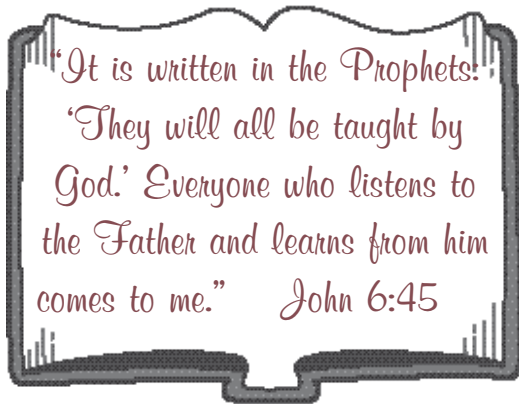


Vista 2000

A Publication of The General Council of the Christian Church of North America
Anno Domini 2000 – Volume 1, No. 3

We Believe . . .

the Bible to be the infallible Word of God. • in One God, distinct in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. • Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, the Only Savior of mankind, through whose death atonement was made for our sins. • in a personal devil, served by demon spirits, who will be cast eternally into the Lake of Fire. • in regeneration, (new birth), through faith in Jesus Christ. • in Water Baptism by simple immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. • in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to salvation, with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. • in the Lord's Supper to be shared in regularly as a reminder of our Lord's death. • in the Apostolic regulations regarding foods and practices that injure the body and offend the holiness of God. • in the healing of the sick in response to the prayer of faith. • in the pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ. • in the bodily resurrection of the dead.



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Vista 2000

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Editorial

“In the year of our Lord. . .”

Historically, the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary was always a given. Until recently, there were symbols of the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ almost everywhere. When a public building, church, or major edifice was built, its cornerstone indicated the year of its completion together with the letters: A.D. which stood for the Latin words, *Anno Domini*, Year of our Lord.

For nearly two thousand years we have been living in this Christian era. Referring to times prior to Bethlehem, years were reckoned backward with the designation: B.C., (in English this time) meaning: *Before Christ*. The birth, death, and resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ changed the world. But, just suppose you didn’t happen to be a Christian—what then? This date designation system was an everpresent reminder of your conflict. Now, enemies of Truth imposed a subtle change upon the world in an attempt to remove this reference to the “stumbling block” against Humanism and secularity. For the past quarter century or so there has been a successful movement in academia away from the “A.D.” and “B.C.” designations. Frequently, C.E. replaces A.D. and B.C.E. replaces B.C. C.E. stands for *Common Era*, referring to today. B.C.E. stands for *Before Common Era*.

There is one thing we as Christians can do about it—utilize “A.D.” whenever we can in our personal and church correspondence as a testimony. (Not at work as your employer might not be sympathetic.) Note that Anno Domini appears before the year 2000 on page 1 of each VISTA.

People receiving your letters, personal checks, memos, etc. may ask, “Why are you writing AD 2000?” Then you will be able to tell them! If you do this and a door of opportunity opens and you are able to witness, please share your experiences with us at VISTA.

Rev. Eric R Towse
Editor



CCNA
is a
MEMBER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of
EVANGELICALS

General Overseer's Message

Where are the Prophets?

(I Corinthians 12:28)

by Rev. John DeTurco



Every organized body of believers on earth must constantly be on guard against one of the subtlest tricks of the wicked one—that of assuming that since the church is composed of humans it is to be controlled by humans. Such logic fits in most naturally with man's wisdom and pride but it flatly contradicts the divine plan. Jesus said, "I will build My Church." The Church is His, not ours. Every facet of its endeavors is, in the final analysis, spiritual. The Church is in total error when it strays from the blueprint laid down in the Scriptures. God's people have no right to vote down God's Word.

Some may call this Fatalism. They insist that it destroys human initiative, making robots of men. They tell us that, in this new millennium, times have changed and that God gave us heads to think with! They toil fervently to overrule the Almighty by human laws of politics, business, and philosophy. But the fact of that matter is that God's Word has not the slightest inclination toward Fatalism. The Lord's glorious Church is a far cry from being a puppet on a string. Pity the local congregation which refuses to think. We are expected—we are required—to use all diligence, all wisdom, all discretion at our disposal. The early church selected seven men "full of wisdom." Problems arise, however, when human wisdom cunningly displaces divine wisdom.

God's plan does not change. The Bible says that, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets. . . ." Although there is some division of opinion about present-day apostles, there is no indication from Scripture that apostles were limited only to the first century Church. There is, in fact, sufficient evidence in the New Testament to cause many of us to believe that the Church is in need of apostles today! For the moment, however, let us look more closely at the fact that God has set **prophets** in the Church. We seldom hear about prophets anymore. Somehow we have equated this office with that of the teacher of prophecy, but such a comparison is far from accurate.

The Bible "prophet" is more than a preacher; he is more than a revealer of coming events. His unique ministry is both **undesired** and **unwanted**. Prophets are hated by the very people whom they are endeavoring to help. Stephen asked, "which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" Prophets were stoned, imprisoned, beheaded—but never loved.

God calls prophets. No man would ever choose the office

for himself. No parents would pray that their son might some day be a prophet, and no church would knowingly elect a prophet to be its pastor. A prophet is a divinely-called proclaimer of the righteousness of God. As such, he hits sin hard, and without compromise. He fears God more than man, and therefore unhesitatingly rebukes wickedness wherever it is found. Positions, or lack of them, are ignored by him. Usually he stands alone.

A prophet spends more time with God than with men. He is willing to forego the pleasures of abundant fellowship with society. He never succumbs to the philosophy of ecumenicism. He is a man of prayer.

Knowing that he is God's representative, he must be sure that His message is from the heavenly headquarters. When he opens his mouth, there must always be the positive affirmation, "Thus saith the Lord."

A prophet has no time to generalize. You know what he is talking about. He is never ambiguous in his ministry, in fact, you are tempted to believe that he has singled you out, and is exposing you before the whole congregation! As a cover-up, you may accuse him of taking advantage of the pulpit to cut you down—but in your heart you know what is happening. "There is a God in heaven," and "He reveals secrets to His prophets."

A prophet never gives book reports. He never delivers beautiful lectures on the merits of love. He can never be found on a program committee, deciding who will play the organ, who will give the invocation, and who will lead the litany. He has no concern over tea parties or coffee klatches. A fire burns in a prophet's soul, and that fire cannot be extinguished. He has caught a vision of eternity and of the judgment to come. He knows that his message is relevant, whether his listeners know it or not. It is not his intention to cause everybody to get angry as he is endeavoring, under God, to stir them from their complacency, their ease, and their sin.

The prophet never seeks a detour around the word "hell." He unmistakably preaches an either/or gospel: either repent or burn in hell! Alternatives are nonexistent as God's way is a Holy Way—reject it and you will fall headlong into the lake of fire, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Thank God for the office of the prophet. We need them.

"O LORD, SEND US THOSE MEN FILLED WITH THE FIRE OF THE HOLY GHOST WHO WILL TURN US BACK TO GOD BEFORE IT IS ETERNALLY TOO LATE!— Amen



Focus on Parenting

Do You Really Spoil the Child if You Spare the Rod?

by Rev. Vincent Stigiliano

You may have heard the question asked recently, “What is happening to our children.” You may wonder if our problems as parents come from “sparing the rod.” Well, my answer is yes . . . and no.

First, the “yes” part of my answer relates to the fact that many of the problems of unruly children today come from the parents’ lack of authority. That is the main lesson we need to learn from Proverbs 13:24: *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.* Parents must have authority over children for the household to run properly. The baby boomer generation rebelled against the authority of their parents. Then, when they [we] became parents, didn’t want to assume authority over their children or responsibility for their children’s behavior. Thus child rearing became more and more permissive with each ensuing generation.

However, when we apply the passages in Proverbs to our situation today we must recognize cultural differences from the time and place where the Proverbs were written.

In Solomon’s time children, women, and men were physically beaten or flogged as punishment for wrong or criminal behavior. Today, we would be horrified to hear that an adult man or woman was sentenced to 30 lashes for some criminal activity; nonetheless, we continue to defend our right to physically punish children by quoting this Proverb forgetting that Solomon also said that adults should be physically beaten for misbehavior.

I believe the main point that Solomon makes for us parents today is that we must be strong and hold authority over our children so they will learn proper discipline. Ultimately, the goal of this authority is to *train up [our children] in the way that [they] should go so that when [they] grow old [they] will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6), and this leads to my second answer.

