

CHURCHRIGHT

Volume 1 Number 4

Striving to do church right.

In This Issue

Doing Membership Right . . .	1
Reality Check	2
Our High Calling	2
Culture of Excellence Award	2
September Emphasis: Publications	3
Focus on Fellowship	4
October Emphasis: LifeSpring	5
Ministries Highlights / Calendar Events / News and Notes	6-7
A Cherished Tradition	8

Doing Membership Right

Never has the importance of local church membership been downplayed as in our day. You've heard, or perhaps have asked, the common question "Does one have to be a member of a church to be a Christian?" I imagine that even those who ask this question recognize that the principle they seek to establish falls flat on its face when applied to other similar scenarios. Does one have to become a member of the armed forces to be a soldier? Imagine a young boy wanting to be a Boy Scout but not wanting to join any local chapter. Or how about being a student without enrolling in school?

This question isn't always asked with malicious intent. Sincere seekers, whose concept of church membership is shaped by today's fast-food consumer oriented culture, also ask this question. Patronizing their local McDonald's requires no commitment to that business beyond paying for their meal. In fact, the drive-through window minimizes their contact with other patrons. Quick and easy, the way I like it, little contact with others, and definitely no commitment to the franchise — these are the rules of the game. Unfortunately, people's attitude toward church is sometimes driven by the same rules.

Regardless of the basis for one's skepticism toward church membership, the fact remains that to be a Christian is to become a member of the body of Christ, which finds tangible expression in a local assembly of believers. The argument for being members of the "invisible church," as opposed to a visible local congregation, fails to recognize that the purpose of the visible church is to make the invisible church known. Invisible Christians who compose an invisible church provide no witness of the life of Christ to a watching world. We make the invisible visible by manifesting the life and character of Christ, including His commitment to the love and unity of His disciples as a body (see John 17). A host of other New Testament passages teach that membership in Christ's body is not an option for the believer, but is an important responsibility and high privilege. To love Christ is to love His bride, the church.

In the interest of underscoring these biblical principles, *Membership Matters*, a study guide for individuals and small groups, is made available. It is first in a series of membership training manuals to be published by the General Conference on various topics of importance to the Church's ongoing spiritual development. **Cost and ordering information is on page 7.**

— *Whaid Rose*
Denver office

REALITY CHECK



Passing the Basket

The congregation's hospitality chairman invented it: an empty basket with a red bow tied on top. This wasn't an ordinary basket; it represented an invitation to fellowship in the adult Bible class.

As the chairman handed the basket to a couple in the class, he invited them to fellowship with him and his wife one evening over pie and coffee at their home. At their first opportunity, that couple, in turn, passed the basket to another couple in class with an invitation to fellowship together.

Over the next few months, the "hospitality basket" moved throughout the group until everyone had participated in fellowship. The members loved it. As one of them said, "It helped us turn our good intentions into action."

Acts 2:42 says that brethren in the early church made a habit of fellowshiping with one another. What creative ways can we think of to follow their example?

— CR

Adapted from Fresh Ideas for Discipleship & Nurture, p. 163.

OUR HIGH CALLING

Emerson: Grunt Work

by Howard E. Butt, Jr.

Ralph Waldo Emerson is a well-known early American poet and philosopher. Once, when he was a child, he watched as a man sawed and cut up wood. Although the job was beyond the little boy's strength, young Emerson wanted to help. After considerable thought, he said to the woodsman: "May I do the grunting for you?"

The book of Proverbs tells us to celebrate with those who celebrate and cry with those who cry. We should also work with those who work.

This is Howard Butt, Jr., of Laity Lodge. Getting under the load with

someone nearby changes that relationship. Even the smallest amount of help will do. Find someone today with whom you can share the grunt work — it's crucial in the high calling of our daily work.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose. (Phil. 2:1-2, NLT)

Taken from The High Calling of Our Daily Living, May 4, 2003 (www.thehighcalling.org/). *Used by permission.*



Culture of Excellence Award: Ken and Karen Riggs

Congratulations to **Ken and Karen Riggs**, our third recipients of the Culture of Excellence Award!

