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# 2020: The Ministry of Reconciliation



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## Faithful Ambassadors

I'm happy to welcome *Churchright* to this BA (see the center four pages). This is a first for us — to get *Churchright* into your hands and promote its revamped website ([churchright.org](http://churchright.org)). Enjoy!

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ. But what might it mean in this season of COVID and change? Make no mistake, we are living in the end. If not The End, *an end*. Hinges in history — turning points — are tumultuous, but they are also generative. God brings new things out of the old as His kingdom advances, but the process isn't for the faint or distracted. God's reconciliation ministry will go on, but will we go with it? Only as faithful ambassadors.

Upheaval causes panic and paralysis in many, but in others it induces reflection and revival. The former won't contribute much to the kingdom if they're clinging to the old, but the latter group will build as the new is revealed. I can consider only myself, as you examine yourself. The first question is, "Whose ambassador am I, in practice? What kingdom am I really representing?" Something as simple as my use of social media can give me away. Assessing my attitudes and actions will tell if my priority is God's kingdom or something, someone, else.

Has my true ambassadorship been co-opted to advance lesser agendas? Ambassadors of this kind of confusion will fight indignantly, but not endure. What our ambassadorial role and kingdom commission consist of is a second question.

King Jesus provided the job description of His ambassadors plainly. In Matthew 10, He sends His disciples as a prototype of those to come: "Go preach . . . 'the kingdom of heaven' . . . Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (vv. 7, 8). This is our unique grace.

Ambassadors of the King will witness before lesser kings and governors. And what is our character and disposition? "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (v. 16). This is our answer. To be less or other than wise, harmless, and healing in a time of upheaval and change is to misrepresent King and kingdom. May we represent Him well and faithfully — to the end.

— Jason Overman





# Talk the Walk

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Living the ministry of reconciliation during a pandemic.

by Israel Steinmetz

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As I'm writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping the globe, impacting daily life for billions of people. If the past few months have taught us anything, it's that we cannot predict the future. I can't imagine what the world may be like by the time this article is published.

What I do know is that among the myriad impacts of COVID-19, my local church has not met in person for weeks, and there is no certain date in the future for when we'll be able to do so again. We've continued to hold weekly worship services with a skeleton crew from our building

and broadcasting via Facebook Live to our members, who are all under stay-at-home orders.

## Separated and stranded

It's a strange time. The disconnect we're all experiencing is taking its toll. Billions of people, accustomed to going *out* to work, school, exercise, shopping, and recreation, are all stranded at home. Billions who are accustomed to shaking hands with strangers, hugging family, and greeting one another with a holy kiss on Sabbath find themselves unable to touch, unable to reach out, unable to leave their homes.

In North American society we have been gradually sliding toward replacing in-person relationships with digital ones. COVID-19 has accelerated the pace of this trend in ways no one predicted. No visits. No shared meals. No human connection

without an electronic screen bridging the gap. And now that includes corporate worship. We cannot come together in person to bend our knees and raise our hands and open our mouths toward God. Even this we must do via electronic screens.

If we did not realize it before, we are all facing the reality now: Words alone cannot do justice to relationships. Of course, we've heard it all before, but now the proof confronts us every day. Work is not the same when separated from our co-workers. School in a virtual classroom doesn't compare to being in a physical classroom. We feel cheated at birthdays and weddings and, perhaps especially, funerals. And more than anything else, we sense our disconnect on Sabbath. Content without community is clearly not enough. We need more than to simply hear the words of prayer and song

and Scripture; we need to share life with those who share those words. And yet . . .

In the midst of all this, I've been looking for opportunities as well as at obstacles. Had COVID-19 come a few months earlier, it would have provided a timely example of how we need physical evidence to support our verbal testimony. This was the topic of my previous article in this series, "A Picture's Worth." As ambassadors for Christ, we're entrusted with the *ministry* of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), and without this ministry — this tangible activity — our message is incomplete.

But as I reflect on the past few weeks, I'm reminded of the importance of our words. I'm reminded of the significance of the *message* of reconciliation (v. 19) and how our ministry is incomplete without it. It's true that we must walk the talk, but we must also *talk the walk*.

### Ministry or message

At times the Christian response to Christ's Great Commission has been to favor either ministry or message over the other. This is painting with too broad a brush, but there is some truth to the stereotypes in North America. On one hand, among some Christians, there has been a tendency to focus on the message of reconciliation: preaching the gospel, teaching the truth, discipling believers with Scripture. This word-based approach to faith has shaped much of conservative Christianity. At times, the result has been a disconnect from the real world of lost people, growing believers, and the church's mission. The

truth, accurate as it is, has often sounded hollow and judgmental to a world longing to see it put into action.

On the other hand, among liberal believers, the pendulum has sometimes swung so far toward the *ministry* of reconciliation that the message has been left behind. They sometimes excel at enacting the gospel through serving the poor, showing compassion for the broken, and including the marginalized. But the name of Jesus is avoided. The explicit message of the gospel as it relates to personal sin is marginalized, and the truth of Scripture is often compromised.

half of the mission of God, and thus both fall short of truly joining it.

### Word with deed

As followers of Christ, we are called to imitate Christ. And the most striking pattern of Jesus' life was the way He *always* combined words with actions. Yes, He preached the gospel with His mouth. But He also fed the poor, healed the sick, and cast out demons. As Jesus commissioned His followers to go out on His behalf, He sent them with this two-pronged approach to being His ambassadors (e.g., Mark 3:14, 15; Luke 10:8, 9; Acts

“The most striking pattern of Jesus' life was the way He *always* combined words with actions.”

These two extremes reveal the temptation to separate the ministry and message of reconciliation. One says, "I will boldly proclaim the gospel and truth of Scripture with my mouth, whether or not I prove it with my actions." The other says, "I will live like a Christian and let my actions do the preaching. No need to say anything unless I am asked." The first approach yields a person holding a sign, warning strangers of damnation. The second yields a person running a soup kitchen without mentioning Jesus. Both approaches contain

1:8). Years later, the author of Hebrews would describe the salvation offered by Christ as something that was both announced and confirmed (Hebrews 2:3, 4). One is not complete without the other. As author Scott Jones says in *The Evangelistic Love of God & Neighbor*:

To evangelize non-Christian persons without loving them fully is not to evangelize them well. To love non-Christian persons without evangelizing them is not to love them well. Loving

God well means loving one's non-Christian neighbor evangelistically and evangelizing one's non-Christian neighbor lovingly.

So we must have word and deed, message and ministry. And in the midst of physical separation from the vast majority of my congregation and community, I'm realizing again just how powerful words can be. The power of a text or email. The power of a tele- or video conference. The power of preaching to my

apostle — indeed, he reminded believers often that words without action are useless. Nevertheless, he placed a premium on the *words* of the gospel, particularly as they related to people coming to faith in Christ:

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach

communicate the love and mercy and call of Jesus Christ. Words that provide the testimony that proves the truth of the evidence of our lives, just as much as the evidence proves the truth of our testimony.

## Redeeming the time

On two occasions, the apostle Paul encourages believers to redeem the time. In Ephesians 5:16 he tells us to do so because the days are evil. COVID-19 has brought evil days upon us. Days of fear, anxiety, separation, poverty, sickness, and death. These evil days are in need of redemption, in need of being bought back from sin and death. Left with little more than our words to reach people with the gospel, we might feel that we do not have enough at our disposal to redeem the time.

But Paul's other use of this phrase reminds us that our words are a powerful tool in God's hands: "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:5, 6).

Now, more than ever, Paul's words remind us to talk the walk!

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“God’s Word is powerful, and when we act as His mouthpieces, we yield that power.”

congregation via the Internet in an empty sanctuary or calling my unbelieving friends to check on them. Words are powerful. They communicate our love with a clarity and precision that actions cannot. They reinforce our actions with information that simple behavior fails to communicate. God's Word is powerful, and when we act as His mouthpieces, we yield that power. We proclaim our faith, express our love, and share our message of reconciliation.