The “no” part of my answer relates to the fact that Moses taught good child rearing practices as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:6-9: *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.*

Here, Moses tells the Israelites, and us today, that it is the parents’ job to teach children proper behavior, proper beliefs and

proper decision making. Study this passage. Notice that all of the emphasis is on the teacher (the parent) continually repeating God’s commands, nothing about punishment. Educators still maintain that repetition is a necessary part of a teaching methodology. Notice how thoroughly Moses teaches this principle.

First, the parent must believe the commands (verse 6). Second, (verse 7) they are to talk to their children about these commands when they sit at home or walk around the neighborhood.



Parents are to repeat God’s commands at bedtime (when you lie down) and at breakfast (when you get up). Thirdly, (verse 8) we need to remind ourselves of these commands (practice what we preach) like tying a string around our finger. We are to focus our attention on this teaching process continually like a horse in a race who wears blinders so he won’t be distracted by the other horses.

Then, (verse 9) we are told to write these truths on the door frames of our house. In other words, our life-style should demonstrate what we are teaching our children so clearly that neighbors will

confirm the teaching. Also, the truths are to be written on the gates of our homes. The gates represent our witness in the community. Is our family or our church known for honesty? Generosity? Fairness?

I remember friends who had worked with my father telling me that he would get upset on the job, but never swore. They would joke about the words dad would say which weren’t what construction bosses usually told the crew. He ‘walked the talk’ out in front of the community and it came back to me to reinforce the teaching. I hope and pray that my children can have similar experiences.

Now you see why my answer was “yes and no”. I recognize the need for corporal punishment in some instances with children (usually to teach them about danger), but I would suggest that physical punishment beyond that purpose and point in time is not effective or necessarily scriptural. Instead we need to focus our attention on *training* children in the way they should go.

If you still have doubts, consider Jesus and the disciples. Discipline and disciple come from the same root word. Jesus disciplined the disciples. He taught them, he encouraged them, he rebuked them, but he never physically punished them. That’s discipline!

Testimony

of Evangelist Marisa Millie Colon

Christian Pentecostal Church
Staten Island, NY

My name is Marisa Millie Colon. I, my loving husband, and our two children have been attending Christian Pentecostal Church for five years. Four years ago, the Lord touched my life in a special way.

I had been sick on and off for over twelve years.

Pains in the stomach, diarrhea and vomiting were treated with antibiotics prescribed by my doctor. I was twenty years old at the time I first got sick. I had just moved to Staten Island from Brooklyn when I collapsed at work. I spent one month in the hospital. The doctors were convinced it was psychological. Bulimia, they thought. I weighed ninety pounds! It was only after my white blood cell count began to rise significantly that the doctors suggested special testing at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. There, a biopsy confirmed my worst fear:

Crohn's disease.

The doctor informed me that Crohn's disease is an inflammatory disease of the bowel. It generally progresses causing blockage of the intestines and sometimes fistulae—abnormal passages between the intestines and the surface of the abdomen. Complications may involve other parts of the body including inflammation of the eye, severe arthritis, inflammation of the spine, skin and mouth ulcers, and kidney stones. Surgery to remove the colon usually does not cure the disease. The end results are usually fatal.

The disease progressed. I was started on some experimental medication which caused loss of hair and joint disease. It was now 1995. I was thirty-seven years old. I had been hospitalized five times this year alone. I was unable to walk or eat solid foods and suffered from constant diarrhea. A deep depression came over me. I now had a feeding tube and it was suggested that part of my intestine be surgically removed. As my husband's family was Christian, they began to pray and witness to me. My husband's cousin, an evangelist, came to the hospital to visit me.

He prayed, and then a strange thing happened. He left his Bible in my hospital room.

Tired and depressed, not wanting surgery, I signed myself out of the hospital against medical advice and went home and brought the Bible home with me.



A privately-hired home health aide cared for me at home where I had resigned myself to die.

I began to read this Bible. I had never witnessed nor heard of a modern miraculous healing but wondered if it could happen today? Asking God if he still cared—still healed, I got out of bed—and promptly fell! I cried out to God. Then, the Holy Spirit spoke to me. He said,

“Get up. Take up your mat and walk”

to which I promptly replied,

“I can't do it!”

Then, I felt someone lift me up. I began to walk, but I was scared. I was told to get rid of fear and began to walk a little bit more every day. Skin and bones, I had to learn to eat all over again. I prayed over my food and it stayed down. I knew that God had touched me.

Soon after these events, I went for a drive and was led by the Spirit to a church where I heard beautiful music and a prophecy spoken concerning “doubt.” I went to the altar. The pastor prayed for me and I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Over the next several months I got stronger and stronger as I continued in the Word. The doctor finally insisted that I go back in to the hospital for tests. My colonoscopy and X-rays were normal!

The Lord had healed me!

I was also free from pain. My physician, Dr. Kalman, a gastroenterologist at Mt. Sinai Hospital said, “I've never seen this!”

I have been saved, healed, and delivered for over four years now. I have been back to work full-time for over two years. The Lord opened the door for me to attend a Bible institute and I will be graduating this June! I now spend my time evangelizing, sharing the love of God and my testimony. God has blessed many people with it and many have come back to the Lord. God also confirms His word through healing and deliverance as I give my testimony and minister in the power of the Spirit.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you.
(Matthew 7:7)



73rd ANNUAL CONVENTION

August 10 — 13, 2000

Hyatt Regency • 1800 Presidents Street, Reston, Virginia

OUR THEME—

PENTECOST . . . A New Power

The Christian Church of North America is a Bible based Movement, and its message is clear and unchanging. Our founding fathers placed the doctrine concerning the Bible first in our Statement of Fundamental Truths: God's Word is foundational to everything we believe, preach, teach and practice. Though heaven and earth pass away, God's Word will live forever.

As a Pentecostal Movement, we depend upon god's divine power, because it is only the power of God that opens hearts. Lives are changed.

The focus of the Pentecostal message is Jesus. John the Baptist proclaimed Him to be, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Jesus, God who became man, showing us the character of our Creator and Heavenly Father, is the Redeemer of lost humanity—the Savior of the whole world. He offered up His life to redeem sinful mankind.

It is the Pentecostal message to exalt Jesus Christ! It is our prayer that God will grant CCNA "A New Power" as we continue on in this new millennium 2000.

This year 2000, a new millennium, presents The Christian Church of North America with a new challenge as we enter into the future. Come and be challenged under the anointed ministry of our special speakers as they expound on the 73rd Annual Convention Theme: **Pentecost. . . A New Power.**

Call 724-962-3501
for a Registration Packet

OUR CONVENTION

SCHEDULE—

Thursday, August 10

7:30 - 8:45 pm

Opening Service

8:45 - 9:30 pm

Prayer

9:30 -

Fellowship

Friday, August 11

8:30 - 9:10 am

Prayer

9:15 - 12:15 pm

Seminars

12:15 - 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:45 - 4:45 pm

Business & Elections

7:00 - 7:30 pm

Opening Music

7:30 - 9:30 pm

Evening Service

Saturday, August 12

8:30 - 9:10 am

Prayer

9:30 - 12:30 pm

Council Business (if necessary)

1:30 - 3:00 pm

Convention Banquet

7:00 - 7:30 pm

Opening Music

7:30 - 9:30 pm

Evening Service

10:00 -

Youth Aglow

Sunday, August 13

8:30 - 10:00 am

Italian Service/Spanish Service

10:15 - 12:30 pm

Communion Service

7:00 - 7:30 pm

Opening Music

7:30 - 9:30 pm

Closing Rally

10:00 -

Youth Aglow

OUR SPEAKERS



Rev. James Biscardi, Jr

is a Vietnam veteran who won the Air Force Bronze Star for meritorious service. As Chief Information Officer for a federal organization of over 3500 employees, he developed and implemented a leadership philosophy called Mantle which is used to measure leaders' performance. He has received top quality awards from the President of the United States, the Governor of New Jersey, and the Secretary of Defense.

Seminar speaker for the Plenary Council Thursday morning August 10, at 10:00 AM.



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Bishop Joseph Garlington**

is senior pastor of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, PA, and is widely acclaimed for both his teaching and music ministry. His distinctive insights and humor have made him a favorite conference, campus, and seminar speaker, especially at Promise Keepers rallies where he serves as a worship leader, speaker, and master of ceremonies. His message and ministry of reconciliation has touched thousands and led to the formation of Reconciliation Ministries International.

Bishop Garlington will speak on **August 11-12** for the Friday morning seminars on Worship; Friday and Saturday evening services.



Rose Tuminaro

was born and raised in a CCNA church in Washington, DC area. Her experiences as a pastor's wife for over 38 years have taught her many aspects of the work of the Lord.. God has chosen to use her in many avenues of ministry to share His Word. These include Bible studies, retreats, seminars, Christian Counseling and pulpit ministry. The cry of her heart today is revival for God's people.

