

Together

Worldwide Church of God News

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Denominational Name to Be Changed

by Joseph Tkach

Saul of Tarsus was fully devoted to arresting and condemning Christian believers. But Christ had other plans for him. As Saul traveled to Damascus to have more Christians arrested, Christ met him in a blinding light and turned him into a believer. The change the risen Jesus worked in Saul was so profound that the Scriptures began to use a new name for him – Paul.

A cunning schemer, Jacob knew how to look out for himself. But God met this grandson of Abraham at the ford of the Jabbok River and wrestled with him all night. When he saw Jacob's tenacity, he changed Jacob's name to Israel to reflect who he was – one who struggles with God.

Abram and Sarai were skeptical of God's promise to make them the progenitors of many nations. But God's promises are sure, so God changed their names to reflect what God was making them to be – Abraham, father of many nations,

and Sarah – princess.

I have been asked literally hundreds of times over the past few years when the name of our denomination will come to reflect who and what God has made us to be since he led our church into our

profound spiritual transformation nearly two decades ago.

Now, I am happy to tell you that the time has at last come to begin the process of changing our denominational name!

Older members will recall that

Statement of Beliefs Revised

After a lengthy review process involving our international and U.S. denominational leadership teams, updates to the WCG *Statement of Beliefs* were approved by the Advisory Council of Elders on March 19.

The revisions to the *Statement of Beliefs* are designed to more clearly reflect the Trinitarian foundations of our theology. The approved draft was the fruit of much prayer, time and energy on the part of our doctrinal review team, consisting of Grace Communion Seminary President, Dr. Russell Duke; WCG Vice-President, Dr. J. Michael Feazell; WCG Theology Consultant, Dr. John McKenna; WCG Media Director, Dr. Michael Morrison; WCG Superintendent of Ministers USA; Dr. Dan Rogers; and WCG President, Dr. Joseph Tkach, as well as supplemental work from several others.

The last major revision of our *Statement of Beliefs* (2001) reflected our reformation from what was predominantly an old-covenant works-based theology to an evangelical new-covenant theology. Although the statements developed a decade ago remain accurate, sound and consistent with Trinitarian theology...

continued on page 3

In this issue...

Recent Events	4
U.S. Regional Conference	6
Announcements.	8

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before 1968, we were known as the Radio Church of God. That name made sense at the time, as the church was a pioneer of religious radio broadcasting. In the '30s, '40s and maybe even the '50s, a name that included the word "radio" sounded dynamic and modern. But by the 1960s, that name had begun to sound quaint and out-of-date. Membership was growing, and congregations were being established around the world. We needed a name that described what our church had become, so "Worldwide" was substituted for "Radio."

Today, we are faced with a similar situation. Not only are we a transformed church, but we have found that the name "Church of God" causes many people to confuse us with groups that have used that name far longer than we have, such as the Churches of God, Anderson, Indiana, and others. Some of these churches are Pentecostal, and most are fundamentalist. Because "Church of God" is in

Grace lies at the heart of our values and mission.

our name, many people assume that we are a branch of the many "Churches of God" and share their doctrinal views.

Since the beginning of our spiritual transformation, ministers and members alike have been raising the question of changing the name of the denomination. Our doctrinal foundation, mission focus and church structure have undergone major changes, and a new name signals clearly that a major change has taken place, which in turn serves to strengthen our witness to God's grace and his intervention in our fellowship.

In the October 2005 issue of *WCG Today*, members in the United States were invited to submit possible new church names to their pastors. District superintendents collected the suggested names and forwarded them to us. Members, national directors and missions directors from around the world were also included in the process.

Our name search team, which was ap-



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL
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pointed by the WCG Board of Directors and composed of a number of leading men and women from various departments at headquarters, examined the names submitted and made recommendations to the Board and to the Advisory Council of Elders.

After reviewing all the submitted names and discussing the viable ones at length, the search team isolated key terms that reflect the church's values and mission as a denomination while avoiding key terms that are normally associated with other denominations as well as those that are already in use by other organizations.