## Testimony of truth

Paul understood and practiced the two-pronged approach of word and deed in his life as an

unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14, 15, NIV).

The gospel is good news for everyone, but no one can believe this good news if they do not hear it. It is not enough to simply "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Rather, the light must be accompanied by the illumination of speech; good deeds must be paired with good words. Words that convey grace to those who hear them. Words that explicitly

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# Found Faithful

by Rose McCormick Brandon

After many years of faithful service, the ambassador to a major country was fired. The problem occurred when a dispute arose between his home country and the one he served in. At a press conference, when he was required to speak on behalf of his own government concerning a major disagreement — something that should come naturally to an ambassador — the man took the side of his foreign hosts.

The press ridiculed him. His colleagues were shocked. No one could believe that a man with a glowing resumé, a man admired by all and now in the last years of his career, could fail so dramatically.

Every diplomat knows that faithfulness to the country they represent is their primary duty. Paul used the analogy of an ambassador to show that followers of Jesus are citizens of heaven living in the world and speaking to the world on His behalf. This role is key because God makes His appeal to the world through His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20).

In this role, we endure enticements that seek to lure us into a state where we become more comfortable in the world than in the body of Christ. Leaning away from Scripture and toward the prevailing opinions of our time can cause us to forget who we are and why we're here. This can lead to espousing opinions that don't reflect God's view. If we embrace worldly ideas without giving thought to whether or not they have God's approval, we are in danger of becoming overly comfortable in the land of our ambassadorship.

Pressure to conform is strong. And sometimes appealing. Ungodly philosophies appear enlight-

ened, loving, and kind — *everything a Christian should be*. Everything except faithful. Like the fallen diplomat who adopted the mindset of a foreign country, we can become so entrenched in ideologies of the day that we become unfaithful to the One who commissioned us as an ambassador (2 Timothy 4:10).

Daniel is an example of a true ambassador for God. While he lived in exile in Babylon, he never forgot where he came from and Whom he belonged to. When praying became illegal, Daniel kept up his practice of kneeling three times a day. He was an Israelite and bowed before no man, even when that man was the king of the land and held Daniel's life in his hands.

Life can be dangerous for faithful ambassadors: Daniel was thrown into a pit of hungry lions. God miraculously delivered him from death, but not all faithful representatives are rescued. The priority for Christ's ambassadors is not deliverance but that the One who sends us finds us faithful.

Love for Christ urges us to make a decided commitment to remain faithful ambassadors for Jesus regardless of consequences. The failed ambassador's loyalties had shifted. His actions informed everyone that he had become deeply rooted in his foreign field and had forgotten where his allegiance belonged. The transformation in him happened over a period of years and went unnoticed until a crisis brought it to public attention.

The ambassador's career as a valued emissary ended in disgrace. His shredded reputation never

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# Christian Peacemaking

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A worldview for Christ's ambassadors to act upon.  
by David Yvinec-Dunlop

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Despite the best effort of some, we live in a world fractured along ethnic, religious, political, and racial lines. Peace seems to elude the human race. Many of us believe that under certain conditions, peace would be attainable. If only we all had the same religious or political beliefs, or if only we were more forgiving and understanding, peace would become reality in our world.

In theory, peace seems possible, and yet in practice, it is so far out of our reach. In such a context, it would be normal to

feel disheartened and become cynical. Some will argue that we should face reality and be pragmatic because in some cases, violence is inevitable and even necessary.

But as Christians, we have the truth of Christ, who challenges us to live and act differently: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). These are challenging words. How can we as Christians be peacemakers and not resort to violence when it seems the obvious and most reasonable choice?

## Defining a peacemaker

First, let's define what it means to be a peacemaker in a Christian context. The German theologian Hans-Werner Bartsch argues that to be a peacemaker

should not be conflated simply with being nonviolent. In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount, the Greek word translated “peacemakers” does imply, and is not restricted to, what Bartsch calls a “passive attitude; it has necessarily the active counterpart of making peace, promoting endeavors toward peace, and eliminating any discernible causes of war and hatred.”

In a way, this is what Jesus encourages His followers to do when He speaks about turning the other cheek or when He tells the disciples to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:38-48). Jesus also says to not exclusively greet those who are our brothers and sisters, implying we should greet our enemies (actual enemies or perceived as such).

Christians are not to passively



stand by and put up with abuse, but they should actively work for peace by being loving, by praying, and by meeting and welcoming those they perceive as enemies. What a challenge! Indeed, in the Christian worldview, there is no room for assimilating peacemaking with military action or with preparing to kill a perceived assailant.

### A new worldview

We can easily become legalistic in trying to obey this injunction to be a peacemaker. We can feel self-righteous about being that true follower of Christ who eschews violence at all cost. But with every action we take as Christians, it all comes down to the intent of our heart (1 Corinthians 4:5). As believers, how do we reframe our worldview so that we can better love whomever we encounter in life?

As noted by Herbert Warren Richardson, an American theologian, to be effective in reaching our neighbors, whether perceived enemies or not, our attention should be “directed against the forces, or structure, of evil itself rather than against the person or group who is doing the evil. Christian faith sees neither particular men nor particular group as evil, but sees them trapped within a structure of ideological separation which makes ritual conflict inevitable.” The problem is not so much the human beings who do evil “but the structure of evil which makes men act violently.”

In order to successfully challenge the structure of evil, Christians have no options but to “meet violence with non-violence.” Otherwise, how can

Christians claim to be different, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13, 14)? To think and act that way echoes the words of Paul to Timothy when he affirms that some human beings are held captive to evil powers (2 Timothy 2:26). It does fit well with Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.

Christians are to be an example of resistance against the structures of evil, which can take many forms. We still ought to remember that “the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.” Those weapons nevertheless “have divine power to destroy strongholds” and “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5).

In this way, we will exemplify

“Christians are to be an example of resistance against the structures of evil.”

### A peacemaking church

This is why the statement of faith for the Church of God (Seventh Day) can rightly affirm “participation in physical warfare as contrary to a Christian’s humanitarian calling.” If our role as the church is to be God’s representative on earth and to be a window into the upcoming kingdom of God, we need to thoroughly reflect on what it means to be a peacemaker according to how Jesus qualifies it. Peacemaking needs to be faith in action, and it needs to be actions that effectively challenge the modus operandi by which our world functions (violence, abuse, and coercion, either physical or psychological).

the same peacemaking gospel that Christ preached so that we may “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” to the captives among the nations (Luke 4:19).

Blessed are the peacemakers!

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**David Yvinec-Dunlop** writes from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.



*Recommended reading:* Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence, by Preston Sprinkle

# My View From Your Pew



by Shirley Brosius

Six months ago, my husband and I began searching for a new church home. As we visited other congregations, I joked that we would join the first church where someone invited us to lunch. Six months and seven congregations later, we're still waiting for that invitation.

In our former church we had, from time to time, entertained church visitors in our home or at local restaurants, so I did not think my suggestion was unusual. I loved hearing the stories of how visitors found our church, where they lived, and what they did.

I once wrote a note on a bulletin telling my husband I would invite the young couple at the other end of our pew home for lunch. "What will you serve?" he asked. I named a meal-in-a-bag food I had in the freezer. The couple loved it and said they purchased it themselves on occasion. We had a great visit although, I must admit, they never returned to church. But surely not because they had not felt welcomed.

Visitors seek to connect with God through worship and teaching, and church members serve as a crucial link: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Entertaining visitors need be neither fancy nor threatening. Rest assured, visitors are eager to get to know you and learn more about your congregation. They don't want to drive miles and then return home without connecting with someone on a personal level.

I'm finding, though, that when we visit churches, we rarely receive invitations to participate in activities outside of the morning service. Certain-

ly, we could just sign up and attend. But there's something warm, friendly, and hospitable about a congregation that embraces visitors by extending invitations.