Sister Tuminaro will speak at the Seminar on Prayer, Thursday evening, August 10.



Rev. John DeTurco

General Overseer of the CCNA and member of the Executive Board for over 38 years, will be speaking at the Sunday morning Communion Service, **August 13**. Together with his wife, Lydia, they have made over 100 trips overseas for ministry in over 40 countries.



Brian and April Wieneke

will blend their voices showing their love for music and for people at the Saturday afternoon banquet August 12.



Rev. Sam Demarco

is Associate and Youth Pastor for New Brighton Christian Assembly and National Youth President of CCNA. With a worshiper's heart, godly passion, and divine vision, Pastor Sam brings life changing ministry to America's youth. He will speak at the Sunday evening service, August 13.

Featured Church

Christian Assembly

Richmond Hts., Ohio

Rev. Michael A. Marino, Pastor



On December 5, 1999, Christian Assembly celebrated its 75th Anniversary of service to the Lord. Seventy-five years of witnessing, sacrificing, anointed preaching and miracles. Even these strong indicators are inadequate vehicles for describing God's faithfulness through these rewarding times.

Upon entering the vestibule that morning, one could sense the excitement and anticipation that was prevalent throughout the entire day. It began with two morning services as our theme, "We've come this far by faith" was emphasized during worship and accelerated as the Rev. Michael Trotta, our keynote speaker, challenged us with his anointed message. After these uplifting services, the faithful who had filled the sanctuary proceeded to the multipurpose room for an afternoon of fine dining, unique fellowship and special programs presented by the family of Christian Assembly.

As the assembly family and special guests entered the multipurpose room, each was presented with a beautiful activities pocket calendar and ball point pen commemorating this special day. One could not help but be impressed with the beautiful table settings and elegant floral arrangements by our master chef, John DeCapua. There was a continuous "buzzing" in the room as folks made their way to the seating arrangements.

Following our scrumptious dinner which included various delicious desserts, we commenced with our program. Family members of our former pastors were extended a special invitation and we were overwhelmed with the response and attendance. Pastor Mark Tedeschi led in prayer and scripture reading followed by Paul McHugh who sang, "We've Come This Far By Faith." A HALL OF FAME HONOR ROLL was presented by Judith Cefaratti and Ann Oldsey giving thanks to each of the pastors and their wives for their faithful service:

Frank and Marianna Frano [1924-1945]

Sam and Thelma Lee [1945-1953]

James and Lucy DiStaulo [1953-1965]

Michael and Mary Marino [1965-Present]

Again, words are inadequate to describe how God undergirded these faithful warriors in their efforts to establish churches

and care for those whom they served. It was just amazing to hear how they supplemented their incomes by driving taxis and school buses, giving music lessons, laboring in mills and selling insurance. Unbelievable miracles, including deliverance from bodily harm, were wrought in their behalf as they faithfully ministered God's Word to families and friends. We were favored with a song of faith and inspiration, "Victory in Jesus" sung by Renee

Ballistrea, Carol Buhrow, Charlotte Fox, and Camille Gorjanc.

At the completion of each pastor's presentation and to the delight and amazement of their families, a beautiful portrait of the pastors and their wives was unveiled. Pastor and Mary Marino then presented a plaque to Mary Corio, our oldest charter member and

wife of previous co-pastor Dominick Corio. Pastor Marino then offered a brief synopsis of his tenure, including the many various channels of ministry God provided for him and his family. A very touching moment was experienced as Pastor related that he had conducted the funerals of each of the three former pastors. Laura Koch sang "Triumphantly The Church Will Rise", moving Christian Assembly into the glorious future.

The afternoon was climaxed with a video prepared by Helen Casagni and Pastor Nick Cacciatore, displaying many photographs of the past and present saints involved in the ministry of Christian Assembly. Many beautiful close-ups were included causing the viewers to respond with "amen's." Pastor Bob Hengle closed with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving followed by many hugs, handshakes, and even some tears of appreciation, reflecting the victorious journey of seventy-five years in the King's family.

We've come this far by faith,

The cry of those who have overcome,
Souls rescued nurtured by manna above,
As we implored our God's great love.

By faith we'll confront the coming years,
Regardless of the pain or tears,
For surely victory is our lot,
The crimson price we were bought
(poem written by Joe Casagni)





District News

New England District

New Church Planting in Taunton, Mass

On Sunday, December 11, 1999 a Christian Youth rally TAUNTON FOR JESUS was sponsored by God's Love Family Church in Taunton, MA. Over 50 people attended the event, which was comprised of praise, worship, and Gospel preaching. The church has since conducted Sunday services and midweek Bible study. On March 18, 2000 the church conducted a youth rally with over 100 in attendance. The local McDonalds and Papa Gino's donated free hamburgers, pizza, and soda. The church was planted in the home of Rev. Guy DeLuca but is now meeting in the local school building on Sundays and at his home mid-week. The church is growing in number and Spirit and we thank God for servants that are obedient to the leading of His Holy spirit.

Gypsy Congregation Meets in Revere, Mass

In February, a small group of Gypsies approached Rev. Michael Coleman for permission to meet in Full Gospel Community Church for Sunday evening services. The group was surprised at Bro. Coleman's willingness as every other church in Revere had turned them down. Without a pastor, Bro. Coleman offered to preach until they had a pastor. On February 27th the first meeting was held with 25 in attendance. To date, the group has grown to over 75 with many having received Jesus Christ as their Savior. They have asked Bro. Coleman to be their pastor. Please pray for Bro. and Sis. Coleman. Their church is showing growth as God has blessed them with two congregations.

Boston Church Bears New Harvest

In September 1997, Rev. Michael Player and family accepted the position of full-time pastor at Christian Assembly Boston. At that time about 50 attended the Sunday morning service. The church had gone through many hardships. Today the church is 95% filled and the balcony is being prepared to accommodate the overflow.

Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

Shortly after the Lord saved me I was invited to attend a prayer meeting at the home of Sister Adelina Cellucci. In attendance that day were Sisters Loretta and Cesidia Cedrone, Filomena, Carmela Pellegrini, Adelina Cellucci, and I, Gerarda Leone all of Christian Assembly of Boston.

As we prayed, the Lord blessed tremendously. When we finished praying, Sister Pellegrini picked up her Bible and held it tightly in her arms. In her heart she desired to be able to read, but she could not. Sister Cedrone moved closer to her and said, "Sister Carmela, why don't you open your Bible and read whatever the Lord puts before you?" Discouraged, she responded, "Sister, how can I read if I have never even set foot inside a school?" Sister Loretta replied that it was not necessary to learn in a school and to open her Bible that the Lord might show her how.

Sister Carmela opened her Bible to the Gospel of John and attempted to read. At first she proceeded very slowly with a great deal of assistance. Within minutes she had read 14 verses by herself. This was incredible, for we all knew of Sister Carmela's inability to read. As she continued, we all cried with joy and thanked the Lord for the miracle that He had performed in our midst.

Whenever she had the opportunity, she would happily testify to what the Lord had done. (The Lord does great things when we open our hearts to Him!)

Sister Pellegrini suffered much persecution in her walk with the Lord, but remained faithful until she died.

Rev. Vincent Prestigiaco

Eastern District

Christian Pentecostal Church Ministry Wins State Award

The New York State Health Care Facilities Association recognized a ministry from Christian Pentecostal Church, Staten Island, NY as Volunteers of the Year in its Spiritual Category. The ministry to residents of the Clove Lakes Nursing Home in Staten Island, NY has been in operation for over five years. It consists of an hour of praise, worship, and Bible study every Monday night.

The ministry began when a young wheelchair-bound resident, Ed Labelle, sought Bible instruction and was picked-up by church member Andrew Gallagher and driven to church every week to attend Bible class taught by Rev. Eric R Towse (VISTA Editor). At the conclusion of the course, Bro. Towse decided that it was easier for ambulatory members of the church to travel to a nearby nursing home each week than for this dear brother to have to "schlep".

• CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE •

The next Bible course was taught at the Cloves Lakes Nursing Home. Ed Labelle invited other residents and over the years the ministry grew. Each evening would begin with the singing of hymns and choruses. After that, Bro. Towse would teach the Bible verse-by-verse, beginning in the Gospel of John. Two of the residents who faithfully attended the services, Haines Jenkins, a quadriplegic paralyzed from a gunshot wound, and Barbara Gagliardi RN, PhD, a resident suffering from multiple sclerosis were eventually married! Some of the residents and family members received the Lord.

The ministry eventually grew out of the small chapel it started in and was moved to the day room. Eventually nearly all the residents on that floor as well as some from other parts of the nursing home attended the services.