The name search team presented their findings and recommendations to a combined meeting of the Board and the Advisory Council of Elders on Dec. 20, 2005. After all factors and criteria were considered, the Board and the Council settled on the name "Grace Communion

Our unity with God and with one another is reflected in the word Communion.

International." Grace lies at the heart of our values and mission as a transformed church. Our spiritual unity with God and with one another is reflected in the word Communion. The word International identifies us as a unified body of believers who span the globe, sharing a common history and journey of faith.

The decision was announced in the February 2006 issue of *WCG Today* and was met with mixed reactions. Although a majority of members expressed support for the new name, many were uncomfortable with it, so we decided to put the name change on hold, praying that God would reconfirm, in time, whether or not this was truly where he

was leading us.

As time has passed, the consensus in favor of the name “Grace Communion International” has continued to grow. Although we cannot expect 100 percent agreement on any name, we have now reached a point at which more than 80 percent of U.S. members favor a change to this name.

We are a church that God has changed radically from what we once were to what we are today. Our change to a new name – one that accurately describes what God has done with us – will be consistent with that transformation.

Of course, most of our congregations have already taken on local names, demonstrating the value in putting before the public a name that better represents who our Father has made us, through the Spirit, to be in Jesus Christ. Grace Communion International describes our spiritual journey together, celebrates our new life in Christ, and communicates our Trinitarian, Christ-centered theology.

As a reminder, local churches, and our international regions, will still be able to choose their own name that may or may not be the same as our denominational name. In some countries, it is even prudent for them to keep the name “Worldwide Church of God.”

You will see the name change take shape in a carefully orchestrated way over the next several months. The name, “Worldwide Church of God” will still be ours. Our web address, www.wcg.org, will continue to belong to us, and will eventually redirect users to a new web address. New publications and other media will begin to reflect the new name in the next month or so, but keep in mind that all Worldwide Church of God copyrighted material will continue to belong to us, as will everything pertaining to the name Worldwide Church of God.

I praise God, as I know you do, for all he has done for us, in us and through us. Our new name will be but an acknowledgement and reflection of the great love, mercy and power he has displayed in our fellowship.

In the meantime, let’s be about our Father’s business!

The word International identifies us as a unified body of believers who span the globe, sharing a common history and journey of faith.

Thank you for all you do in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Without the prayers, financial support, and devotion of God’s people to living and sharing the gospel, there would be no church to name! The glory goes to God, of course, but I know he is well pleased with the zeal and love so evident in our congregations around the world.

Statement of Beliefs Revised

continued from page 1

it is important for our wording today to more explicitly identify our core beliefs as rooted in Trinitarian theology.

We believe that the 2009 revisions describe in a more explicit way our beliefs about the love of God as

shown to us in his

Son, Jesus Christ,

and the saving significance of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

It is in Jesus Christ that we are given the righteousness of God, and it is in him that our lives are hidden. We rejoice that he is sharing himself with us, and we pray that many more will come to see and embrace the blessings he has already obtained for them.

Although the statements developed a decade ago remain accurate, sound and consistent with Trinitarian theology, it is important for our wording today to more explicitly identify our core beliefs as rooted in Trinitarian theology.

Full text of the *Statement of Beliefs* is on our website at <http://www.wcg.org/aboutus/beliefs/> and it will be sent in booklet form to all U.S. member households.

Ambassador University Reunion

A group of Ambassador University alumni are sponsoring a reunion in Dallas, TX, over Memorial Day weekend (May 22-24) for all alumni, faculty and staff who attended or worked at Ambassador University during the post-consolidation years (1990-1997). More information can be found at www.aureunion.com.



Church Multiplication Ministries 2009 Planning Meeting

The Church Multiplication Ministries team gathered on January 8-9 in Memphis, TN, for its annual planning meeting (right). Dan Rogers, Superintendent of U.S. Ministers, and Ted Johnston, Generations Ministries director, joined the CMM team comprised of Glen Weber, Randy Bloom (CMM director), and Ken Williams. Lorenzo Arroyo is also part of the team but was unable to attend.