Here are my suggestions as a visitor.

- Staff an information desk in your foyer so that if no greeters are on hand, I can find a bulletin and learn where restrooms and nurseries are located.
- Welcome me with greeters who distribute bulletins and tell me they're glad I came — or that I came back, if I return.
- Look me in the eye and tell me your name during the greeting time. Ask me where I live. Tell me you're glad I chose to worship with you today.
- Invite me to church activities — to a small group Bible study, for starters. Or women's or men's meetings. I will get to know you much better in a small group setting than I do sitting behind you in a pew. In our former church, I often invited visitors to small group meetings because such places allow participants to interact and get acquainted.
- Invite me to after-church luncheons, even if they are covered dish affairs. Surely there's enough food to feed a few visitors. I would love to sit beside you and meet your family.
- Once it's obvious that I'm a regular visitor, offer to meet with me to answer questions I may have. While your website offers some information about your church, I want to know your

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# Questions & Answers



**What** roles do natural disasters, tragic accidents, plagues like COVID-19, and other human sufferings play in God's will or plan?

**Scripture** offers no single, simple solution to this question. Consider these oft-heard answers, open your Bible, and see how they stack up against the Word.

**Human suffering demonstrates God's wrath and punishment for sin.** Scripture tells that God has sent, or permitted, disease and disaster to fall upon people because of their rebellion against Him. Cases in point: Noah's flood, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, death of David and Bathsheba's firstborn.

These examples do *not* prove that *all* human tragedy and suffering can be traced to God's wrath or to specific human sins. Jesus made this clear in Luke 13:1-5. Much or most human suffering appears random and defies easy human explanations. Sin and suffering do have a generic link in Scripture, to be sure. But according to Christ, it's not our place to say that anyone's suffering is because of this or that particular sin.

**Suffering comes to test our faith.** Job's suffering is a familiar example of this. Another is the insufferable, or unbearable, order for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Whatever pain or loss God's people experience, they can be assured that it comes with the knowledge and consent of a loving God. He is touched with our pain and promises that all things work for good to them that

love Him and are called to His purpose (Hebrews 4:15; Romans 8:28). If you believe this when the virus hits *you*, you pass the test — whether you live or die!

**Natural disasters, pandemics, and plagues are signs of Christ's return.** We should be cautious here. On one hand, Jesus told us to watch for His coming and the end of the age. On the other hand, most "signs" He gave (famines, wars, earthquakes, pestilences, etc.) have happened in every age. "These are the beginning of sorrows," He said in Mark 13, "but the end is not yet. . . of that day and hour no one knows" of Christ's return by watching the signs (vv. 7, 8, 32, 33).

**Life's trouble and suffering are intended to refine and build character.** Peter says so at the beginning and end of his first epistle (1 Peter 1:6, 7; 5:10, 11). Paul and James agree that trials and tribulations produce patience and other fruit toward perfection (Romans 5:3; James 1:2-4). It is said of Jesus that He "learned obedience" by what He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). How much more do His followers have to learn from the same school of suffering, painful though it be.

These Bible narratives and verses provide a multi-pronged answer to the question, and there is still more to learn on this topic. Let us rest confident that we'll "know more about it [and] understand why . . . farther along," when all things become plain in the light of God's eternal glory in Christ.

Trust and obey, and bear up on the way of the cross — the Jesus way.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



# Working Toward Harmony

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Practicing reconciliation in  
the body of Christ.

by Lisa Harp South

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**A**re you concerned about harmony within the church? Many of us are. How then can we be reconciled with our brothers and sisters in our congregations? What is the ministry of reconciliation that 2 Corinthians 5:18b talks about: “Christ . . . gave us the ministry of reconciliation”? After reading this text, I asked myself, *Am I actively involved as an ambassador for Christ in the ministry of reconciliation? What does that look like within the church?*

So I researched the words *reconciliation* and *reconcile*. Let’s look at a couple of definitions.

*Reconciliation*: “a change from enmity to friendship. It is mutual,

i.e., it is a change wrought in both parties who have been at enmity” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*).

*Reconcile*: “to restore to friendship or harmony” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).

These definitions help us better understand what Scripture teaches. Romans 5:10, 11 tells us that we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son and that through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have received reconciliation — restored to friendship with God. If we are reconciled to God through Christ, wouldn’t God desire us to restore harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ? As new creations, we should have a new attitude toward each other — forsaking animosity and harsh judgment and embracing friendship and harmony — reconciliation.

## Recognizing reconciliation

What does this reconciliation look like? Consider Ephesians 4:1-6:

Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul also instructs us to speak “the truth in love” and that each one of us is joined together to create one “body for the building up of itself in love” (vv. 15, 16).

How we love and treat one another is of much importance

to our Father. It creates unity with our brethren: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Reconciliation is made possible by showing kindness to each other. Ephesians 2:7 describes God's reconciling work as His "grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." If we are to be like Him, then we need to act toward each other in kindness that makes for peace, rather than in anger that makes for hostility: "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups [uncircumcised and circumcised] into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (v. 14). While this scripture discusses engrafting Gentiles as part of the people of God, it may also indicate how peace is made among the brethren.

### Practice points

How do we practice the ministry of reconciliation and bring to our church a state of harmony? In her article "Eight Ways to Pursue the Ministry of Reconciliation," Denise Loock shares insights that I have adapted for our fellowship within the church.

**Evangelize.** Simply share the good news, the message of God's reconciliation wherever you can. And remind others in the church body of God's truth.

**Refuse to be divisive.** Share God's peace and kindness, on-line or face-to-face.

**Be generous.** Remember that God owns everything anyway. Share the resources God has given with those who are needy in your congregation.

**Listen to others.** Before responding in anger, try to listen.

Find a point of convergence.

**Be grateful.** Send notes of thanks to those who need an encouraging word in your congregation. Has God placed someone in your life as a blessing? Let them know!

**Be hospitable.** Share your meals with fellow believers. Also share experiences that point back to God.

**Glorify God in all things.** No matter what talent someone compliments you on, point back to God's work in your life.

**Seek Scripture.** Ask for guid-

kindness when your brothers and sisters in Christ have brokenness in their lives. Many carry their wounds silently. Pray for wisdom and love in dealing with them, rather than saying something negative. They may need to repent of wrongdoing, but it takes love, peacemaking, and kindness from others to help many of us get there. Pray for God to open your eyes to see where one of your brothers or sisters is hurting.

We all have a responsibility to be Christ's ambassadors to the world. But we also have a re-

“Reconciliation is made possible by showing kindness to each other.”

ance from the Holy Spirit to produce the appropriate fruit so that you can be a minister of reconciliation. Love, peace, and kindness are part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

### Specific application

Contemplate these eight points when working toward harmony in the church body. This can include former members of your congregation who seek to return. It can be frightening if they sense they will not be accepted back with open arms.

Think of these eight points of

responsibility to show love, peace, and kindness to our brothers and sisters in Christ. This ministry of reconciliation is the way back to harmony. May God help us lead the way! **BA**

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**Lisa Harp South** attends the Shawnee, OK church and is an active member of the Oklahoma Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



# No Words Needed



by Inger Logelin

*I can't go in there,* I thought as I turned away. The ramshackle outhouse I stood in front of teetered on the edge of a ravine, with just a scrap of cloth serving as the door. Village children, stray dogs, and small pigs observed me with interest as I edged away.

My husband and I were visiting a small Mien village in the hill country of northern Thailand with missionary friends. A bone-rattling ride on a dirt road had brought us high in the hill country near the border between Thailand and Laos. In this area infamously known as the Golden Triangle, those who profited by drug activity lived in what could be described as “mansions” next to their neighbors’ rickety dwellings.



The service attracted a dozen or so believers in plastic chairs, several naked babies, and skinny dogs wandering through the open door of the home where the meeting was held. True worship is the same around the world, and it was obvious Jesus had a home in hearts of this village.