All it took was a guitar and a Bible and a few committed Christians. Bro. LaBelle, a former actor and model eventually went to be with the Lord following a heart attack, but his hunger for the Word, and perseverance despite his handicap, resulted in the founding of this thriving ministry. For this he will be remembered.



The Clove Lakes Nursing Home Ministry from Christian Pentecostal Church. (L to R) Rev. Eric Towse, Sis. Arlene Towse, Sis. Marcia Kaufman, Bro. David Kaufman, being presented with award by Mr. Demesay, Administrator.

Northwestern District

Women's Ministries of Richmond Heights Christian Assembly

sponsored a Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, March 25, 2000. Rev. Vilda Roy, National Director of the CCNA Women's Ministries, was the guest speaker. More than 90 women, members of Christian Assembly and their guests, gathered in the multipurpose room of the church for a delicious breakfast, prepared and served by the Men's Ministry, under the direction of Tom Brown. After the breakfast, the group gathered in the sanctuary. The praise team, led by Renee Ballistrea, and accompanied by Mary Marino, wife of pastor Michael Marino, ushered in the presence of the Holy Spirit through a time of enthusiastic praise and reverent worship. Rev. Roy came with a message of what God has ordained women to be in the family. Her desire was that the fire should be ignited, and in some instances reignited, in each one of us. The women were receptive to this message and when the call for ministry at

the altar was given, almost every woman came forward for prayer. It was evident that God truly ministered through His obedient servant.

On Sunday morning, Rev. Roy ministered in both of the morning worship services. She reminded the congregation that nothing would ever occur in our lives except that God has permitted it for our good and for His glory. The message was well received as was evidenced by the fact that when the invitation was given for ministry to families, almost every family represented in the church that morning came forward for prayer. How thrilling to see, in some instances, three generations come forward as a family unit.

Rev. Roy ministered tirelessly under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Many were challenged and encouraged. We thank God for her ministry and its impact on our people. It is our desire to see the women of God become all that they can be in Him.

Joyce Brown

Director, Women's Ministries
Richmond Heights Christian Assembly

Vacation Trip to Italy Results in Souls Saved

September of 1999 found Pastor John Depolo, Christian Church of North America, Washington, PA on his way to Italy together with his daughter and son-in-law, Dr. Ron and Brenda Kludo. They flew to Rome and traveled to Sicily. They departed Tarmina on a ferry across the Straits of Messina and drove north across the Appenines, the rugged Calabrian region. They arrived at Cerenzia where they were met by cousins and other family. All hearts were so deeply touched. Bro. Depolo left for Sorrento but promised to return to see his family once again.

Bro. Depolo and his family continued their tour traveling to Capri, Florence, and back to Rome where they enjoyed visiting the highlights of the city after which they returned to Cerenzia as they had promised. It was difficult to express the joy and excitement that they experienced upon their return as cousins and relatives kept coming to visit—twenty or thirty at a time!



• CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE •

Many of the relatives had heard that Bro. Depolo was a minister and they were very curious to hear of his experiences with the Lord. He asked the family if they would pray and ask Jesus to come into their hearts. They were so receptive. Pastor Depolo prayed with each one of his family members and they accepted the Lord Jesus and their personal Savior. Bro. Depolo taught his family in the Italian language. He attended a Protestant church while there and many members of his family attended as well.

This trip was truly a dream come true for Pastor Depolo who was born there seventy-nine years before and had not been back to meet his warm, loving family. He saw the house he was born in, walked to the church in which he was baptized, but, most of all, was privileged to bring the message of salvation to the family that he had never met. The visit ended as best described by Acts 20:36-37:

When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.

Of Interest to All Districts

CCNA is a family and families like to keep in touch with one another. VISTA is looking for reporters to apprise us of upcoming District events as well as happenings in the local church.



If you would like to serve as a reporter for your church, please speak to your pastor and then contact::

Rev. Eric R Towse
 Editor, VISTA
 647 74th Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11209
 718-748-3942
 Fax: 718-238-6551
 E-mail: ccnaVISTA@aol.com

ALSO—

The CCNA operates a web site on the World Wide Web and offers CCNA churches a FREE web page to advertise their location, service schedule, directions to the church, and contact information. If you would like your

church included, please send a color photo of your church and all pertinent information to the above address. Churches are reporting visitors from contacts through our web site.

If your church has its own web site, we will be happy to furnish a “link”.

VISTA deadline is the first of the month following the month the current issue is published. Items may be mailed, E-mailed, faxed or telephoned in to VISTA.

Vista Extra



Senate Prayer

When Minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual generalities, but this is what they heard:

“Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, “Woe to those who call evil good” but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it Pluralism; we have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism; we have endorsed perversion and called it alternative life-style; we have exploited the poor and called it the lottery; we have rewarded laziness and called it welfare; we have killed our unborn and called it choice; we have shot abortionists and called it justifiable; we have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem; we have abused power and called it politics; we have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition; we have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression; we have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of Your will, in the name of Your Son, the living Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen”

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In 6 short weeks, Central Christian Church, where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa, and Korea.

Commentator Paul Harvey aired this prayer on “The Rest of the Story” on the radio and received a larger response to this program than any other he has ever aired.

With the Lord’s help, may this prayer sweep over our nation and wholeheartedly become our desire so that we again can be called one nation under God.

(Source: Internet—Sent to VISTA via E-mail)



CCNA
Education Department
Rev. Lucian Gandolfo
Executive Director



CCNA Scholarship Program

If you would like to contribute to the CCNA Scholarship Program or apply for a scholarship please do so before the July 15th application deadline. Scholarships are available. Please click on the CCNA web site at www.ccna.org for more information or write CCNA Education Department, PO Box 1122, Scranton, PA 18501-1122.

CCNA School of the Bible

is growing! As of May 1, 2000 we have 134 students enrolled. 36 are studying independently by correspondence, and 98 are enrolled in 5 SOTB Study Centers as follows:

<u>DISTRICT</u>	Independent <u>Study</u>	Study <u>Centers</u>	No. of <u>Students</u>
Eastern	15	-	-
Northeastern	2	2	54
Niagara/Mohawk	5	1	13
Northwestern	9	2	31
Southern	1	-	-
Korea	1	-	-
Oklahoma	1	-	-
Kansas	3	-	-
<u>TOTALS</u>	37	5	98

Is God Calling You to the Ministry?

The CCNA Education Department and Home Missions Departments want to help. Although educational training should NEVER take the place of the calling and anointing, it should ALWAYS accompany it! If you sense a call to the ministry, it is a high calling indeed and you need training. Contact Rev. Daniel Immordino, Director of the CCNA School of the Bible (732) 471-1775, for information on SOTB courses that will equip you to minister and allow you to fulfil the educational requirements for CCNA ministerial credentials.

Then contact Rev. John Ferguson, Director of the CCNA Home Missions Department (724) 962-3501, for information on ministry opportunities. The CCNA Home Missions Department

wants to fulfill its goal of starting up 15 new churches by the year 2004. We need workers who are willing to answer the call, get the training, and reach out to the lost with the precious and powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Jesus said, "Behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35), "...but the labourers are few." (Matt 9:37 and Luke 10:2).

CCNA National Christian Education Conference

You are invited to attend our second CCNA National Christian Education Conference to be held on **Saturday, September 9, 2000 at Trinity Tabernacle, Brooklyn, NY.** The day begins at 8 AM with a continental breakfast and ends at 4:30 PM.

Again we are offering the conference at no cost to you, including lunch and conference materials. We will be receiving a free-will offering. The day is so planned as to be of value to pastors, staff members and all that are seriously interested in further preparing themselves for Christian service.

Many who attended last year's conference expressed their appreciation for the informative, inspiring speakers we were blessed with. Well, again we have prayerfully chosen the subject matter and speakers for our second conference. They are all well qualified to address us on the subjects assigned them. I am confident that we will all be helped through the ministry of that conference.

The Education Department wants to be of help to the corporate ministry of CCNA. Events such as this are planned with this as our motive. We love you and desire to see you and your ministries prospering. Do plan on being there.

TOPIC

Training For What?
Where Do I Fit?
Education & Home
Missions
Resolving Conflicts Biblically
Topics of Interest
The Importance of Sunday School
Evangelism
Is Ignorance Bliss?
Ministry: Back to Basics

SPEAKER

Rev. Reggie Abraham
Dr. Terry Osborn

Rev. John Ferguson
Rev. David Farina
Rev. Thomas Geysler

Rev. Rick George
Rev. Lucian Gandolfo
Rev. John DelTurco

Rev. Lucian Gandolfo



Report on the

&

Spring Retreat



*How should one chase a thousand,
and two put ten thousand to flight,
except their Rock had sold them,
and the LORD had shut them up?
(Deuteronomy 32:30)*



Bro. John Del Turco

From Thursday, May 11 through Saturday, May 13, 2000, pastors, credential holders, and their wives met at a joint CCNA/IPCC Ministerial Retreat in Ontario, Canada. What a joy it was to be there!

