

Christian Men's Group Names Ed Cole's Successor

In a surprise move, the Christian Men's Network (CMN) has named A.R. Bernard, pastor of 15,000-member Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, N.Y., to head up its worldwide operation. CMN's founder, Edwin Louis "Ed" Cole, died Aug. 27 after a short bout with bone-marrow cancer.

Paul Cole, pastor of Hope Christian Community Church in Southlake, Texas, said both he and the board of CMN, who named his father's successor, "felt that there needed to be a national and international voice" and that Bernard could best fill that role.

"The issue was simply to select the person whose leadership is most likely to produce the best result in the furtherance of the corporation's purpose," Bernard said of his appointment. "They had to take a lot of things into consideration."

Cole will help coordinate CMN events and said that Bernard will not be the keynote speaker at every CMN event. Reggie White, Ben Kinchlow, Lafayette Scales and other men that Ed Cole has mentored will fill that role as well.

"What dad did is he put sonship in the hearts of a bunch of men," Cole explained. "And that sonship is about stepping up. So the sons now become the fathers."

Bernard came to faith in Christ at a gospel meeting with evangelist Nicky Cruz in 1975.

Bernard and Ed Cole met in 1985, and Cole quickly became Bernard's "mentor, spiritual father, a very dear friend for 16 years," Bernard said. "There are many who claimed him as their spiritual father. Our relationship went so deep."

CMN's offices and world-training center will remain in Southlake, Texas, according to Bernard, who brings not only his pastoral experience to the job, but also his 10 years in the banking industry.

He also has ministered at national and international conferences with Promise Keepers and with CMN. His teaching style, like Ed Cole's, is confrontational and challenging and has put him in demand as a speaker at events around the world.

Still, he recognizes that he can never fill his mentor's shoes. "There's only one Dr. Cole," Bernard said.

Robert Andrescik