The Riggsses have served the Tulsa and Claremore, Oklahoma, congregations. They continue to give their time, talents, and money liberally for church building projects, building and grounds maintenance (mostly at their own expense), and church activities. Ken and Karen don't hesitate to fill teaching spots when needed, supervise youth, or help the elderly.

The Riggsses have been among the most instrumental people respon-

sible for the renovation of the Dover CoG7 Campground. They've also worked at other churches around the country and have given their time and resources to advance Spring Vale Academy.

Dr. Jewell Linville tells of the time she fell and broke both wrists and how Ken and Karen went out of their way to minister to her. The CoG 7 commends this couple for their humble service to the kingdom!



Each dollar helps
support

- ▶ Bible Advocate magazine
- ▶ tracts and booklets
- ▶ online outreach

September is
Publications Emphasis.
Your offerings are
appreciated.



Keith Michalak
Director

One piece of
literature . . .
many ripples for
the kingdom



If You Wanted to Hurt the Cause of Christ

by Joe McKeever

If I were the devil and wanted to damage the cause of Jesus Christ on earth, I would set myself to dividing Christians — separating believers from their congregations and erecting barriers between churches. Make them all independent. Convince them they don't need others, that they are able to go it alone.

If I were the devil and wanted to separate believers, I could chalk it up as “done” and go on home. We are separate already. But the devil did not do it; we did this to ourselves.

I am immensely burdened for weak Christians and weak churches I see all around.

The problem, in many cases, is they do not know they are weak, because they've always been this way and everyone they know is in the same boat. They limp along rendering a little service to the Lord Jesus Christ and content themselves that misery is to be expected if one would live for God in this world, that not reaching the lost is the norm, that shallow sermons and boring lessons meet the standard, that running behind the budget is universal, that worship is a drudge, fellowship a waste of time, and service a pain.

I made a discovery one day while chatting with my longtime pastor neighbor, the late Buford Easley. We had had an unusually fruitful service the previous Sunday, with a great crowd, a number of new members, and a large offering. As we chatted, Buford said, “Boy, we've been having some wonderful services lately. We're bringing in extra chairs, people are joining the Church, and the offerings have been great.”

Suddenly I remembered a similar conversation I had had with another local minister a year earlier. My church was hurting financially, we were discussing where to cut expenses, and some of our leaders were looking around for someone to blame. Out of the blue the other pastor said, “I don't know what's wrong with us. We're way behind in our giving and having to cut expenses and my people are complaining.”

Our churches were having identical experiences. When one was up, the others were [up]. When one was down, the others were down. But since we did not know we were part of a trend that was affecting all of us, we tended to take everything personally. Good attendance and great contributions meant we were doing well and the people were faithful, God was blessing. Sagging attendance and poor offerings could only mean our members were unhappy with their leadership and people were unfaithful.

It turned out we were wrong on both counts. Other forces were at work affecting attendance and the offerings and other aspects of church life.

We did not know this because we never talked to each other. We assumed every other church was doing great and we were the only one suffering — or that we were outdoing the others.

The Christian who cuts himself off from his church will soon lose the standard. He will award himself “A's” on the various aspects of his life because the norm no longer exists in his world. Therefore he contents himself he's doing well. When he gets blindsided by disease or death or other disasters, he has no strength and no resources and lapses into despair.

The church that isolates itself from others soon turns inward. It cares about nothing so much as meeting its own members' needs and keeping them satisfied. The cries of the outsiders are heard no longer, and the churches down the street or across town lose their status as beloved brothers or sisters and become competitors to be shunned.

If we ever get our churches and our people together, three things will have to occur:

- 1) The pastors are going to have to give the churches back to Jesus. It's His church and He wants it back!
- 2) Pastors are going to have to give their ministries back to Jesus. Quit keeping your own records, promoting your own career, and let Him handle it.
- 3) Churches are going to have to give their fears back to Jesus. If a few members of your congregation decide to join the church down the road, so what. It's the Lord's business, not yours. Let the Lord rule over the Church; it's His Body, so let Him be in charge.