As *farangs* (foreigners) and guests, we were served a delicious meal of country rice with chicken and greens. As we visited after the meal, I felt a hand on my arm. A petite young woman dressed in a wrap of colorful tribal-patterned cloth gave me a shy smile and motioned at me.

“What is she saying?” I asked our friends.

“She’s calling you Big Sister.” I was indeed much taller — and yes, bigger — and decades older than this young woman. She appeared to be in her twenties and shorter than five feet. “She wants you to come with her.”

Taking my hand, the young woman pulled me gently away from the house and up a dirt hill. The whole village was perched on land that sloped away in all directions, with gardens terraced on the hillsides. I could see rounded ranges beyond ranges in the green misty distance.

The young woman led me to a small wooden house built at the top of the hill from the meetinghouse. Beaming, she guided me into the one-room structure with a dirt floor, small table, and two plastic chairs. A large framed photo of the king of Thailand held a place of honor. She gestured toward the print, and I smiled and nodded to let her know I understood the significance of the picture. I knew it was common for households in Thailand to display a photo of the king.

A few dishes and pots, some clothing and blankets were neatly settled in their places. After I had admired the little home with smiles and nods, the young Mien woman led me outdoors. She placed two three-legged stools in front of the door and motioned for me to sit. It was as if she were inviting me to sit on her fancy terrace with comfortable patio furniture. Around us her chickens scratched and pecked in the dirt.

My young friend sat next to me patting my arm as we looked out together at the rounded ranges that fell off into the distance. The gentle pats spoke a language all their own — a language of love, of honor, of thankfulness “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). All without a word spoken.

She sighed, and it was the sound of contentment. She seemed so proud to show me her

*continued on page 24*

# CHURCHRIGHT

Doing church right



## Sabbath School Zooms!

On Sabbath, April 25, BAP curriculum editor Jason Overman was the guest teacher for Lesson 4 of the *Prince of Peace* quarterly, via Zoom. Over 230 households “Zoomed in” for the lesson. Even in desperate times of uncertainty, God’s grace opens up new opportunities for His people in ways we could not imagine.

Special thanks to Pastor Donville Bell and the Rhema Praise Sanctuary CoG7 family in Willowdene, Jamaica.

Jason is available to teach lessons and hold discussions via Zoom. Contact him at [jason.overman@cog7.org](mailto:jason.overman@cog7.org).

## Certainly Uncertain

If there were a contest to determine the top ten most heard phrases these past few months, I’d submit *uncertain times*. It seems that every television commercial, corporate email, and newscast contains at least one sentence that begins, “In these uncertain times. . . .”

These times certainly are uncertain. An unseen and previously unknown threat, COVID-19, suddenly changed our lives. Some people became seriously ill, and many more became seriously afraid. Businesses closed. Churches didn’t meet in person. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs. Will things ever return to what they were before? We don’t know. Uncertain times.

I am, however, certain about these three things:

- The Church of God (Seventh Day) is alive and well. Within the United States and Canada, congregations are livestreaming worship services, Zooming Bible studies, and staying in touch electronically. District superintendents and area representatives continue to communicate. Artios Christian College, Missions, and Bible Advocate Press haven’t missed a beat, thanks to technologies available. Our Denver offices have remained open to serve us.

- Our local congregations, districts, and Conference continue to need tithes and offerings. Budgeted expenses are being cut to the bone. Scheduled salary raises have been withheld. Leadership meetings, Super Sabbaths, retreats, and camps are being cancelled. Leaders are doing everything possible to protect the financial health of our church, but many expenses cannot be eliminated. We continue to need the tithes and offerings of our members.

- The almighty God we serve and in whom we trust remains in absolute control. Nothing that is happening surprises Him or overwhelms Him. Throughout human history, God has demonstrated His faithfulness to those who place themselves in His hands. Present difficulties never annul God’s eternal promises and plans.

I am uncertain of much. But God, His mission, and His promised outcomes are not among them. Keep faith with God!

— Loren Stacy



## District News

### Northeast

*Contributor: Esther Winchell, Women's Ministries Director*

#### Ministering God's Way

My family and I had just come home from spending time with our family in Arizona, only to enter quarantine on March 15. We wanted to start on our district travels, beginning with our biannual board meeting. Well, that didn't occur. The March and April calendars were filled with different district-wide functions, but they were cancelled or postponed.

As a ministries director for women, my calendar cleared up quickly. It made me sad, and I wondered how I would fill the time. But God had other plans.

I began receiving requests that needed to be filled by our Prayer Shawl Ministry. In two weeks, we sent out eleven prayer shawls and one coverlet for those needing prayer due to the virus and hospitalization. Recently, another three went to friends of members. We have done 22 prayer shawls since the quarantine began.

I thank God for the technology He has provided. We are holding women's meetings, devotions, prayer time, and chat time on Zoom. Our Ossining, New York women's group did a group meeting recently, and members from various churches joined in. We retreated with several women from Boston, Bridgeport, Winchester, and other cities.

In mid-April our own local women's group Bible study met online. It was great to see others and have a study and "catch up" time.



Church is still going on. It may not be as we know it, but we must remember we are the church, so we will continue to minister in ways that God provides.



**Bringing comfort.** *Women Equipping Women in the NED have been busy! They made a prayer blanket for Pastor Donald Gouldbourne (Boston, MA), who was having major health issues, and sent it to him in March. In late January, Laura Sinai Chavez in Fort Wayne, IN (Warsaw St. congregation) was scheduled for surgery, so her mom requested a prayer afghan for her.*

I am a discipleship cell leader. In this time of pandemic, I am sending devotionals to twenty brothers daily. At the same time, I remind them to all pray at 7:00 p.m. as Pastor Antonio Vega suggested. In my home we have Bible study on Thursdays and Fridays. — *Areli Vega, Church of God, Lanham, MD*

*The Lanham, Maryland congregation has been reaching out during the coronavirus outbreak. Read what their various ministries are doing at churchright.org.*

### Central

*Contributor: Ken Lawson, Superintendent*

#### Board Meeting

March 14-15, just before the shut down for COVID-19, the Central District board completed its 2020 meeting in St Paul, Minnesota.

Extra time was spent working to increase the effective Ministry Program, which consists of all our camps, retreats, and Super Sabbaths. There are well over 25 of these valuable camping and fellowship events in our district.

The board signed a letter of thanks to Crist Romero



(Waukegan, Illinois), who completed a four-year term working with our translation needs. She also helped organize and work personally with the growing number of members-at-large in our twelve-state district.

Due to a generous contribution from Still Waters Prairie Retreat in Alfred, North Dakota, we approved a committee to manage these funds. It will assist all Central District Pastoral Program students taking classes at Artios by covering all their tuition costs.

Perhaps like every district, much of our meeting was consumed with trying to create a balanced budget. New appointments for the coming year were made, the budget was adopted, and the minutes were approved. Then everybody scrambled to get home as news of the pandemic and coming shutdown threatened.

## Southwest

Contributor: Jamin Teran

SWD photos taken by SWD Media Ministry



**Legacy of leadership.** The SWD Leadership Team had its annual meeting in San Antonio, TX, on March 8, centering on the theme “Building a Legacy of Leadership.” Team members heard from different CoG7 national leaders and district ministries to learn how they can reset their ministries and enhance existing ones. During a Q&A time after the presentations, the team was encouraged to strive for a leadership mindset for 2020.

# CHURCHRIGHT.org

Have you seen the updated Churchright Online? You can view the current issue, an archive, memorials, and more at *churchright.org*. (Adjustments are still being made.)



**Prayer and praise.** Twenty-six sisters from San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Kerrville, and Laredo gathered on March 15 at our sister church in Artesia Wells, TX. Focusing on the theme “Don’t Give Up!” they prayed and worshipped and were reminded that even when we are discouraged, we must continue to pray. God listens.

For more SWD news, visit [churchright.org](http://churchright.org).

