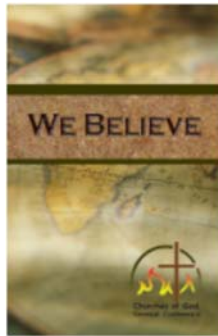


Churches that Get It—Vol. 9, NO. 23

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Not to brag, but this past week I reviewed my visitation schedule and realized since the first of the year, Linda and I have been all over the Churches of God, General Conference (CGGC) heartland. From Eastern Pennsylvania to Illinois and lots of places in between we worshipped with our churches and fellowshiped with our pastors and leaders, even as far south as Florida. Sadly we didn't get to connect with our California or Western Region churches this year, but they are in our heart too, not to mention many in the family of God we've met overseas. This family known as the CGGC is our spiritual home. Of all the things we'll miss when we finish this current calling, it's our larger community of faith we'll miss most. We can identify with Paul's emotion in Acts 20, knowing that some we'll never see again.



For the past eight years, my purpose has been to build up the Churches of God, to expand her kingdom borders for the glory of Jesus so more and more people may experience his abundant life (John 10:10). I know we still have a way to go, but today's CGGC is not the same as it was less than a decade ago. In this period we opened up our credentialing process, revised We Believe, recreated the Church Advocate, and launched the Missional Leadership Initiative, to name just a few changes. Cynics out there may naysay CGGC ministries and even attack leadership, but they have not seen what I have seen across the body. I've visited church after church in the CGGC-USA that gets it when it comes to being on one mission with Jesus in their community and the world. Space here does not permit me to tell of Center Bethel-ARC, College First-GRC, New Beginnings-MRC, Eufaula-WRC, Manteca-CAE to name only one in each region. I could name many

more and will highlight several from the ERC below.



A church in the Dominican Republic

In addition, the number of pre-existing congregations connecting with the CGGC today is also nothing short of amazing. Eight years ago this was basically a non-existent trend. In this same period we launched Latino Ministries; watched our overseas work grow on every field; and added new works in the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Mexico, and Venezuela. My ongoing prayer is that the CGGC may continue to grow until all the USA churches get what it means to be on one mission with Jesus and every cynic and critic is dumbfounded by God's good work in our midst. Okay, let me tell you about our visits to the Mt Holly Springs and Eberly's Mill churches in the Eastern Region.



The Mt Holly Springs facility

Three weeks ago Linda and I visited Mt Holly Springs Church. Dick Reese invited me to preach at both morning services for their 30th anniversary as a congregation. As I've reported before in the eNews when we served the Plainfield Church they birthed the Mt Holly congregation.



The announcement board at Mt Holly Spring



Mt Holly Springs Associate Pastor Danny Murray

Both these churches are quite dear to our heart. Like our children we've watched them learn and grow into the on-one-mission churches they are today. We stopped by Plainfield the Sunday before Eastern Regional Conference and heard about changed lives in the trailer park where the church regularly ministers. They understand missional ministry and make the commitment of people and resources to Git-R-Dun.



Ed preaches at Mt Holly Springs

At Mt Holly I preached from Acts 16 about having a Gospel vision. "Come over and help us!" is the plea of so many people, and often we Christ followers can't see or hear them. Mt Holly Church began when one family opened their home for a Bible study and several others joined them in support. The congregation grew from there to what it is today, a story of one miracle after another. Last year the congregation erected an outdoor pavilion for community and church use.



New pavilion at the Mt Holly Springs church

I praised the congregation for their teen-age pregnancy as they started New Hope Church in their fifteenth year. I also told them that as a mature congregation of 30 they ought to be birthing any number of new faith communities in places like Boiling Springs, York Springs, even Carlisle or Middlesex.



Mt Holly Springs second service praise team

In my conclusion I challenged the church to pray about who might open up their home or help with starting new congregations in the area. Dick and I have often talked about the possibilities. I told the assembly when we return to PA we want to agitate for new church starts, but we will need many partners to see it happen and lots of prayer. They seemed very open to becoming part of such a venture. If people in established churches get involved in multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches, the mission shifts from the efforts of a few to the many and the possibility of exponential growth opens up.



Pastor Jim Moss, Jr. at Eberly's Mill

Then last Sunday Linda and I visited another CGGC church that gets it. Like so many congregations not on the mega-church list, our fellowship at Eberly's Mill in the Eastern Region receives little media notice.



Inside the Eberly's Mill sanctuary



A view of the Eberly's Mill bethel

Nevertheless they are committed to transforming their community in Jesus' name one life at a time. I remember when Jim and Darlene Moss, Jr. went there twenty years ago church attendance hovered at about 30-35. Today the active congregation stands somewhere around 165 on any given Sunday. It took twenty years, but how did this happen?



Matt Eding

Jim and the leadership reached out to their neighborhood going door to door to find out what the community needed. Then, over the years they ministered to those needs. Because of this growth and plans for future growth the church expanded staff two years ago by hiring Matt and Stephanie Eding. In the next year they also expect to make a major addition to their church facility. Check the church out at <http://www.eberlysmillcog.com/> for more information. The stated purpose on their website is "Our church exists to serve God and you," and they do. In fact that could/should be the *raison d'être* for all churches that get it!

On One Mission together,
Ed
Soli Deo Gloria!

WTS Presidential Interviews to be Held

Winebrenner Theological Seminary plans to hold focus group meetings with its candidates for president on June 23 and 24 at the seminary in Findlay, Ohio. There will be a morning and afternoon session each day so the candidates can make an individual presentation followed by a time for questions and answers. See the schedule below for details. Representatives from the Church are invited to participate in this extremely important selection process. All are encouraged to be in prayer and anyone desiring to attend needs to register with the seminary by contacting Ruth Whitaker at academicdept@winebrenner.edu or [419-434-4240] to indicate which sessions they will attend.



Timeline for WTS Focus Groups June 23 & 24, 2015

Morning:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. | Presentation |
| 10:30 – 11:15 a.m. | Questions and Answers |
| 11:15 -11:30 p.m. | Break |
| 11:30 – 1:00 p.m. | Lunch (Only for Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees) |

Afternoon:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 3:30 – 4:00 p.m. | Presentation |
| 4:00 – 4:45 p.m. | Questions and Answers |
| 4:45 – 5:00 p.m. | Break |
| 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. | Dinner (Only for Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees) |

Presentation Topic:

From your perspective, what are some of the current challenges in theological education today and how would you address those challenges at WTS?