That's the starting place. I'm still looking for where we go from here.

Joe McKeever is director of missions of the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans. Adapted from *Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN 37421.



- Studying how to transform LifeSpring School of Ministry into a four-year accredited college for the Church of God (Seventh Day)

- Raising the educational standards of those being trained for ministry in the Church

- Incorporating a mentoring and discipleship component within ministry training

Be a part of the change . . .
so you can change lives.

October is LifeSpring emphasis month. Please support our young students by giving to this vital ministry.



Larry Marris
Director

A season of change

Ministries Highlights

SWORD

- ▶ November 5-7 LeadNow National Conference for young adult ministry workers in Dallas, TX. Sponsored by the RightNow Campaign. Go to www.rightnow.org/Events/Details.aspx?id=1019, or contact Christy Lang at sword@cog7.org.
- ▶ November 6-8 SWORD retreat in Goldendale, WA. Contact: Rachel Stirn at sword-westcoast@cog7.org.
- ▶ December 2009 - January 2010 Pioneer Missionary Training in Mexico. Scholarship available from SWORD to cover the cost of registration fee for one young adult. See details at <http://sword.cog7.org>.

Calendar Events

Districts

- ▶ September 26 Michigan Super Sabbath, First Church of Christ, Owosso (585 E. North Street). Call 989 725-2251 for directions.
- ▶ October 10 Super Sabbath - Parkland CoG7. Call 780-440-0096
- ▶ October 30 - November 1 SWD Women's Retreat - Tyler, TX - Pine Cove Camp. Contact: Romula Bergman, 210-846-5467
- ▶ December 31-January 3, 2010 SWD Winter Youth Retreat - Midlothian, TX - Salvation Army Camp Hoblitzelle. Contact: Jason and Rose Rodriguez, 832-797-9916 or jandrrodriguez@att.net.

Emphases coming up:

Missions (November)

G. C. Ministries (December)

News and Notes

Biblical Guidance for Faithful Stewardship

Whether you are doing well or are struggling during this tough economy, you will benefit greatly from an excellent selection of books available from the Bible Advocate Press. Request a list by writing to BAP, by calling 303-452-7973, or by e-mailing bap.orders@cog7.org.

New Children's Curriculum in Progress

Work on producing new children's Sabbath school curriculum is proceeding slowly. Our small committee is working diligently on lessons for the first year for the middler age group (grades 4-6).

Now we must enlarge our team to speed up the progress. We need more writers for Bible

Churchright Online

Want to read more about what's going on in the CoG7? Visit www.cog7.org and click on "Churchright."

lessons and contemporary stories for years two and three. Graphic artists, designers, and activity planners are also needed.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this important ministry, or if you have written lessons and activities for your own classes, please contact LeRoy Dais at the BAP office. You will be provided with information, including instructions, a newly revised sample lesson, and a list of lesson topics.

We're also looking for folks interested in developing lessons for the primary age group (grades 1-3) and preschool children (age 3-kindergarten).



Pioneer Missionary Training

Where: Guadalajara, Mexico

When: December 21-31, 2009

Cost: \$400/person.

Deadline for applications: November 1, 2009

Have you ever wanted to go on a mission trip but didn't have the chance? Do you want to be involved in CoG7 missionary endeavors but aren't sure where to start? Then PMT '09 is for you! Call us at 303-452-7973, or go to www.cog7missions.org for more contact and sign-up information.

October is Clergy Appreciation Month

To those who serve . . .
pastors, lay pastors, their wives, and families . . .

Thank you!

- ▶ Have you thanked your pastor today?
“Give a bonus to leaders who do a good job, especially the ones who work hard at preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17, *The Message*).
- ▶ In its ongoing efforts to create a culture of excellence, the Is-sachar Forum will present the Pastor of the Year Award in 2010. Watch for details in future issues of *Churchright* on how to nominate your pastor.



Membership Matters

Membership Matters, a book recently published by the General Conference, offers good answers to questions on church

attendance in an

interactive study guide format, suitable for small group interaction. The cost is \$5.00 per copy; \$3.50 per copy for orders of more than ten, plus postage.