After reviewing the CMM vision, mission and faith goals, the team discussed its key strategies and plans for casting a vision for church multiplication, helping congregations develop environments that lead to church multiplication, and providing church leaders with resources for starting new churches.

The vision for church multiplication includes the creation of Christ-centered congregational environments which “naturally and supernaturally” lead to the multiplication of ministry leaders who start new churches. Church Administration and Development and CMM envision starting new kinds of churches, for all kinds of people, in all kinds of places. This is a “God-sized” vision, but it is a vision that is validated by scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit through the church throughout history.

CMM faith goals include:

- Planting 12 or more new churches each year
- 45 assessors comprising 15 assessment teams
- 4 church plant leadership training teams
- 12 or more ministry coaches for church planters
- 20 district church planting networks

At this time CMM has trained:

- 22 assessors (3-5 assessment teams)
- 1 church plant leadership training team



- 5 ministry coaches for church planters

CMM plans for 2009 include:

- Inviting experienced church planters to speak at the nine regional conferences. These speakers will join Randy Bloom in addressing the conference plenary sessions. They will also participate in the breakout workshops.
- Conducting Church-Next Training – a 5-day training session for pastors and other ministry leaders who want to learn how to plant a church (dates to be announced).
- Producing a training resource manual for the Church-Next Training program.
- Developing a process for recruiting church planters.
- Adding the church planter recruitment process to the CMM website (cmm.wcg.org) and beginning to recruit church planters from outside the WCG.
- Working with district pastoral leaders to begin to develop district church multiplication networks.
- Presenting a church multiplication workshop at the Wisconsin Dells festival.
- Conducting church multiplication workshops for district networks and congregations. (To schedule a workshop contact Randy Bloom at Randy.Bloom@wgc.org) Please continue to pray that the

Spirit will continue to lead us - pastors, congregations and denominational leaders – that we may discern his will and follow his direction for starting new churches. Please ask the Lord to provide the ministry leaders and resources we need to participate in his mission to the world by planting new churches.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers for the ministry of planting new churches. Those of us in Church Administration and CMM are grateful for your passion and participation in this ministry. God bless you all as you continue to experience the life and love of Jesus.

Randy Bloom

Growing Deeper in Louisiana

About 70 pastors, ministry leaders and members from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana met in late January in Tickfaw, LA, for Growing Deeper—the second intensive of Servants Passage. The gathering was coordinated by the Tickfaw congregation under the leadership of Mike Horchak, district pastoral leader, and his wife Pam. The group was led by Ted Johnston, director of WCG Generations Ministries.

Servants Passage is a two-year-long journey of exploration and learning that helps believers of all ages understand and grow in ministry with Jesus as we journey together to WCG Next. The journey includes three weekend intensives with local-church-based, small-group learning between intensives.

At the first intensive, Join the Journey, participants explore their personal and group “divine design”—the composite picture of the spiritual gifts, interests, life journey, relationship styles and other factors granted by God to us individually and collectively so that we

may participate actively with Jesus in his ministry. The insights gained from this exploration lead to a “life development plan,” which identifies goals and means for growing in this ministry in ways that are faithful to who God has made us.

At the second intensive, Growing Deeper, participants are helped to understand more fully the nature of Jesus’ ministry on earth and their current level of development related to that ministry. Ministry development strategies and tools are examined, leading to formation of local “learning communities” where growing in ministry and doing ministry are brought together in the context of our local church-based living and loving with Jesus.

If your congregation or district pastoral network would like to begin a Servants Passage journey in your area, see additional information at genmin.wcg.org/leadershipministries.htm or request additional information from Ted Johnston by e-mailing Ted.Johnston@wgc.org.

Youth Discovery Weekend in Myrtle Beach, SC

Our youth event was held on Martin Luther King Holiday Weekend (Jan. 17-19). We provided worship services, basketball, bowling, a talent show, and a dance. Several of our youth gave testimonies of how Jesus

Christ has worked in their life in recent times.

Because all the congregations that normally attend were unable to do so, I almost canceled the camp. However, we took the matter to Jesus!