**2020**

## CALENDAR

**Artios Events**  
May 12 - July 6 - registration  
July 12 - August 16 - classes in session

For a complete listing of events,  
please visit [churchright.org](http://churchright.org).



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## ASLEEP IN JESUS

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### Paul Eugene Heavilin Sr.

1927 - 2020

Paul Heavilin was born March 15, 1927, in Marion, Indiana, child number eight of fifteen born to McClellan and Vera (Foster) Heavilin. He slipped peacefully from this life on March 29, 2020, in Waldron, Indiana. His wife, Virginia, and daughter Marilyn were by his side.

After earning his first bachelor's degree, Paul pastored two years in Wisconsin for the Wesleyan Methodists. At that point in 1952, with three young girls in tow (the youngest less than a week old), he went to Missouri to teach at Midwest Bible College (MBC) for the Church of God (Seventh Day), and Virginia cooked for the students. This set a pattern for the rest of Paul's life of his wife being a co-partner in his ministry wherever he went.

Over the next 48 years, Paul served the Church



of God in multiple places and in multiple roles: pastoring in Wisconsin, California, and Michigan; working as youth camp director, president of the Michigan state board, president of the North American Ministerial Council, and secretary of the International Ministerial Congress; carrying out duties in numerous positions on district, state, and local boards; and ministering for fourteen years at Spring Vale Academy (SVA), where he was "Uncle Paul" to many of the students. Between his MBC and SVA teaching years, Paul taught two generations of some of the same families!

Paul was preceded in death by his parents and eleven of his siblings. He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Virginia (Spencer); brothers John and Charles (Barbara); sister Lois (Ben) Drown; seven children, 19 grandchildren, 49 great-grandchildren, and five great-great grandchildren.

*Read the entire memorial for Paul on our Memorials page at [cog7.org](http://cog7.org).*



## The Bible Advocate Press is going digital!

To update our 47-year-old printing press and other machines, the board of directors approved the purchase of a Canon printer. We can now do smaller print-on-demand jobs — you print only what you need.

To learn more about our new addition, watch for updates in future issues of *Churchright*.

# Pursuing Peace with Paul

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by Jason Overman

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**T**he New Testament often paints its greatest truths with the broadest brush strokes.

From it we get the big picture about the ministry of reconciliation, being ambassadors for Christ, and being compelled by love. But with these grand principles, the New Testament also sketches smaller portraits that show us what these truths look like in practice, up close and in person.

Philemon is one of these little pictures. As Paul's shortest letter, coming in at only 335 words (in Greek), it is a treasure of practical Christian reconciliation and all it implies for our personal and social relationships. In this "Spotlight," we focus on the marvelous story of Philemon, Onesimus, and the peacemaker who re-

stored broken relationships and transcended the institutions that divided them.

The epistle gives the barest of detail about our two estranged fellows. Philemon is a householder and slave master, apparently of some means and status. He is also a "beloved friend and fellow laborer" of Paul's who has a church in his house (vv. 1, 2). Onesimus is a lowly runaway slave. Under Paul's influence, he has come to faith in Jesus Christ.

This scanty description entices questions: What happened to Onesimus? Why did he run? Who was at fault? We don't have the answers. We are left with only the wide gulf that divides them. But this thinnest of outlines allows us to focus on Paul and how he actively pursues peace and bridges the gap as ambassador and advocate to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Let's attend closely to his master class on peacemaking.

**Verses 1-3, 22-25:** At the beginning and end of the letter, Paul identifies himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." As a good soldier, he has been faithful to the cause of Christ in which they are all "fellow laborers." They are united by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." These words frame not only the epistle but also the gospel work itself and Paul's high expectations for it. Because we have "peace from God our Father," the "church in your house" is indicative of a new family in Christ. Throughout the book's twenty-five verses, Paul repeatedly refers to all parties affectionately as "brothers."

**Verses 4-7:** Having established Jesus as the bridge that binds us, Paul turns to his friend Philemon. He expresses his thankfulness and prayers to God for Philemon, and commends him for the "love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the

*continued on page 24*



## Pay Back

"Mrs. Adams, come to church on Sabbath — please." Hazel looked up from their checker game. "We'd love to have you."

"Why, child, I haven't darkened the church door since my husband died — and since that falling-out with my daughter. Took my granddaughter and moved away. I've not seen them since."

"Mom doesn't go to church either." Hazel looked sad. "She used to."

"Why not, child?"

"The only job she found when we moved back here made her work Sabbath." Hazel looked sad. "It's kinda lonesome by myself."

"Well, they won't want me — not after so long."

Hazel thought about their growing friendship. *She's really nice — like a grandma would be, if I had one.*

On a beautiful Sabbath morning, Hazel looked up from their shared hymnal. Mrs. Adams' former worry lines softened and relaxed. *She was afraid, but everyone welcomed her. I'm glad I kept asking. It feels almost . . . like family.*

Later, under Mrs. Adams' watchful eye, Hazel made a salad and sandwiches, and they ate together. It became their Sabbath ritual.

"You wear that same dress every Sabbath, Hazel. Tight across the shoulders and much too short. I'm surprised your mother allows it."

Hazel squirmed, her eyes downcast. "Mom doesn't know. I change before she gets home. I was saving for one . . ."

Mrs. Adams seemed not to notice, lost in thought. *She's about the same size. It's still in the package. . . .* She rose slowly. "Leave the table;

we'll clear it later. Come!"

The bedroom was gloomy after the sunlit kitchen. "Open that trunk in the corner," directed Mrs. Adams. Slow tears escaped as she lifted out an unwrapped package, stamped and addressed, with the word *REFUSED* in large black marker.

"Open it, child. It was for my granddaughter. Her mother and I had argued . . . wouldn't let her open it."

Curious, Hazel complied, and her hands shook. "It's the most beautiful dress I've ever seen!" *Even nicer than the one in the catalog.*

"Put it on, child. I was right . . . slightly big. Perhaps your mother can take it in."

"I'm sure she can," said Hazel. "She used to sew a lot."

Mother's reaction was totally unexpected. "Where did you get this dress?" She reached for a chair and sat down heavily, fingering the beautiful fabric and fine seams.

"I sewed this dress myself," Mother murmured. "My friend Amy ordered it for a granddaughter's birthday. I moved away and we lost touch. . . . What's your friend's first name?"

On another beautiful Sabbath morning, Hazel sat between her two most important people. Amy Adams glanced down and smiled. *The dress fits perfectly. And to think! It brought us all together!*

Hazel's mother rejoiced. *It's good to be back in God's house. I have a beautiful daughter, a friendship renewed, and a wonderful Lord.*

The pastor spoke on the importance of and need for ambassadors to promote the message of reconciliation with God. "And we have a special young ambassador in our midst today," he concluded, glancing in Hazel's direction.

I guess a kid can be an ambassador too, thought Hazel with a smile.

"Lunch at my place," insisted Amy. "Hazel and I have our little routine. She fixes lunch, and I tell her how." *And it's time I phoned my daughter . . . right after lunch.*

### Science Time: Reconciling Food Enemies

Did you know that there are certain foods that "don't get along"? Try this experiment, and see if you can get oil and water to come together. You will need a clear jar with a lid, oil, vinegar (balsamic vinegar looks cool if you have some), mustard or mayonnaise, salt and pepper.

#### Directions

In a clear jar, mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup oil and 3 tablespoons vinegar. Place the lid on the jar and shake it until the oil and vinegar have mixed. Now let the jar rest on a table and watch it for a while. Do the oil and vinegar stay mixed? How can you get the oil and vinegar to stay together? You need an ambassador! Add one teaspoon mustard or mayonnaise (or both) to the jar and shake the jar again. Now let it rest on the table again. Do the oil and vinegar stay mixed? The reason is that both mustard and mayonnaise are emulsifiers. They are attracted to both oil and vinegar molecules and keep them together. Add some salt and pepper, and you have a delicious salad dressing!