As I was praying during the Thursday night opening session, I reflected on the fact that right there, in that very "upper room," the principal brethren of two great Christian Movements of nearly identical origin and Pentecostal doctrinal conviction were gathered. Over the past one hundred years God has used these two fellowships to impact the most powerful continent on the face of the earth, and beyond, with the uncompromised Gospel of Jesus

Christ. I imagined the vast wealth of collective knowledge and experience that resided in that room, as well as the magnitude of the ministerial potential that was assembled there! If only somehow God could "shut up" our hearts to focus less on our selves and cause us together to turn our eyes singly on Him, I wondered what great works He might be able to accomplish through our combined forces? My prayer is that this Retreat was only the beginning. Perhaps the Lord will guide us in that unified direction.

On Friday we were inspired by seminars on the importance of the minister's personal and public life. These were offered by IPCC General Superintendent Daniel Ippolito and CCNA General Overseer John DelTurco, respectively. We also had time to fellowship together and get better acquainted during the meals and a boat tour through the Thousand Islands region. Saturday concluded with a wonderful time of worship, historical sketches of the IPCC and the CCNA, and two powerful messages by Brother DelTurco.

Overall this Retreat was a great success. Thank you executive brethren of the IPCC for inviting us. May our "Rock" continue to knit our hearts together so that we may



Bro. Daniel Ippolito

serve Him more effectively and fruitfully. Together we could put tens of thousands to flight!

Rev. Lucian Gandolfo



20/20

“The Vision for Today’s Youth”

The Apex [the name for CCNA's national youth convention] was the first event for All Out Ministries and the first CCNA youth convention of the new millennium.

Picture if you can, over 500 teenagers, leaders, and youth pastors waving their respective banners and running throughout a gymnasium all based on the excitement of going home and going all out for their Lord. Imagine hundreds of teenagers lying with their faces to the floor as they prayed for souls to be saved. Try to dream about an event that saw 40 teenagers from a predominantly church going group, give their hearts to Jesus Christ. Visualize hundreds of teens running to the front just to praise their God. If you are able to do this, then you now have a glimpse of the highlights of this year's national youth convention. Imagine that.

Out of the 20 major youth events that I have directed as well as the many I have attended, I have never witnessed a greater event than this year's Apex. From Friday to Sunday, so many

things were occurring by the Lord's hand to justify my statement.

From souls being saved to hearts being filled with the Spirit, God was in the house. One teenager believed she received the gift of healing and with that, two people she prayed for were healed that weekend. The flow of the weekend went without a flaw as the All Out committee did an exceptional job facilitating the event. Great job men!



Friday night's kickoff encounter began with five churches throughout our organization performing a step/dance celebration. The video presentation enhanced the already high level of anticipation. Then the praise began. David DeMarco led the Praise & Worship all weekend teaching us new songs with which to worship the Lord. I witnessed on Friday no less than one hundred teens responding to the praise by coming forward. By the last meeting, the majority of the 500 teens in attendance were either up front or standing in their seats responding to the call of worship.

Gregg Johnson spoke to the group about sacrifice and worship. He



explained how those who look at sacrifice as duty and not worship would never enter their rightful place with God. Forty teenagers gave their hearts to the Lord.

Michael Knight was our featured speaker equipping our leaders at the morning seminar and filling us up with the word all weekend. Saturday night, through a video sermon, hundreds of us were before the Lord praying for souls. In that time of prayer, some were being challenged, others called, and others were having their selfish mindsets cut away by the Holy Spirit.

Sunday night I spoke about having an all out encounter with God that lasts forever. This all out encounter should cause us to run for the Lord. I challenged the teens to make their weekly meetings a mountaintop experience claiming that it will be a place of revelation, victory, and assurance. A word to the CCNA youth was given; it is time to grow! It is time our youth groups start getting new faces and in order to do that we need a fresh supernatural approach. We need a Pentecost for today.

Many of the teens responded by being filled with the Holy Spirit. The weekend climaxed with a jubilant time of celebration with banners waving, leaders running, and young people dancing, all ready to go home and see their world change.

As I look back at the weekend, the focus of the whole event was all about outside the four walls of that gym, or their youth group. It was about running for the kingdom, it was about pursuing souls, it was about wanting more of Jesus, and it was about going all out for him!



All Out For Him,
Pastor Sam



20/20: Behind the Vision



I have spent the past three months in the All Out Ministries office preparing for Apex 2000. Pastor Sam and I spent hours upon hours considering, reviewing, and confirming everything from the services to the cafeteria. Two days prior to registration, the four district directors Quran Karriem, Bill Kingsley, Pete Pellegrino, and Tim Hatch arrived to work diligently toward the final preparations just in order to make the event excellent. And when all of the preparation time ended, and everyone entered into the gym for Friday's opening meeting, I realized that it was finally game time. As the All Out committee, it was time to make things happen. When the lights were lowered, my confident, prepared self quickly melted to a nervous little bug. I likened that feeling to my first start as a freshman. But as the weekend progressed, though we made a few mistakes, that nervous twinge transformed into the

• CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE •

confident attitude of a winner. What I have learned through this weekend is that when the time comes to make things happen, whether it be at a youth conference, your youth group, or in your school, nerves are a part of the game, but never fear. God has equipped his servants with a bold spirit to work his kingdom. As you gain experience, mistakes may come, so will that confident, winning attitude. God instructs us not to fear. Step out, despite that anxiety, and make things happen for the kingdom.

David D'Angelo

Administrative Assistant

Testimonies from the Apex

“The Youth of My church experienced a move toward true worship like never before. It was great to see the young people moved by the presence of God and the phenomenal worship experience that Apex 2000 provided. **I was moved personally at the altar as I prayed for young people who wanted to get a passion for the lost and see their schools as harvest fields for Christ.** As a youth pastor, that excites me more than anything else! I personally want to thank the Lord for the awesome things we had happen in our lives. I can truly say, our youth will never be the same again. One in particular wrote me an E-mail saying, *“I never thought I could love God more than I did, but I was wrong, after Apex I love Him now so much closer and more than I ever could have”* What an awesome testimony!”

Tim Hatch,

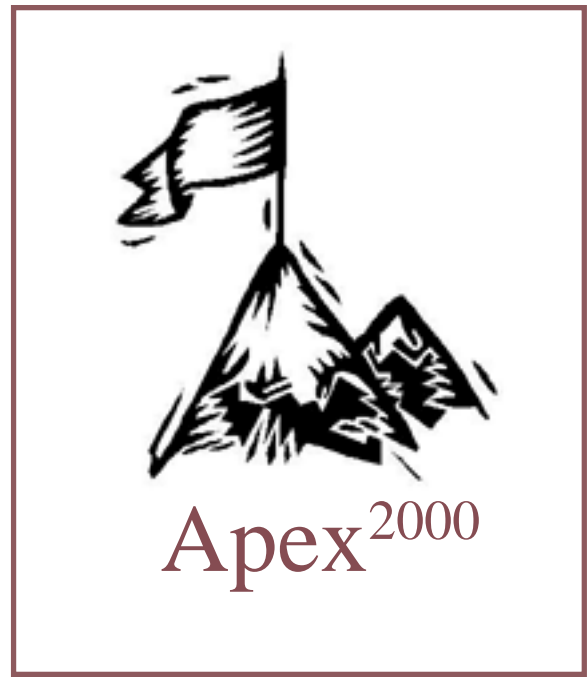
Living Waters.

Here's an e-mail that was received two days after the Apex.:

“Pastor Sam, just wanted to let you know one of our teens who went to the Apex led **five of his friends** to the Lord at school.”

John Marc Saginario,

Calvary Full Gospel.



Theme Song for the Apex by David DeMarco

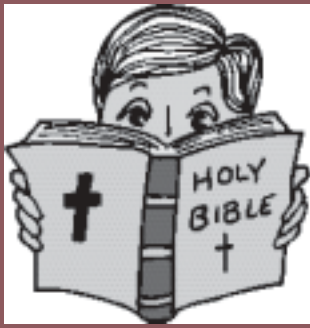
Mountain

I will meet you on the mountain
The mountain of God
Come and drink of this fountain
The fountain of Love
On the mountain we'll seek the face of our king
and climb to the apex of our destiny
Come with me and taste and see
Meet me on the mountain of God

Verse

On the mountain of God
There's a river that flows to the thirsty
On the mountain of God
There's a banquet of hope for the hungry
Daring to Believe, reaching to receive
Climbing up with our with our praise we will
taste and see





It's In the Bible!

