

Five major priorities

George O. Wood, newly elected general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, spoke recently with Hal Donaldson, editor in chief of Today's Pentecostal Evangel, about the priorities he sees for the Fellowship and his administration.

tpe: When the announcement of your election was made at the 52nd General Council in Indianapolis, what were your feelings?

WOOD: I was overwhelmed with emotion. I expressed to the delegates that I was humbled by the grace they had extended to me. I reflected on the time I was 13 and my parents were debating whether to plant a church in Jeffersonville, Ind., or in Indianapolis.

We were driving from Jeffersonville to Indianapolis and my father became very ill. I was scared to death riding in the backseat wondering if my dad was going to die. My mom didn't know how to drive. We spent

that evening in a motel and never made it to Indianapolis.

We went back and planted the church in Jeffersonville. I started my ministry there teaching the 4- and 5-year-olds Sunday School class. Two and a half years later, my father's health broke and we had to leave. My parents felt it was the one striking "failure" of their ministry.

But out of that church God raised up an independent Pentecostal congregation that now has over 3,000 people. When I was elected, I thought about how I wished my parents were alive to be there. And how I was elected in the city my parents didn't reach.

tpe: What individuals have influenced your life?

WOOD: My mom and dad had the most significant influence. They were hard workers for the Lord, even though they lived on nickels and dimes. My mother prayed two hours every day. She read the Bible through every year. She was so full of joy.

Thurman Vanzant was a professor of mine at Evangel University [in Springfield, Mo.]. He gave me a deep love and a rich understanding of God's Word. Writers like C.S. Lewis also had a profound impact. I have also been deeply touched by my family and so many friends I couldn't list them all.

tpe: Can you describe the settings where you found Christ and also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

WOOD: I was 10 years old when I committed my life to Christ. One night I dreamed the Lord had returned and I had been left behind. I was petrified. I knew I wasn't ready to meet the Lord, so I prayed and dedicated my life to Him that night.

I was one of those kids who had difficulty receiving the Baptism. I thought I wasn't holy enough to receive the Spirit. My theology was off. But when I was 16, I was kneeling at the altar in Central Assembly in Springfield,

Mo., and all of a sudden I began to speak in other tongues.

I think some people don't receive the baptism in the Spirit and speak in tongues because they feel they have to be unconscious. They don't realize the Spirit is already filling them with words if they just exercise some faith and let their mouths experience the glorious infilling.

tpe: As you look back on your life, what is your greatest disappointment and how did the Lord help you deal with it?

WOOD: One of our greatest struggles was when our daughter went through a time in her early 20s when she was away from the Lord. We received a phone call one night that she was marrying a young man who wasn't serving the Lord. But we did our best to build a bridge to her.

Evangeline and her husband came to General Council in St. Louis in 1995. She was suffering with a form of arthritis and went forward for prayer the night Gilbert Patterson preached. Her knees were badly swollen and she was on heavy medication. It appeared they couldn't have children. I prayed for her and God healed her instantly. The next day her knees were normal and she was walking around in high heels.

I asked her husband, Rick, if he wanted to receive Christ. He said he wasn't ready. Two years ago, Rick came to the Lord and the change in his life has been dramatic. And, through God's grace, they have given us a grandson,



General Superintendent

GEORGE O. WOOD

Jacob George. That was a difficult valley, but the Lord saw our family through it.

tpe: Describe the spiritual state of our nation and our world. What will it take for us to experience spiritual renewal?

WOOD: We are heading toward becoming a secular culture — one that is godless. But, as the Church, we have the power of the Holy Spirit and every tool needed to reach this generation. I'm a hopeful person, because I believe the Holy Spirit can renew His Church. He loves this country

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Assistant General Superintendent

L . A L T O N G A R R I S O N

and wants it to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

St. Francis of Assisi said, “Preach Jesus at all times; if necessary, use words.” It’s critical that the Church not only preach to people verbally; we must re-establish our credibility as a serving, caring, loving community. We are not going to reach the world if we are scrapping with one another or focusing on minor issues.