**In a Bible parable, a father and son were separated — but they reunited!**



Image by CCXpistiavos from Pixabay.

### Fill-in-the-Blanks Puzzle

**Directions:** Unscramble the words below, and use them to fill in the blanks.

basrsamaosd thircs lenpidga  
mprielo feahbl onecdercli

Now then, we are

\_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_,

as though God were

\_\_\_\_\_ through

us: we \_\_\_\_\_ you on

Christ's \_\_\_\_\_, be

\_\_\_\_\_ to

God.

**Solution:** 2 Corinthians 5:20

Kids Time activities are  
abridged from the BAP  
children's curriculum. Order  
at [cog7.org/online-store](http://cog7.org/online-store).





# Leaders

by Whaid Rose

On December 15, 1967, the Silver Bridge at Point Pleasant, West Virginia, collapsed, plunging many to their death. Investigation showed that the bridge was carrying far more weight than it was built to carry. That's because cars and trucks weighed more in the '60s than they did in 1928 when the bridge was built. Unable to bear up under the weight of current vehicles, the Silver Bridge came apart.

This sparked widespread concern about our country's infrastructure and underscored the importance of bridges to our domestic life. Indeed, so much of what we do depends on them.

Using the Silver Bridge incident as an illustration, Dr. James Earl Massey wrote the following in a 1994 *Christianity Today* article: "Every leader is a bridge, connecting people with meanings, relationships, and opportunities. So much of what is possible for people depends upon bridge-persons."

The need for "bridge-persons" has never been greater than in this moment in history. As I write

this column in mid-April, the coronavirus outbreak continues to take its toll in ways not seen in modern times. Conditions in New York City are grave enough to necessitate the conversion of a well-known convention center into a hospital. Playgrounds, parks, airports, and pews are empty. Living rooms are now classrooms and offices. Trucks in hospital parking lots are make-shift morgues.

The resulting fear and anxiety is understandable. People are grieving the loss of livelihood and loved ones, especially those whose loved ones died alone in quarantine and won't get a proper burial.

But most unsettling about this pandemic is the feeling of naked uncertainty that it thrusts upon us — its unknowns, the questions it evokes: When is this going to be over? What will be the eventual economic fallout, not just nationally but for us personally? And what will normal look like when we get there?

There are no answers. There's no playbook for COVID-19. It's like walking in the dark. However, dark times underscore the importance of leadership, which brings us back to where we started. And considering that so much depends on it, it's safe to

say that every crisis is a leadership opportunity.

## Qualities of good leaders

The Silver Bridge illustration begs this personal introspection: Is my leadership strong enough to bear up under the weight of the present crisis? Such times test our leadership, separating the genuine from the pretenders.

In his book, *The Motive*, Patrick Lencioni asserts that leaders lead either for the rewards (the prize they get for their hard work) or for the responsibilities (the joy of loving and serving others). Not surprisingly, it is the latter that bears up under the weight of a crisis. Such a leader brings their influence to bear upon the situation at hand, all for the joy of serving others.

Consider some of the things such leaders do best.

**They provide clarity.** Confusion and uncertainty are typical in times of crisis. The leader's responsibility is to provide clarity. This doesn't mean coming up with answers; in crisis there are usually no answers. Rather, this is about clarifying the big picture, connecting people to a vision of life beyond the crisis. In *Church Unique*, Will Mancini writes, "To lead by rallying people around

# hip in Times of Crisis

a better future, albeit unknown, requires clarity first.”

The best biblical example is Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). When skeptical onlookers misconstrued the Spirit’s work, Peter rose to the occasion and provided clarity, so much so that three thousand people were converted!

The importance of clarity plays out on our TV screens daily as the pandemic continues. The graver the situation, the more clarity is needed, and those who provide it best are most respected and admired.

**They demonstrate moral courage.** More than mere bravery, this is the capacity to do what’s right for the right reason in the face of difficult circumstances. It is developed over time through building trust, character, and integrity.

Classic examples of moral courage are Joshua summoning two-plus million weary wilderness wanderers to cross over into Canaan (Joshua 1:10, 11) and Nehemiah rallying a nation to rise up and rebuild her broken walls (Nehemiah 2:17-20). These happened at pivotal moments in Israel’s history.

**They think creatively.** In our fast-paced technological world, the one constant is change, and

leaders who make the greatest difference are those who adapt to change through creativity and innovation. As the outcomes of the pandemic already show, there’s no way around it.

The best example of creative thinking in Scripture is Jesus. He was a master communicator because He was masterfully creative. To get His point across, He told stories, drew in the sand, held up a Roman coin, and sat an infant on His lap. No wonder He changed the world.

**They give care.** *People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.* Among the reasons we admire the apostle Paul is the care he exuded for those under his leadership. Near the end of his life, in recalling some of the things he suffered, Paul highlighted “the care of all the churches” (KJV) as the greatest burden of his ministry (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

Paul’s capacity for caring reminds us of the caregivers on the frontlines so frequently highlighted these days. When life is on the line, leaders give care.

**They communicate hope.** In his book *Hope Again*, Chuck Swindoll writes, “Hope is a wonderful gift from God, a source of strength and courage in the face of life’s harshest trials.” The fact

is that hope is scarce in times of crisis, unless leaders communicate it.

Everyone is a leader because in some way, everyone is impacting those within their sphere of influence. Leadership is never more critical than during times of crisis, and the crisis has never been greater than at present. The question is, will your leadership hold up under its weight? **BA**

**Whaid Rose**, former president of the General Conference, is dean of the Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership and pastors the Newton, NC congregation. He and his wife, Marjolene, live in Denver, NC.



**For resources on leading your congregation to work together in ministry, visit Artios Christian College’s Lead Up section in [baonline.org](http://baonline.org).**

# Found Faithful

*continued from page 7*

recovered. Sometimes a crisis is needed to draw us back to faith in Christ.

We are living in a time of crisis now, and God is asking us, “Whom should I send?” May our answer be, “Here I am. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8, NIV). May we be faithful to our calling (1 Corinthians 4:2). **BA**

**Rose McCormick  
Brandon** writes from  
Caledonia, Ontario.



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## No Words Needed

*continued from page 14*

world and the beautiful vistas she saw every day.

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I sighed, too, for the acceptance and love I felt. I was supposed to be the one bringing God’s love into a dark place — the “official” ambassador for Christ. Yet that day I felt the love of God made manifest in my heart through a tiny woman whose language I couldn’t understand. “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ,” Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:20, “as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

God’s ambassadors are found in surprising places, sometimes surrounded by pigs and chickens. His love, “as though God were pleading through us,” draws others to Him. That day I experienced how His love crosses borders and cultural divides and doesn’t always require language.

**BA**

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**Inger Logelin** writes  
from Langley, WA.



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## Pursuing Peace with Paul

*continued from page 19*

saints.” Paul praises him, not for his status or standing but for “the sharing of your faith” and the “consolation in your love.” He acknowledges the joyous refreshing Philemon has given to “the hearts of the saints.”

**Verses 8-16:** Having established that Philemon is a man of faith and love, Paul is ready to make his appeal on those same grounds on Onesimus’ behalf. Paul could command and coerce Philemon to do what is right, by the weight of his authority, “yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you.” The same love that motivates Philemon is what moves Paul to empty himself for Onesimus’ sake. This love has transformed the runaway slave into

Paul’s own son, and Paul appeals to Philemon to receive him as his “own heart.” The self-emptying love of Christ defines all three men and requires that Philemon not act by external compulsion but by voluntary love. When he does, every boundary that separates them will be transcended. In this reconciliation, Philemon is called to receive Onesimus with divine acceptance, “no longer as a slave but more than a slave — a beloved brother.”