A Study in the Word with Rev. Eric R Towse

Topic: "The Missing Ministry Gift"

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

"We don't believe like you Pentecostals. We believe that the gifts ended with the death of the last apostle!"

Did anyone ever say that to you? One of the things that makes Pentecostals unique is our firm belief in the perpetuity of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Scripture from the very day that the Spirit was given until Jesus comes. Nearly 2000 years ago believers, in obedience to Jesus' command to "wait in Jerusalem", received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire descended from heaven. (Acts 2:1-4) This was the beginning of the Age of the Church.

Believers were cautioned never to attempt to use "enticing words of human wisdom" to persuade or reason with the unbeliever of the Good News, rather, that by a demonstration of the Spirit's power, one's faith should rest on the power of God. The apostle Paul was very clear on that. (See I Corinthians 2:4-5) Furthermore, that this ministry of the Holy Spirit would continue throughout this age is expressed plainly in Acts 2:38-39:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Welcome to "afar off"!

God knew that a time would come that man's wisdom would come into conflict with His wisdom. It is clear that God never intended man to take over from the Holy Spirit—reverting to human arguments and reason when it came to witnessing, since the ministry of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and effective. Yet, many of today's churches have abandoned the supernatural for the earthly. It is the main reason why so many churches and

ministries are literally dead, and the seminaries that train their clergy are appropriately nicknamed, "cemetaries". **The convicting, compelling, and comforting power of the Holy Spirit is no longer welcome—except on their terms.**

We Pentecostals know better, don't we?

• We lay hands upon the sick expecting them to recover. (James 5:14-15)

• We earnestly seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit both at the time of salvation, and for the power to serve:

*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. **Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.***

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

*"Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.***

(Acts 4:30-31)

• We believe in the gifts:

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of **wisdom**, to another the message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another **speaking in different kinds of tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (I Corinthians 12:7-11).*

• BUT do we really believe that all ministries of Ephesians 4 are for today?

Let us examine our practices, for actions speak louder than words.

The Greek word *αποστολος* (*apostolos*, apostle) means, literally, one sent forth with a message. All of Jesus' disciples were named apostles:

• CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE •

When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.
(Luke 6:13)

Their ministry is well documented in the New Testament. The apostles worked under the leading and anointing of the Holy Spirit to build and nurture the church.

The ministry of the apostle Paul especially resulted in churches being firmly established in cities throughout the Roman Empire.

But what has become of that ministry gift today? Is the Holy Spirit still anointing apostles to establish and nurture churches or has that particular ministry gift come to an end? We need to examine this question carefully lest we jump to a wrong conclusion.

Since, as previously established, the Pentecostal believer accepts the power of the Holy Spirit working in the world today, the answer to the question of the continuance of the apostolic gift should be “yes”. But if so, then where are all the new churches?



Here, I believe, is the crux of the problem. The CCNA, for example, has a magnificent heritage of church planting and growth from the early part of the 20th Century. The believers were faithful and the Lord blessed. All of the gifts manifested as the Lord confirmed the preaching of the Word with signs following. The title of

apostle could have been applied to many of the founding fathers of CCNA and others throughout the years who were anointed by the Holy Spirit for the church planting ministry. But in the Body of Christ today, with the exception of certain foreign missions,

the focus of many church organizations is growth of the local church to the exclusion of planting.

Sometimes a church needs to expand because of successful efforts in evangelizing the local neighborhood in which case a building program would be necessary and appropriate, but far too often the emphasis on local church growth suppresses the apostolic ministry and no consideration is given to church planting. Interestingly, it is often less expensive to acquire a building and renovate it for use as a church than to modify an existing church structure.



In addition to the concerns of planting new churches, another manifestation of the apostolic ministry gift is often overlooked and that is the training of ministers. Because of the emphasis on church growth, associate pastors are often encouraged to specialize rather than to receive the opportunity to de-

velop through well-rounded experience. Some pastors express frustration when, following years of training, a seasoned associate leaves when, following years of training, a seasoned associate leaves for his own congregation. But is that not a necessary part of fulfilling the Great Commission as well? The apostle Paul called Timothy “his son.”

For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. (I Corinthians 4:17)

I believe more Paul-Timothy relationships need to be established in the Church of Jesus Christ today rather than the commissioning of spirit-filled believers to “wait on tables.” (See Acts 6:1-6)



The combination of church planting and training for ministry is an emphasis of CCNA. Our **Home Missions Department** is available to assist developing ministries and our **Education Department** has the resources for training workers. The burden remains, however, for the senior pastor of the established church to provide the opportunity for the man called of God to develop his ministry so that God’s plan for the establishment of new churches may be fulfilled.

Many congregations may look to their contributions to foreign missions as an example of recognition of the apostolic ministry gift, but it is not—unless the contributing church established the foreign mission itself. Otherwise it is a much needed support of a ministry—although begun through someone else’s apostolic gift.

The church today needs to be complete in its ministry gifts and in complete obedience to the Spirit of God. It should be the burden of every pastor and church member to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord and do so in such a way as to operate as close to the Scriptures as is possible. Since we are not able to “pick and choose” our spiritual gifts because,

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines
(I Corinthians 12:11)

we must accept the ministry gifts so that,
we all [may] come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:13)

• VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHOR •





The Tragedy of Rama

by Rev. Eugene Palma

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
(Matthew 2:18)

The following description of a Biblical event should not be considered a mere speculation. Rather, it is a result of long periods of serious meditation. For this reason King David did not advise us just to read the Law of the Lord, but to meditate in it day and night. (See Psalm 1:2)

After long periods of meditation on the Biblical events surrounding the tragedy of Rama, I have concluded that it occurred as a consequence of a terrible mistake made by the Wise Men. Having come to Jerusalem to worship, the Wise Men searched for the birthplace of the newborn King of the Jews whose star they had seen in the East.

Rama was a little town, not very far from Jerusalem. It was built by the descendants of Benjamin, the younger son of Rachel, the wife of Isaac. Benjamin's tribe lived in Rama, a small place given to Benjamin by Joshua. After Israel had broken into two separate kingdoms, Israel to the North and Judah to the South, inhabitants of Rama were eventually taken captive into Babylon. Seventy years later, the prophet Jeremiah considered this event to have broken the heart of Rachel, the historic mother of Benjamin's tribe, who wept comfortlessly for her children because they were no more.

The Gospel writer, Matthew cites Jeremiah's prophecy to explain the horrible event that took place years later at Bethlehem, under the reign of King Herod—an event that occurred due to the grave mistake of the Wise Men. The terrible mistake was this: The wise men greatly rejoiced when they saw the new star in the sky in the Orient, because they know that it was the star of the King of the Jews that was to be born. Following the star, they journeyed westward. It may have taken up to two years for them to get to Jerusalem.

When they were aware that they had reached the capital city, they unintentionally left their path, assuming that the birth of the new King would have taken place in a palace. However, while in the palace they became gradually perplexed and concerned by the behavior and the anxiety of King Herod. They noticed that Herod, instead of being excited that a new heir to his throne was born, was troubled along with all of Jerusalem. Furthermore, the wise men may have been disturbed by the amount of time it took

to research the historical records concerning the birthplace of the new King, who, by this time, would now be about two years of age. On top of this, the Wise Men were further upset by Herod, who took them aside privately and asked them many questions concerning the time that they had seen the star in the East and with his apparently exaggerated desire to search diligently for the child, and then to return to him with their findings, so that he could go to where the new King was and worship Him also. The Wise Men began to become very suspicious of Herod when he did not offer to go with them in search of the new King. They were puzzled by the whole affair. Now they were convinced that Herod had come to know two important facts. One, that the birthplace of the new King was Bethlehem, and second, that the newborn King was now about two years of age.

When the Wise Men eventually left the palace, they no doubt left with a great concern; realizing perhaps that something was not right. It is for this reason that Matthew tells us emphatically that when the Wise Men left the palace and again saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. Their joy now in seeing the star undoubtedly was ever so much greater than it was when they originally saw it in the East. They were now convinced that they should have continued to follow the star instead of having assumed that the new King would be born in Herod's palace.

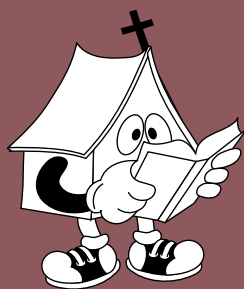
What a terrible mistake they had made!