I get letters from people who, by their own admission, are “watchers on the wall.” They are searching for anything wrong in the body of Christ. Quite honestly, they need to get off the wall and start witnessing to people. We need to quit pointing our fingers at people and open our hands.

Jesus on the cross didn’t close His fist and yell at people. He opened His hands and received the nails. And we have to be a compassionate, serving community. We have to model the Christian life.

tpe: You are known for placing high value on relationships. What steps will you take to foster unity and



Transition can be similar to what scientists call a “wormhole” (a portal of space where matter passes from one universe to another) experience. Life in the wormhole can be extremely chaotic. It is certainly fast-paced and frequently unsettling because of fear of the unknown.

These days as I leave one ministry and embrace another I feel like I’m in a “wormhole.” Although I may have personal transitional challenges, I am confident that when God guides, He provides.

I am depending on Him to provide direction, wisdom, anointing and favor. I sense an expectancy the Assemblies of God will be blessed by God in the future as it has been in the past.

I truly believe the following: God and one more constitute a majority; teams accomplish more than individuals alone; the local church is the hope of the world; and people can change their behavior by changing what they know.

As commissioner of Discipleship and executive director of Church Ministries, I dream of the day when every Christian has an insatiable desire to know more and more of the Holy Scriptures. Faith comes by digesting God’s Word.

cooperation within the Fellowship?

WOOD: Like my predecessor, I want to be a general superintendent who reaches out to, and serves, the whole family of the Assemblies of God: Young and old, men and women, different ethnic

groups, large and small churches. I want an atmosphere in the Assemblies of God that is welcoming, loving and respectful of others.

From time to time, some parts of the body may disagree with other parts of the body, but we have to remember we are in this

General Secretary

J O H N M . P A L M E R

Debbie and I are grateful, humbled, and honored for the opportunity God is giving us to serve this Fellowship. After 32 years of pastoring, we are looking forward to serving our Assemblies of God churches and pastors. I am excited to partner with my fellow officers in helping lead our church in fulfilling Christ’s mission.

It is so thrilling for me to see what God is doing through our younger ministers. I believe God is raising up a generation of young warriors with whom we can form strategic partnerships to advance the cause of Christ. We are blessed to be a strong fellowship of multi-generational ministry.

We’ve said it for years, “The whole purpose of the whole church is to take the whole gospel to the whole world.” As we keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, are filled with the Spirit, and faithfully honor and obey God’s Word, we will be the people God has called us to be and do the work He has called us to do.

Let’s expect miracles. Let’s love each other intensely. Let’s do ministry with excellence through the power and wisdom of the Spirit. And let us, in all things, exalt our living and loving Lord. The best is yet to come!



J A M E S K . B R I D G E S

General Treasurer



Having served 14 years with one leadership team — which has been together longer than any administrative group in Assemblies of God history — change is naturally challenging. However, when we focus on the leadership of the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus, we understand He will guide us safely into the future.

My challenge as the general treasurer is to continue maintaining the financial integrity and fiscal responsibility of our General Council. To our readers and our Fellowship, we pledge to stay the course and move into the future under the banner of a triumphant Lord, who is building His Church and preparing for a glorious return.

Let us stay prepared for His imminent coming!

together. We have core values we are committed to. There is enough glue to hold us together to build the kingdom of God. Certainly everything is not perfect. And never will be.

Imperfections have been there since the Early Church. But there is too much good to reckon with the bad. We can’t allow ourselves to become so consumed with the imperfections that we lose our sense of gratitude for the good things God is doing.

tpe: What will you focus on in your first few months in office?

WOOD: I believe the Lord has given me five major core values for which I’d like to lay the foundation. First, that we would passionately proclaim, at home and abroad, by word and deed, Jesus as Savior, Baptizer in the Spirit, Healer and coming King.

Second, we need to invest strategically in the next generation. We have hundreds of thousands of children and young people in our churches whom we must conserve and prepare. They are our future church planters, pastors, missionaries and lay leaders.

Third, we need to vigorously plant churches. It’s critical that young leaders be given opportunity to help us identify new models of leadership, church development and church planting.