We needed to show to our youth we shouldn’t quit in the midst of difficulties. So we made the weekend an evangelistic event. I challenged our youth to invite every unchurched youth that they knew to the camp. The church then paid half of their camp cost. We had eight unchurched youth from the community as well as 16 youths from our local congregation.

We had a great Spirit- and fun-filled weekend. A few of the new youth have already attended our church worship services. Including our adults, we had 34 people at the camp. Many of our adults and youth said that although they missed the fellowship with the youth from the other church areas, it was one of the best camps yet. The moral of this story is never quit! No matter how bad it looks, Jesus is faithful.

Howard Blakeney



On March 15 youth from Worldwide Grace Fellowship enjoyed cooking a Southern Sunday supper of ham and side dishes in the kitchen of the new Salvation Army Homeless Shelter in Clarksville, TN. Preparing supper for the 30 residents in the new, spacious kitchen was not only easy but fun for Keribeth Williams (starting left and going around the table), Christopher Davis, Pastor Doug Tomes, Will Peters, Ed Peters, Mathew Davis, Mariel Tomes, and Kayla Williams.

Making News in Rhode Island

Good News Today, a Christian newspaper in Rhode Island, had an article about the ministry of Grace Family Church (WCG) in West Warwick, RI. Ralph Davis writes,

“This month my editor asked me to check out some pasta and a pastor in Arctic [the downtown section of West Warwick] to see if there was a story there. A spaghetti supper was to be held to raise funds to help... Grace Family Church....

“The gathering was a huge success with over 200 people attending and all proceeds were given to the church.... The Arctic Mission paid for all of the ingredients and the group did all of the planning, preparation, serving, and cleanup.

“There was no charge for the supper; it called for a ‘free will’ offering. There were about fifty very hungry people who had no money and yet ate until they were content.... Pastor Luiciano Cozzi of Grace Family Church is happier to know that the guests received nourishment than collect more donations. There were visitors from other churches donating to the cause as well, enjoying the fare and the company of the Grace Family Church members.”



On March 7, the New Covenant Fellowship church in Tyler, TX, held their annual Women for Christ Retreat. This year’s theme was “The Bride of Christ.” The program for the day included worship and praise music, prayer and fellowship. Messages included “Do You Take Jesus” by Tricia Owens, “It’s All About You” by Sue Berger, “Love One Another” by Amy Brady, and “Communion Foreshadows the Wedding Supper,” by Marcia Demarest. Guests were from Tyler and surrounding areas. — Janalee Swisher

First Regional Conference of 2009 in

The first U.S. regional conference of 2009 was held March 6-8 at the Renaissance Hotel in Agoura Hills, CA. This facility offered us the best rates for our meeting rooms, accommodation, and meals all in one location. This year's conferences are themed "WCG Next 2009 – Sharing God's Love and Life: Ministry in the Spirit."

In the opening session on Friday

try to several categories within the church: youth, family, and leaders. In smaller meetings chaired by district pastoral leaders, congregational pastoral leaders then met to discuss ministry in their respective areas.

The Friday evening worship celebration began with music led by Katherine Carter, ministerial intern in Community Life Fellowship (Altadena, CA), and a band from CLF.

Joseph Tkach, WCG president (right), gave the keynote address: "For the Love of God." He presented the ministry of

Randy Bloom, director of Church Multiplication Ministries, spoke on starting new congregations, and he introduced a guest speaker, Rod Koop (both shown at right), national facilitator of church multiplication in the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

On Saturday afternoon, a variety of workshops were offered:



afternoon, Dan Rogers (right), superintendent of U.S. ministers, addressed the question, "How does Trinitarian theology inform the practice of Christian pastoral ministry?" Our approach is not to invite Jesus to bless what we are doing, but for us to share in the work that Jesus is already doing.