Order *Membership Matters* by e-mailing bap.orders@cog7.org or by calling 303-452-7973.

Presenting Every Man Complete in Christ

“We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1:28, NIV).

A CoG7 men’s ministry is in the making, sponsored by the General Conference and its districts’ weekend events.

Coming to a local church near you, Fall 2009 — Spring 2011

For information: see *Churchright Online* or contact Pastor Jeff Endecott at pastorjeff60@msn.com.



The Jasper, AR, Church of God (Seventh Day) invites you to their 21st Annual Octoberfest Family Retreat at the church’s campgrounds. Contact Jason or Stephanie Overman: 870-446-5736 or jasonoverman@hotmail.com

Does someone at your local church exemplify excellence in service? Submit names and letter substantiating the nominee’s qualifications to Sherri Langton, Churchright, P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; e-mail churchright@cog7.org

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Convention DVD’s

- Encounter the Holy Spirit: Again, for the First Time** — presenter Israel Steinmetz
- Encounter Growth: The Spiritual Disciplines** — presenter Ken Knoll
- Encounter the Commission: Sharing Jesus** — presenter Larry Zaragoza
- Encounter Grace: Free At Last!** — presenter Calvin Burrell
- Encounter the Father: Life Changer** — presenter Whaid Rose
- General Session** — presenter Whaid Rose
- Children’s Program / Singspiration**

Individual DVD’s: \$10. Set of seven: \$50. Send orders to Church of God (Seventh Day), P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233 or orders@cog7.org.

A CHERISHED TRADITION



This year's Churchmanship Award was presented to Eliseo and Maria Davila of Corpus Christi, TX.

Members and friends of the General Conference gathered for the biennial convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, July 6-11, at the Omni Hotels, with evening worship at the American Bank Center. The week was marked by a spirit of unity and optimism. Activities included family day, culminating with a Christian concert and professional ball game; morning devotions; daily seminars and workshops; general sessions; meal functions highlighting various G. C. Ministries; luncheon for pastors and wives (with guest speaker Andrew Samuels, pastor of two Florida Seventh Baptist congregations and vice president of the World Federation of Seventh Day Baptists); and evening worship services featuring messages by Ramon Ruiz (Monterrey, Mexico), Israel Steinmetz (Kansas City, Kansas), Ken Knoll (Eugene, Oregon), Larry Zaragoza (Visalia, California), Calvin Burrell (Denver, Colorado), and Whaid Rose.

Other activities included the Women's Bazaar, SVA SOUND and ACTION concert; a special preview of the motion picture *No Greater Love*, produced by SVA alumnus Russell Rice; evening afterglows and Issachar Forum reception. Specially noted was the presence of Yamaha Corporation's House of Worship personnel. Products from Giving Bean and Yoder Foods, also present, are among the latest Conference fundraising efforts, led by Peter Youngs.

In addition to convention business, other features included the children's program, culminating with a presentation on Sabbath morning; separate tracks for NFYC and SWORD; and a health fair. New ministries directors were presented: Grace Sanchez (NAWM) and Larry Marrs (LifeSpring). Plaques were presented in appreciation to outgoing NAWM director Mary Ling and to outgoing MTS/LifeSpring director Calvin Burrell.

Five individuals were elected to the board of directors: Erik Dunn (Houston, Texas); Wayne Hrenyk (San Antonio, Texas); Raul Romo (Dallas, Texas); Ruben Marquez (Shawnee, Oklahoma); and Carl Palmer (Spokane, Washington). This year's Churchmanship Award was presented to Eliseo and Maria Davila of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Watch our various publications for the announcement of the location of the 2011 convention as we continue this cherished tradition, to the glory of God.



Convention choir sang "Hear Me, Redeemer," featuring soloist June Bobcombe (Mount Vernon, NY).



Convention Survey

You can do something for the long-term benefit of G. C. conventions. Complete a survey, available on the Conference Web site by September 15. Your input will assist in planning future conventions.