Fourth, we need to effectively and skillfully resource our laity, churches, ministers and districts. The national office is not here to maintain an institution. We’re here to help this great Fellowship reach the lost, build the saints, meet human need, and glorify the Lord.

And fifth, we must fervently pray for God’s favor and help as we serve Him with pure hearts and noble purpose.

tpe: Is there something you’d like to say about your predecessor?

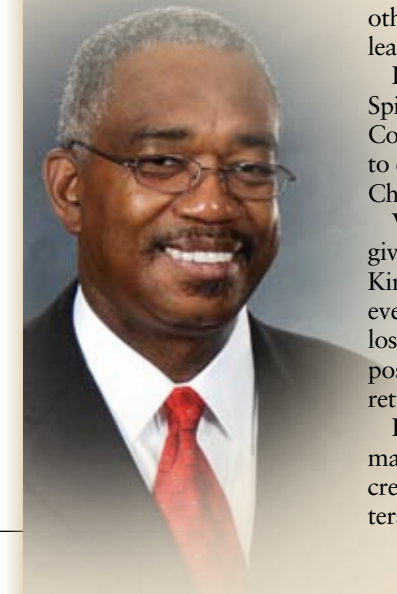
WOOD: I told Thomas Trask the night before I was elected that I felt sorry for the person who follows him. He has been a sterling example of Pentecostal spirituality and dignified leadership.

The Assemblies of God and the Christian community owe him a great debt.

He has modeled Paul’s admonition to Timothy: to stir up the gift that is in you. He has over and over again communicated to us a passion for the Lord and the need for the empowerment of the Holy

Executive Director, Assemblies of God U.S. Missions

Z O L L I E L . S M I T H J R .



Serving as the director of U.S. Missions is an opportunity I never dreamed I would have. I am awe-struck by this great platform — the resources, personnel and all the other wisdom and guidance from the spectrum of great leaders — to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am convinced the Assemblies of God is a Pentecostal, Spirit-filled fellowship committed to fulfilling the Great Commission. I will contribute all the power vested in me to evangelize America with the gospel. That’s what the Church is about — communicating the gospel.

We should be excited about the opportunity God has given the 21st-century Church to reach souls for the Kingdom. Jesus is going to return; and when He does, every individual who does not know Him is going to be lost in eternity. It is absolutely essential for the Church to possess a passion for lost souls. Jesus said He would not return until the gospel is preached to every creature.

It is my responsibility, personally and positionally, to make sure the good news of Jesus is preached to every creature. Therefore, I encourage all my brothers and sisters to join together in expediting the return of Jesus!

*Executive Director,
Assemblies of God World Missions*

L. JOHN BUENO



Never in the history of the Assemblies of God have there been greater opportunities and challenges than there are today. We realize we can't do it alone and must network with other groups that are of like faith. This will add strength to our world missions' effort. This has happened to a degree after the fall of the Iron Curtain and we're seeing it develop in other parts of the world as well.

Another factor is the 5,500 missionaries being sent from countries that used to be mission fields. This will help us penetrate many of the areas we heretofore haven't been able to reach.

The past has been good, but I believe there will be a new approach, new perspective, and a new leadership style that I think will bless our Fellowship.

We depend on the partnership of our churches. It's our local churches across the nation that not only furnish missionaries, but the funds and the prayer support needed to carry on this great ministry. So there is an expression of unbelievable gratitude on my part.