**Verses 17-22:** Paul and Philemon are partners in this ministry of reconciliation. The same sacrificial love that moves Philemon to receive Onesimus as an equal brother in Christ moves Paul to give also: “if he . . . owes anything, put that on my account.” Paul is confident that Philemon will be obedient to this love, and in the process, he will bring joy and refreshing to Paul’s heart.

The book of Philemon vibrantly illustrates what an ambassador for Christ does in actively pursuing peace: orient all parties as brethren in Christ; acknowledge the faith and love that animates them; appeal to, rather than coerce, voluntary and sacrificial action from the heart; and recognize the shared partnership that is in Christ and can transcend every personal and institutional division.

In 335 words, Paul drew a picture that challenges us today. It still breaks down every barrier and bridges every gulf, if we would let it. When we do, our own lives become God’s masterpiece and we, ambassadors of peace.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (v. 25). **BA**



# Peace

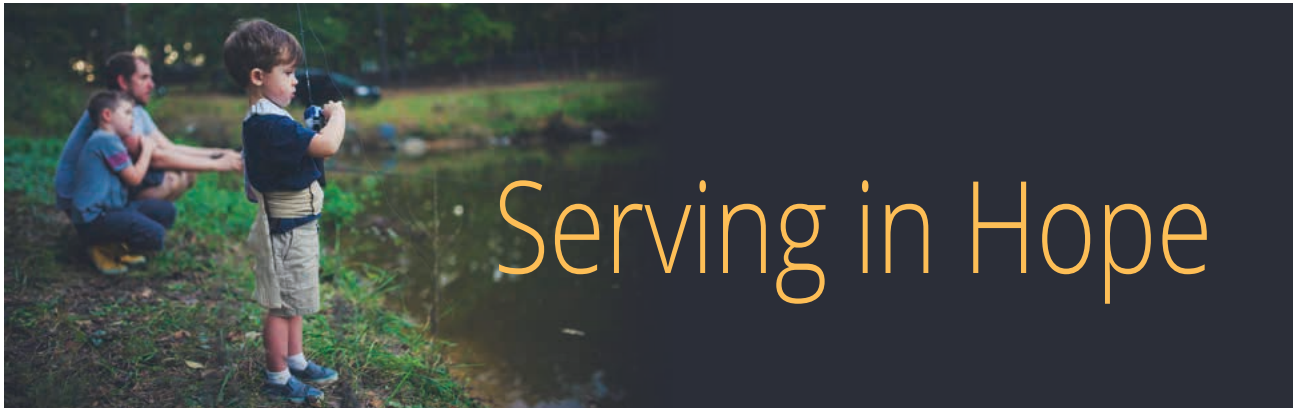
Where is the peace the angels  
proclaimed?  
The earth still swirls with sin and  
pain.  
Only humble hearts swept clean  
Contain the Holy Gift.  
Believe, trust, bow low.  
Wise men still seek  
Him to know.  
Our true  
Peace.

Yvonne Kays

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I  
give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be  
troubled and do not be afraid”

(John 14:27, NIV).





# Serving in Hope

## A letter to our youth from Pastor Ken Lawson

My childhood memories of many sermons in church were from men who seemed angry about a lot of things. They preached long and hard about world conditions and the imminent battle of Armageddon. I greatly feared the nations of Gog and Magog! Late at night, I thought I could hear those evil armies crashing over the hills right where we lived. Some pastors instructed the young people to not go to college because that battle, and the coming of Jesus in the middle of it, was going to happen before we could even get our college degree.

Sermon memories also include hearing a super long list of our personal sins that were going to put us straight into the lake of fire. At that time, the list was often about the way I dressed and combed my hair, about brightly colored clothes, going to movies, dancing, roller skating, bowling, and anything having to do with competitive sports. I was convinced my future was totally hopeless and that I certainly would be tossed into hell-fire — and at any moment!

At a youth camp in the mountains of Oregon, one of our less angry pastors preached about Jesus' love for every sinner. He explained how His shed blood on the cross brought each of us personal reconciliation, the complete removal of all our sins. Hope, joy, and peace filled my heart! The preacher simply stated that Jesus loved us and accepted us into His family, just the way we were.

The fear of marching armies was silenced! Long-range plans were a joy to make. Our heavenly Father wanted us to live joyfully and free. He wanted us to develop optimism about our future

and become anything we wanted to be, because God would support our plans and us throughout our lives.

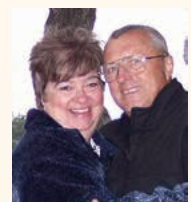
This simple understanding of the undeserved grace of God and Jesus' love for every one of us flooded my soul. At that moment, I truly accepted Jesus Christ. The world I lived in didn't seem ready to smash and grind me into the dirt. Peace came into my soul and life.

During that week of youth camp almost sixty years ago, God called me to become a pastor. At age 76, I still work under that joy, peace, and thrill of His calling. I urge every young man and woman in our church to answer His call on their lives. Do not hesitate to make plans to enjoy love and life and a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. He will come back; He promised He would. With joy, let's all actively serve Him and do His work without the fear and anger that immobilize our hope and salvation.

Let's never allow the angry political climate in our nations, the fear of spreading viruses, the threat of climate change, or anything else in this world to discourage us from making plans to serve our Creator and His Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. When He calls, go! Serve Him with peace, joy, and optimism in your heart. **BA**

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**Ken Lawson** and his wife, Sandra, live in Cottage Grove, MN.



# My View From Your Pew

continued from page 10

specific stance on various doctrines and the organization of your congregation. Do you elect or appoint leaders? Who is allowed to teach or serve, and in what capacities?

- Give me a gift that says you value me. Yes, a coffee mug is fine. But how about a gift bag that includes a recipe or devotional book your church has created, a note pad with your church's name on it, a refrigerator magnet or other personalized items that remind me of your hospitality when I see them around my house?

- Reserve a back pew just for visitors or latecomers.



Visitors come to church for many reasons. Perhaps they've drifted from a fellowship and long to reconnect. Perhaps they've suffered "friendly fire" in their own congregation and seek a safe place to worship. Perhaps, like my husband and me, they simply feel it's time for a change.

Whatever the reason they come, give visitors a reason to stay. With a little thought and effort, they will leave your fellowship feeling loved and cared for, embraced by the arms of one of Christ's ambassadors. **BA**

**Shirley Brosius**  
writes from Millersburg, PA.



## GC Ministries News

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### NAMC Announcement

Beloved Church and Dear Members of the North American Ministerial Council:

In the face of the reality we live in today due to COVID-19, the health measures taken to avoid infections, and the economic situation that prevails in our country and in our church families, the North American Ministerial Council officers have sought God's guidance and have decided to postpone the council meeting scheduled for October this year.

We ask those who have purchased airline tickets and reserved a space at the hotel to please seek reimbursement.

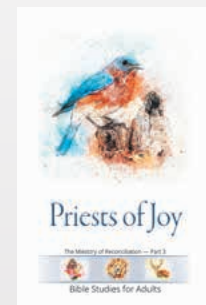
We will let you know as soon as we have information for a future council meeting.

God is faithful. We know that He has always accompanied us. What we are experiencing is a beautiful opportunity to encourage one another and, as members of the Church of God, to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of the kingdom.

— NAMC Officers

### Third Quarter Study

Did you know that we are the ministers of reconciliation — God's priests? In the third quarter lessons, *Priests of Joy*, we are surveying our role "in Christ." We no longer live for ourselves but are compelled by love to be ambassadors for Christ, bringing reconciliation on His behalf. We learn how the church is to be a joyous family, modeling relationship. Order at [cog7.org/online-store/](http://cog7.org/online-store/).



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# On Mission ... In Pakistan

by **Shamas Pervaiz**

Pakistan is an Islamic country in South Asia. It shares its border with India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China, and the good news is preached here. Pakistan is a member of the International Ministerial Congress.

## Religious beliefs

Christians are free to worship and share the good news in most regions of Pakistan, as long as they and Muslims in those areas maintain good relationships with one another. If Christians speak openly against Islam, there will be a problem.