If they had followed the star, they would have found Jesus much sooner because the star stood over the place where the young child was. Because King Herod's ego and dignity were insulted and because his envy and jealousy were aroused by the fact that another king was born, which would have jeopardized his reign, he later ordered the slaughter of all the male children of Bethlehem who were two years old and under. What a tragedy! And all due to a simple assumption. Thus followed the quote of Jeremiah's prophecy by Matthew, which was spoken over six hundred years before, a prophecy based not on predestination by rather on divine omniscience.

The murdered children of Bethlehem are presently in paradise for which we can be very thankful to God who overrules all tragedies and who even corrects the mistakes we make by our assumptions. All humans are fallible.

Eugene Palma

Rev. Palma is pastor of Evangelical Christian Church,
Rochester, NY.



Bits 'n Pieces

The Race of Life

by Samuel D. Museums

Life in the fast lane means always scurrying. You don't have time for pain and no time for worrying.

You're ever on the wing, always taking short cuts.
You always must think—don't get caught in the ruts.

Computers and telephones accelerate your pace.
Your watch never condones any slack in the race.



The cure for impatient is to get underway,
Road rage cancels lenience—there is no room to stray.

We check the schedule book and curse the lazy clock.
We scramble off the hook without trusting on luck.

Jets are getting faster but the business is slower.
The accounts get farther and the profits get smaller.

Our life in the fast lane does not improve our worth.
It only leads to more strain and still bound to this earth.

Time is rare and fleeting; it is cold and uncanny.
Leaves the struggler bleeding and fouls the planned journey.

A fast pace is attrition and will erode our health.
It blunts human ambition and reduces honest wealth.



Road Trip

by Rev. Dennis Derhay

I have a confession to make. Though I am a pastor, I never used the phrase "traveling mercies". I know you're shocked, but read on before you yank my collar. I never prayed for them, even when asked. It always sounded odd to me, like mercies that

wander off on you.



My wife and I are spiritual road warriors. We love to travel. We love to leave. Every few months we get that itch to hit the road, explore new areas, see new states. We long for that final journey, that Last Exit. We are packed and ready to go. Until then, we improvise on the road.

And in all our wanderings, we never prayed for "traveling mercies". God was just with us. We knew it.

A few years into our mutual inability to sit still, our first child decided to arrive. We were told by experienced parents that he would bring an end to our Lewis-and-Clarkiness. There was no way a baby would put up with it. So when he was born, we immediately sprang into action. We planned a trip.

At 8 weeks old, Elliot got his first tour of New England. It was ours too. We have photos of him in Vermont, New Hampshire, Arcadia National Park, and being attacked by a giant steel crab in Massachusetts. He did fine. We didn't sleep, but he did.

A year later his sister came along. The same homebodies warned us that there was no way we could take two babies. They didn't know that Rebekah planned on sleeping her entire first year of life. She never saw all the places we took her.

For the next several years, we dragged these two everywhere, just for the sake of going. It took four times the luggage for two small children, but it was worth it—except when hotels with no elevators gave us a room on the third floor. I believe it was around that time I reinstated my exercise program.

Then a real test came. Some wise guy in the CCNA decided to hold Convention in South Carolina; around 10 hours of driving. The car seat twosome were ages 5 and 4. Ellen and I looked at each other. We didn't blink. We made our reservations. And then we added another 2 hours to the trip. We would first visit relatives in Myrtle Beach. That would end all arguments.

We did this for two years in a row, usually without air conditioning. Our children would ride for hours at a time, playing, laughing, sweating, and just sitting quietly. Never complaining. Never asking the dreaded question. (You know what it is).

It was strange, unique. I wondered if they were human. I kept looking in the rearview mirror to see if Rod Serling was sitting between them. They were our children, and they traveled well. They made me proud. I blew my horn with joy. Maybe we'd name our next child Rand McNally. We just took it as one of the graces of God. Mercies for obsessed travelers. Then came Leah.



She was cute. She was fun. But she hated traveling. We wondered if she wasn't switched in the hospital at birth. She didn't have our interstate-shaped genes. 10 minutes into a drive, she would start screaming. Even our drives to church became a nightmare. We would still go on our trips, but the peace was removed. Gone. And when the baby's unhappy, mom is unhappy. And when mom is unhappy . . .!

We tried everything. We would only travel at Leah's nap time, and drive real fast to knock out some miles. Didn't work. She would stay awake. And scream. We would buy a bag of surprise toys. Each would last around 30 seconds. She would throw them—and scream. We hooked up a small TV and VCR.



We would play her Veggie Tales tapes over and over till we screamed. It didn't work. We even considered putting on Barney. We were getting desperate.

As she was turning 2 last December, and in the process of redefining the word cantankerous, we were conned into a preposterous 3-part journey. A Christmas visitation-trip from our coastal Jersey town to Cincinnati, Greenville, PA and the Poconos. We were out of our minds. We broke it down into 5-hour sections. We knew it wouldn't work. Leah would finish us off for sure. Tears stained my road atlas.

The night before we committed Leahside, I wrote a note to my wife advising we just call it off, and went to work. She called me to say the Lord clearly showed her it was His Will for us to go, that He had a purpose. I agreed, and went into prayer. I reminded the Lord of Leah's juvenile road-rage, and said something like "If this is really Your will, You will do something about Your daughter." Come on, all parents have prayed that way at least once (per child).

The next morning, the van was packed, and we all said goodbye to each other, because we knew Leah would push us over the

edge before the week was out. I put the van in gear. An hour later, as we crossed into Pennsylvania, Leah was still smiling. Two hours later, my wife and I broke records for casting stares of unbelief at each other—even more than when I was called into the ministry. The two older children were taking Leah's temperature. By the time we reached Breezewood, I demanded my wife tell me what she did with my baby, and who was this imposter in her car seat.

We celebrated at the first hotel. The drive to Cincinnati was a joy. The week was wonderful, and we saw the Hand of God move everywhere we went.

Due to a variety of circumstances, some CCNA, some personal, we wound up on many sudden road trips this Spring. Within an 8 week period, my family and I drove around 5,000 miles. I write this at the end of our last trip, to the CCNA/IPCC retreat in Canada, and Leah did great. While sharing this with a fellow CCNA minister there, he asked if he could bring his teens out for us to pray over them. That would be an anointing that could make you famous.

At the last meeting in Canada, someone prayed for traveling mercies. I had to stifle a laugh. Because though I still won't pray for them by that name, I sure do believe in them. In fact, His traveling mercies are new every mile. And Leah is their poster child.



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THE MUFFIN TOP

by Marcia K.G. Carpenter
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It is amazing to me how God can allow us to approach the bridge of temptation, but never allow us to cross the bridge alone.

God knows that danger lurks below. God knows that if you fall, or heaven forbid, jump off the bridge, that Satan is below waiting to “devour you” (I Peter 5:8). God knows our every need. When “we humble ourselves before him, he will lift us up” from the murky waters until we walk in his presence on the path of righteousness (James 4:10). When we come to the end of the bridge and are safely rooted on dry land, only then do we become aware of the evidence of his presence, the “single set of footprints.” I praise God for the moments of testing!

Through these difficult segments of my life, God has shaped me, molded me and formed my character. As strange as it sounds, I praise God for the moments of testing that he blesses me with, for these are the moments that my walk with God becomes strained, and therefore a crying of my soul begins. Because God is faithful, he answers my cry. I cried out to him with my whole heart when my enemy attacks me and he heard my cry. (Psalm 119:145) I’m thankful for those moments of being made humble before the awesome presence of the Lord, for it is in humility that I surrender all and where his grace and mercy abounds!

These were the very conditions of the morning that the Lord spoke to me. I was getting ready to go to work, waiting for my stomach to “growl” as per Gwen Shamblin’s Weigh Down instructions. I had been in the program somewhere in the neighborhood of six to eight weeks. The Lord was really dealing with my love for food versus my love for him. I believe this was a turning point in my spiritual life. I believe that my “muffin experience” was a declaration of my love for the Lord, followed by obedience.

My morning routine included daily devotions at the breakfast table accompanied by my favorite breakfast food: cream cheese muffins. For the person who has never experienced cream cheese muffins, allow me to digress for one sweet moment. The muffins can be purchased locally for about \$1.99; they are packaged four to a carton. The cake is **fluffy, lightly sweetened and fresh**, but the tops of the muffins are the ultimate treat. Each

muffin cake is delicately moistened with a sweet **cream cheese** and topped off with **tender crumb cake pieces** that glob together with cream cheese and sugar. If you enjoy a savory piece of cheesecake or a delicious piece of yellow cake, (two of my personal weaknesses), then this is the muffin for you! Since I had joined the Weigh Down Workshop, I had decided that I was only going to eat the foods I truly enjoyed. Cream Cheese Muffins became part of my morning ritual and this was the last one in the carton.