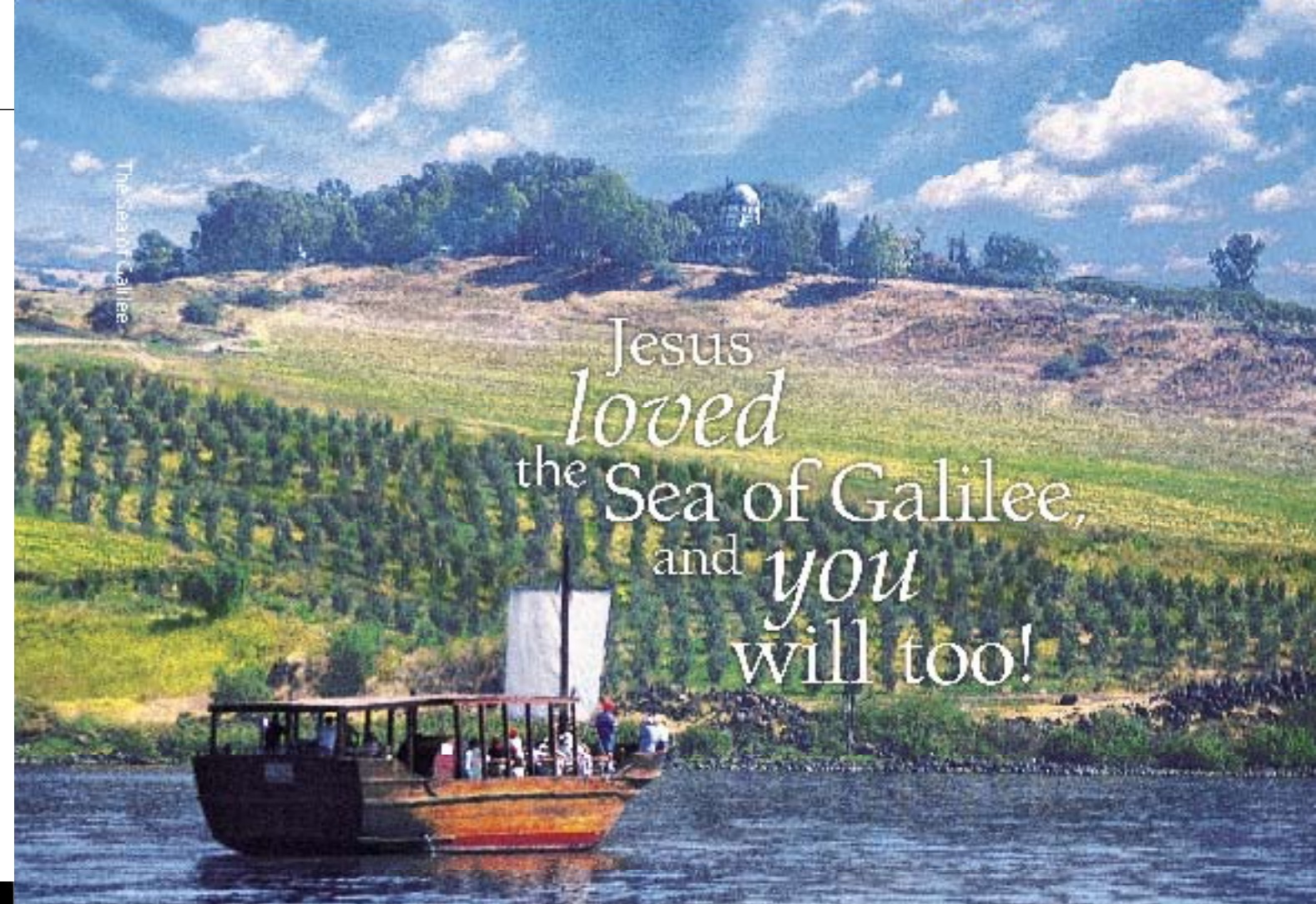
Spirit. I can't put on his armor. I wouldn't attempt to fill his shoes.

tpe: How would you like readers to pray for you?

WOOD: I've asked people to pray for me for two things: wisdom and strength. More than anything, I want to see God work in these days. And I need His wisdom, strength and the Spirit's empowerment to accomplish His purpose.

I don't see the general superintendent's position as a prize that someone wins for long, faithful ministry or a title to be held, or a time to occupy space. I see it as a responsibility the Lord and the General Council have entrusted to me and the leadership team. Our job is to get things done that will build the kingdom of God. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



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I OPENING

Nisar:

- Memorized the Quran by age 13
- Prays five times a day
- Believes Jesus was a mere prophet
- No one has told him otherwise

Along the ancient Silk Road, the Central Eurasia community is sharing a revelation of Jesus the Christ. We are courageously preaching the gospel in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.

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