essence, every Christian, out of compassionate love for the lost as a result of loving God, should be sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ (evangelism) and assisting

Being a servant turns our culture’s values upside down, but it can only be achieved from the inside out. If we try to make it happen on our own, we’ll be fakes, and we’ll manipulate people instead of serving them. Make no mistake: the human heart is desperately wicked. We can do right things for very wrong reasons—to win approval, gain power, and snow those around us. The kind of serving Jesus calls us to finds its source in a full heart of love for God so that His kindness, compassion, and grace overflow from us into the lives of others.

Douglas E. Clay is general treasurer of the Assemblies of God (USA).

in the development of those who have repented (discipleship). That is fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16) out of the Great Command (Matthew 22:37,38)—that none perish, the cause of God!

The Church has been misled to believe the much needed revival in America is going to come via an individual, denomination, religious organization, parachurch ministry or fellowship. No, it is going to happen according to God’s plan and His plan alone—that is “every Christian, everywhere, sharing Jesus!” as stated by H. L. Hussmann in his book, *God’s Greatest Passion*. Just imagine if every member of every congregation would share Jesus with a perishing soul on a daily basis, the very fabric of America would be eternally changed and that would be revival. A revival not led by a person or organization, but the saints of God everywhere sharing Jesus and making disciples. America is facing a variety of difficulties; and according to prophecy, things will become worse. However, it is in these difficult times that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ can effectively and efficiently fulfill the Great Commission. The Church has the answer for America and the world—it is Jesus and His teachings. I am convinced that if the Church is busy replicating itself through the rescuing of the perishing souls who then become replicators, the number of saints would increase exponentially. God is a God of increase. That is precisely why equipping the saints to “do” the work of the ministry was commanded. America’s future rests in the hands of the church’s leader; therefore, I challenge every leader to join together in equipping every saint to share Jesus and disciple those who repent. One-on-one evangelism and discipleship is the key to America becoming a righteous nation under God.

Zollie L. Smith, Jr. is executive director of AG US Missions.