Ted Johnston, director of Generations Ministries (below), spoke on how we participate in Jesus' minis-

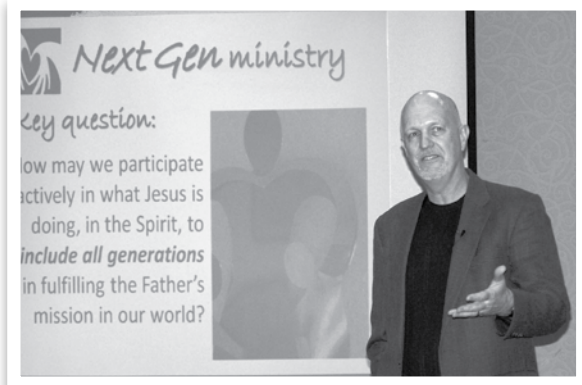


Jesus in John 5 as a helpful model for the ministry of our congregations today.

On Saturday morning, Mike

Hale and Higher Ground from CLF led everyone in worship music. Dan then continued the exploration of how we join in the ministry of Jesus, to see our role in the Father's mission in the world.

- Randy Bloom and Rod Koop, Planting Churches
- Curtis May, Jesus' Dream of Oneness
- Ted Johnston, Positioning for Mission With Jesus
- Jeb Egbert (right), Perichoretic Parenting and Grandparenting
- Mark and Anne Stapleton (below), Including All Generations



Agoura Hills, Southern California



- Russell Duke, Redeeming the Time
- Robert Meade, Demystifying www.wcg.org/online

Dan Rogers then concluded Saturday's program with a Q&A session and group discussion. The evening was free for fellowship and other meetings.

On Sunday morning, some of the



above workshops were offered again, as well as additional workshops by Randy Bloom on church planting. Higher Ground again led worship music, followed by a sermon by Dan Rogers on "Ministry and Mission in the Spirit," a message based on Luke 3 and 4. Lorenzo Arroyo, Regional Pastoral Leader in the Western U.S. and for our Spanish-speaking congregations, led in Communion and the offering.

Mission Directors Meet in Glendora, CA

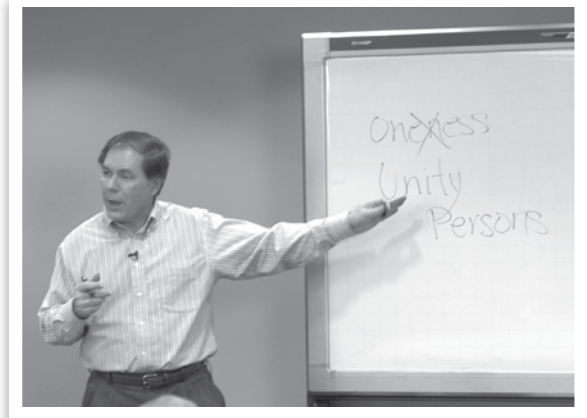
Immediately after the Agoura Hills conference, the WCG Mission Directors (who all attended the Agoura Hills conference) met for an additional three days at the denominational offices in Glendora.

They each gave reports and shared observations about how God was working in their respective regions.

On Tuesday, March 10, Dr. Gary Deddo (right) spoke on Trinitarian theology; his presentation was

videotaped for future use.

A short video of each Mission Director was taped for use on our website, and for a DVD that will be sent to U.S. pastors. Joseph Tkach noted that John McLean, National Director of the WCG in Australia, is also the Mission Director for churches in Australia.



Participants at the mission directors meeting. Front row: Randy Bloom, CMM director; John and Heather McLean, Australia; Paulina and Hector Barrero, Latin America; Nsama and Kalengule Kaoma, Africa; Ruth and Rod Matthews, South Asia and Oceania. Center row: James and Shirley Henderson, U.K. and parts of Europe; Barbara Rogers; Carmen Fleming; Eugene Guzon, the Philippines and eastern Asia. Back row: Ken Williams, Regional Pastoral Leader in the eastern U.S.; Dan Rogers, Director of Church Administration & Development; Charles Fleming, the Caribbean; Santiago and Elke Lange, Germany and parts of Europe; Tammy and Joseph Tkach, WCG president; Charles Albrecht, CAD office manager; Wendy and Gary Moore, Canada and southern Africa.