So there I was, sitting at the breakfast table with my Bible and devotional book (ironically entitled, *My Daily Bread*), a glass of milk to my left and half a cream cheese muffin to my right. (In the Weigh Down Workshop, nobody ever eats a “whole” of anything). I said grace, and believe me, I was thankful for my breakfast, but during that prayer, the Lord began to lay the story of Cain and Abel upon my heart. As if watching a movie, I saw the events of the story unfold before me. Then, flashing in neon light, the Lord held my heart in his hand as he revealed the significance of sacrifice to me, a selfish sinner and broken spirit. God reminded me how Abel’s sacrifice of meat was accepted with love and mercy because he gave the best of his flock to the Lord out of love, more love for the Lord than for the lamb. Cain’s sacrifice of fruit was detestable to the Lord because he complained and begrudgingly gave that which he had worked for in the fields.

I began to see the parallels:

All the diets and sacrificing I had made in the past were simply hopeless and meaningless gifts that I gave out of self-denial, hard work, and misery.

The weight always came back. But giving a portion of the food, just as I give a portion of my income to the Lord because I loved him, would be a true sign of sacrifice given out of love and repentance.

I immediately asked the Lord to forgive me for my selfishness, and did something you should never do unless you truly intend to keep your promise. I told the Lord I would give him whatever he desired of me, because I loved him with all my heart and nothing was so important to me that I couldn’t surrender it to the Lord. Amen! Oh “the tangled web we weave”—Shakespeare.

I took a bite of my muffin, bottom first. I always savored the top for last and enjoyed it as if I was eating my last super. I opened up my devotional book, which instructed me to turn to Genesis 4, and read the morning scripture. Yes, you guessed it, the story of Cain and Abel! Oh how the Lord tugs at our ignorant hearts! I read the story that had just played through my mind in prayer, only this time, the emphasis was on the food.

Like any other muffin-top loving citizen, I began to plea my case. “But, Lord, Cain killed Abel because Abel’s sacrifice was so good. If I give you what you ask, surely *my* life will be taken!” (I know that sounds a little mellow dramatic, but remember, I felt like I was being tempted in the desert!) The Lord’s response: “I am with you always”. He might as well have thrown in “Oh ye of little faith,” but I’m thankful that he trusts me to find faith in the midst of my foolish desires. So I begged, “But Lord, this is

all I get for breakfast—a muffin? “ He answered, “Haven’t I always taken care of you?” (Matthew 6:30-34) I muttered a, “Yes, thank you,” with full realization that the Lord was no longer satisfied with my sacrifice of fruit, but rather he was requiring something of substance—a love offering—my muffin top!

Suddenly I saw myself removing the muffin top begrudgingly and hiding it away so I could eat it later (when God wasn’t looking).

As stupid as it sounds, the idea actually crossed my mind. Then something beautiful happened. The Lord heard my heart and its evil desires. He quietly asked, “Do you love me?” “Of course I love you, Lord. You know I do.” “Do you love the muffin more?” I thanked the Lord for that moment of humility. In his tender, compassionate question, I found repentance. How could I be so foolish as to allow a muffin top to come between me and my creator who sacrificed his life on the cross out of love for me? Was he really asking so much of me? Surely, I could give a muffin top, after all, he gave his life. In reverence to my Lord, I slowly, almost ceremonially, peeled off the flaky muffin top.

I walked it to the sink as if I was kneeling before the throne of God. I shoved it down the garbage disposal, suddenly recognizing how much it now disgusted me. I turned on the garbage disposal as if it were a symbolic process of purification. “Thank you, Lord, for all you have provided. I give this sacrifice to you out of love.. **I do love you more than the muffin top.**



LEAP FOR JOY
by Marcia Kaufman, RN
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One of God’s greatest gifts to mankind is children.

They not only enrich our present but, in humanistic terms, ensure our future by carrying on the heritage we have begun. It does not matter if these little ones are our own flesh and blood or if they are adopted and have become our beloved family in that most extraordinary way, they are our most precious responsibility and joy.

I have been blessed with two children, a son and a daughter, who are now adults. My son has a full family consisting of a wonderful wife, two natural and four step children who we all love very much. My daughter, the youngest, has been married for five years and was expecting her first baby in February, 2000. Somehow when you are looking forward to a very happy event, you forget that things can go wrong. Unfortunately, something went very wrong with my daughter’s pregnancy. She was 22 weeks along and the baby had been quite active for several months when, suddenly, movement stopped. She waited for two days but still felt no movement and then went to her doctor. When she was examined, they could not find the heartbeat. She was rushed to the hospital where a sonogram also showed no heartbeat. The baby was dead.

I don’t think there are words that can relay the depth of grief we all felt with that news.

So many plans had been made; so many dreams vanished into air with those awful words. To make things worse, she had to carry her poor dead baby until her body was ready to reject it naturally.

God is very faithful, especially in the most tragic times of our lives. We were all praying that the delivery would come soon and that my daughter would have as easy a time as possible. Exactly one week later, she went into labor and my little grandson, Alexander Daniel, was delivered stillborn.

I am a nurse and was present during the delivery and saw the problem firsthand. There was a malformation in the placenta which caused a huge blood clot to obstruct the blood flow through the umbilical cord, so the baby may not have been getting enough oxygen all along. There was the chance that Alexander would have been born with brain damage caused by this oxygen deprivation, but no one can be sure. I believe that God had another plan in mind for this poor little one and took him home to spare him and us much pain.

We had a funeral service for Alexander and at the grave site the Pastor’s message was one of comfort and the hope of seeing him again at the resurrection. My daughter and son-in-law were heartbroken but did become closer to God as a result of this most devastating loss.

That happened last November, and, in early May we learned my daughter is again expecting a baby. The joy of this news was slightly dulled by the worry that it could happen again. The doctors consider her a high-risk but are taking every precaution they know. Of course, we have also been praying for a healthy child this time.

Two things have happened which strengthen my belief that I will have a perfect grandchild come this November. First of all, I had a dream two weeks after we heard that she was expecting. I saw beautiful little baby girl, about eight or nine months old laying on a bed. Over her was a little boy lovingly taking care of her. He was stroking her hair and face gently and holding her

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hand. I noticed that the boy was not much older than the little girl and I knew in my spirit that these were my daughter's children. I was seeing Alexander watching over his sister. When I woke up I felt that it was God's way of telling me that this is going to work out well.

My daughter-in-law also had a dream at the same time. She dreamed she saw my daughter brushing the hair of a lovely little girl. She described how she was styling the baby's hair and it was the same way I styled my daughter's hair when she was that age, which was about twelve months. I think we both saw the same child at different ages.

The second thing was the most profound of all. I was present when a sonogram was taken of the baby at twelve weeks. The baby was about 3/4 inch long and less than one ounce but the heart was beating as steady as a clock. This tiny ball of flesh is a living human being and wonderful to behold. While I was watching, all of a sudden this little ball started bouncing. The baby looked like it was leaping from one side of the womb to the other, tumbling and bouncing over and over again. I asked my daughter if she could feel that, but the baby was so small, she could not feel all this activity yet. As I watched this amazing thing, I was reminded of the passage in the Book of Luke when Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was carrying John the Baptist. When Mary came near, John leaped for joy when he heard the voice of the mother of the Lord.

Babies *do* leap for joy!

I now know this for a fact. It is a manifestation of God's ever present Love for us that these—His most precious gifts—know and react to Him even before they know us.

The New School Prayer

(author unknown)

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule.

For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.

And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple or orange or green,
That's no offense, it's the freedom scene.

The law is specific, the law is precise,
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.

In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the State.

We're allowed to cuss & dress like freaks
And pierce our noses, tongues & cheeks.
They've outlawed guns; but FIRST the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen
And the unwed daddy, our Senior King.

It's "Inappropriate" to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such "judgements" do not belong.

We can get our condoms, and birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires, & totem poles.

But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No Word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns the school's a mess.

So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot, My soul please take.

By God's Grace

Karen Bradley

Evangelical Christian Assembly

Red Bank, NJ

A Prayer:

O holy Lord
I come to seek your face
By the power of your Spirit and your Grace

I yield to you
To change, to cleanse, to purify
That with you I may abide

I love you Jesus
It's my heart's desire
To walk with you this midnight hour

Keep my lampstand lit
To rise at my beloved's call
Tho darkness abounds, I will not fall

But O
My broken loyalty
Part to you, part to me

Bring unity
To wholly praise you, to fear your name
How can one come before you and ever be the same?