Muslims who do hear the gos-

pel cannot convert to Christianity openly. If they do, they must move to another country safe from Muslim organizations that will seek to kill them. For their protection, Muslims who do convert do so inwardly.

## Work and schooling

Pakistan gained independence from British rule in 1947. The country is governed by an elected parliament and supported by a strong military. Islamic Sharia law is also practiced, though limited. The government provides some protection for the rights of religious minorities, like Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs. But Muslims are favored in jobs.

Many Christians do not go

to school due to lack of financial resources to pay for school items. Fortunately, Muslims trust Christians. If they complete their studies, some Muslims will hire Christians for better jobs.

## Reaching Muslims

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, 20 to go, preach, and teach. If Christians respect and maintain good relationships with Muslims and other Christians, then we can share the good news to all people.

We also pray for Muslims, invite them to our programs, and go to theirs when they invite us, where we preach the Bible. The wife of one Muslim man was recently possessed by a demon.

After Christians prayed for her, she was healed.

Pastors and members arrange prayer meetings in homes, where we give messages and pray for people. Other churches do not do this. We pray for and visit the sick and help when needed.

We give Bibles to some Muslim leaders and to those who can read and understand. When speaking to people of other religions, we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us.

People in Pakistan hunger for Bible truth. In 2015, we translated *This We Believe* into Urdu, our native language, and have since distributed many copies of it in pamphlet form.

## Training

We also have a Bible seminary, so important for the growth of our church. People see that we have a real church, and pastors send their young people to our seminary for training. Our desire is to have seminaries in different regions of Pakistan. This year we are graduating more than 225 students who have completed four years of training. These graduates will serve in different areas of Punjab and Sindh states, where there are no pastors.

If God allows, we also hope to open CoG7 primary and secondary schools to educate our Christian people, most of whom are not well educated. If our children will study, they can support themselves and be strong in the Bible. In government schools, most students are Muslims and pressure Christian students to join them, causing the Christian students to become disheartened and stop attending.

## COVID-19 in Pakistan

Coronavirus is in all regions of Pakistan. About twenty thousand cases have been reported as of this writing, with only a few deaths. Churches are not open. Prices are increasing. Some shops are still open in some areas, and people are buying food on loan — enough to keep going. A number of organizations are providing for their members, but they do not share this support with others. The government is providing some support, but only in some areas at this time. Please pray for us.

— Shamas Pervaiz

## Now and the future

With the help of GC Missions, Orphans and Widows Ministry, and Women's Ministry, we have completed training women (mostly widows) in how to use sewing machines. We have purchased sewing machines in four different areas for more than one hundred women (sewing machines are \$100 each). Before, they were working in brick kilns or Muslim homes, receiving a low income, and often financially indebted to their employers. Now, sewing clothes in their own businesses, they have no debt. They can send their children to school and give tithes and offerings to church.

Part of our vision is to start a clinic one day where boys and girls can be trained and eventually work as lab, Xray, EKG, and ultrasound technicians. We are also considering mobile medical testing and a dispensary for raising funds and carrying out evangelism in different areas. If we show the love of God and maintain good relationships with others, we can effectively share the Word of God with those in Pakistan.

If you and/or your church would like to support the ministry of the Church in Pakistan or another country where the Church of God (Seventh Day) exists, contact GC Missions at



# Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Population: 219,382,000

Capital: Islamabad

Land area: 340,499 sq mi /  
881,889 sq km

Official languages: English, Urdu

Religion: 90 percent Muslim, 10 percent Christian

Official religion: Islam

Official CoG7 congregations: 115

CoG7 membership: 10,000+

President: Shamas Pervaiz



Earlier in 1995, I began studying in a seminary. When I graduated in 2000, I started full-time church work, preaching to my relatives and friends. At the beginning of my ministry, I did not have my own church; we gathered in homes. Eight pastors worked with me, and I preached in their churches.

I always desired to join an organized church — not for money but to serve. I learned about the Church of God (Seventh Day) through the Internet and read about it on the Church's website. I don't know how I found CoG7, but I believe God directed me to this church to serve here. We started the CoG7 in 2006 with eight pastors.

In 2010, I helped start the Association of Bishops and Heads in Pakistan, and I am the chairman of it. This organization helps Christian leaders from more than seventy denominations strengthen their relationships and support one another. In 2012, I helped found an interfaith organization among Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and other religious organizations. I am the chairman of this organization as well. This group allows us to maintain good relationships with one another, resolve problems, and practice our Christian faith with as much freedom as possible. Wherever there are good relationships, our pastors have freedom to teach the Bible and share the good news.

In 2015, we received our first visit from GC Missions, and our church has grown quickly since that time. I have learned much. With the support and prayers of the Church of God (Seventh Day), we are teaching and serving well here in Pakistan.

[gcmissions@cog7.org](mailto:gcmissions@cog7.org). Write "GC Missions" on your check memo line or donate online at [cog7.org/giving](http://cog7.org/giving).

## Shamas

**Pervaiz** writes from Faisalabad, Pakistan. He is the IMC president of the Pakistan Conference.



When he was young, however, an English-speaking man taught him about Christianity, and my grandfather was baptized. This happened before Pakistan became a nation.

When I was a child, my parents said I would serve God. But as a teenager, I ignored this. My friend, who worked as an X-ray technician, told me that being a technician was a good job, and invited me to learn. When I was studying for the medical field, I was invited to serve in Campus Crusade for Christ as their Youth-in-Charge.

When I graduated in 1987, I worked as a lab technician. The job was good financially. However, I had problems with my employer when they said Christians were foolish. When they asked me to falsify tests, I decided it was time to leave.

## Testimony of Shamas Pervaiz

From childhood, my family kept the Sabbath, Friday night to Saturday evening. My father was a deacon in the Bethania church, a Sunday-observing church, and was always interested in Bible study. He said that we are to run our lives as the Bible says.

My grandfather was a Muslim.



## SOGgy Ministers

The ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) is a relational ministry. It requires us to interact with others as ambassadors for Christ (v. 20). Paul instructs elsewhere, “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NASB). I don’t know if Ken Sande, leader of Relational Wisdom 360 ministry, had these thoughts and verses in mind when he developed his acronym SOG, but I think the two fit together well.

The **s** in SOG stands for **self**-aware. Sande recommends that, as we interact with others, we do our best to remain aware of ourselves. We might ask, “Am I feeling angry, threatened, or frustrated? How am I behaving? Am I aggressive or dismissive . . . condescending . . . sullen?”

We need to be **self**-aware in order to consciously control inward feelings and outward expressions of them that will work against reconciliation. As Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves” (NASB).

The **o** in SOG stands for **other**-aware. In our conversations with others, says Sande, we need to monitor their feelings and behaviors as best we can. What might their behaviors tell us about what they’re feeling? How do ours affect them? If we aren’t **other**-aware, we can easily neglect to adjust our own feelings and behaviors in order to improve theirs.

We need to be **other**-aware so we can discern how best to interact with others to benefit them,

us, and our ministries of reconciliation. As Philippians 2:4 says, “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (NASB).

The **g** in SOG stands for **God**-aware. As children of God and ambassadors for Christ, we also must try to see ourselves and others from God’s perspective. Are we true to God’s Word and God’s will in the positions we take and in the way we express them? What might God himself do in a specific situation, and how can we cooperate with Him in what He is doing?

We need to be **God**-aware because our ministries of reconciliation are actually a part of God’s ministry of reconciliation. Second Corinthians 5:18, 19 says, “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (ESV).

Our great example, of course, is Jesus. Philippians 2:5ff begins, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (NASB). Jesus shows us what an effective ministry of reconciliation looks like. He was loving, humble, and self-sacrificing. He was **self**-aware, **other**-aware, and **God**-aware. Put another way, Jesus was SOGgy. Our own ministries of reconciliation will be more effective if we become SOGgy too.

— Loren Stacy



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