Announcements

Read more at www.wcg.org/together

Birth

Jennifer Abigail Newby, Dec. 11. Parents James and Karen (Davies) Newby of Joliet, IL, now have one boy and five girls.*

Graduation

Ross Flynn, of the Detroit East congregation in Eastpointe, MI, received his PhD in Counselor Education from Oakland University in Rochester, MI, in October 2008. He successfully defended his dissertation entitled “Contribution of Supervisor and Supervisee Personal Epistemology to the Supervisory Working Alliance,” which has been nominated for the Dissertation of the Year Award at the university.

His research found a significant association between how people think about “truth” and who we enjoy in relationship. This may be helpful in understanding how people select a church home.

Obituaries

Henry (Hank) Berger, of Longview, TX, died at age 79 on Feb. 22. Born in Pennsylvania in 1930, Hank was a member of the Air Force from 1948 to 1951. He married (Mary) Jean Marshall in 1951.

Hank loved music—singing praise to God was a highlight of his life. He and Jean became members of WCG in 1972, attending several congregations in Texas and Pennsylvania. He was actively involved in Grace Christian Fellowship in Longview, Texas.

Hank leaves behind his loving wife, Jean, and three children: Sue Hill and husband, Doug; Lee Berger (WCG elder in Longview,

TX) and wife, Sue; Donna Koerner and husband, David; grandsons Lee Stephens and wife, Mindy; Robert Stephens; Aaron Gaither and wife, Jennifer, and great-grandson, Blake.

In memory of Hank, donations can be made to the Jon Whitney Foundation, 1301 Orchard Road, Flat Rock, NC 28731. This foundation helps youth attend WCG camps in the U.S. and some foreign countries.

Vera Dill, 90, a member of the WCG in Birmingham, AL, died Dec. 23. She was a loving mother, Granny and homemaker. She kept over 60 babies for the Children’s Aid Society before they were adopted. Later she maintained a day care in her home.

Emma Haynes, almost 97, died January 8. Her greatest pleasure in later life was to attend church. She was baptized in 1958 and was a charter member of the WCG in Birmingham, AL.

Dorothy Heisz-Dankert, 96, died Feb. 17 in Wisconsin Dells. She was born April 4, 1912 in Vernon County, WI. Dorothy was a member of Grace Fellowship, where she served as deaconess.

Dorothy is survived by a son, Thomas Heisz; daughters, Marilyn Larson, Rita Bennett, and Barbara Flickner; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents; son, Roger in 1961; and her husbands, Eddie Heisz and Emil Dankert.

Beatrice (Ma Bea) Jones, 92, died Feb.

4, 2008. She was born on June 16, 1915, in Bovina, MS.

She was preceded in death by husbands James Cook and Albert Jones; a son, Lacey Jones; a daughter, JoAnn Cook; sister, Hattie Jackson-Walker; brothers, A.D. Jackson and R.D. Jackson; and her parents.

She is survived by her loving and loyal son, James Cook, Sr. of Vicksburg; 17 grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren, 30 great-great grandchildren, and 1 great-great-great grandchild.*

John Lucas III, 70, died in Milwaukee, WI, on Feb. 9. He was a WCG member for 25 years, and served on the ministerial team in Milwaukee. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Kathy, and by his daughters Laura and Lynn, and five grandchildren.

Betty Rose Morris, 66, died Feb. 24 in Turlock, CA. She was a member of the WCG in Modesto. Surviving are two brothers, Ray Morris of Glendale, CA, and Pete Morris of Napa, CA; sister-in-law, Mary Lou Morris of Dunnigan, CA; many nieces, nephews and cousins; and two loving caregivers, Dorothy Wingett and Sandy Olson-Musser. Betty was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, Bill Morris and Joe Morris.*

Florence E. Nail, 89, died in Jennings, LA, March 9. She was born June 10, 1919 in Brooklyn, NY. She was baptized in 1968 and was one of the founding members of the Lake Charles, LA, congregation. She faithfully served the congregation through the years as deaconess, secretary, treasurer and librarian.

* See www.wcg.org/together/09/may/announce.htm for photos and more information.