

FeedBack

My Turn

I am all for simplifying church life and shedding the weight of overdeveloped institutional structures, yet I have several problems with the current laissez faire movement in American Christianity that J. Lee Grady wrote about in his online column ("Christian Dropouts and the Coming 'Revolution,'" Fire in My Bones, April 21). Many times those who start "fellowship groups" where there is "no authority except the Holy Spirit" are in fact leading by force of personality with no standard of authority or accountability. In most churches, there is at least some system of recourse when a leader gets off base.

Second, "church in a coffee shop" might be very effective when reaching the young urban worker. But will those believers be as quick to provide regular ministry to Aunt Mabel down the street? Established congregations tend to provide a more consistent base of ministry to the elderly and the poor. Any form of fellowship that forgets the needy is missing one of the central passions of God's heart.

Finally, while a la carte Christianity might have a broad appeal, yet the fruit often is not believers who are, like Jesus was, ready to lay down their lives for others. From what I can see, the most thriving segments of the body of Christ in the world today are characterized by highly committed believers with clear leaders exhibiting strength and servanthood. Trying to apply such a standard in a culture of comfort is the challenge that falls to us.

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

I congratulate you for your article on Israel ("Why Israel Matters" by Robert Stearns, May). As prayer-watchers for Israel in Cotonou, Benin, we pray for the restoration of Israel.

Dedegbe Therese

Cotonou, Benin, West Africa

Thank you for the most informative article regarding the biblical importance of Israel. We can't be silent when it pertains to the peace of Jerusalem. We must appreciate the wealth of the past and work faithfully toward our future when Christ returns.

Rev. Barbara Anne Yovino, Ph.D.

Brooklyn, New York

I commend you for acknowledging our Lord's command to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. God is speaking clearly to each of us today, and your magazine is a bright light in a dark world.

Beth Ann Holley

Cartersville, Georgia

Thank you for publishing the article about Israel. It was so refreshing to see the body of Christ embracing its Jewish roots and standing with Israel. Please continue to publish more articles on this subject. It is so needed!

Wendy Miller

Clarence, New York

CELEBRATING PENTECOST

Your commemorative issue "100 Years of Pentecost" (April) was

also a resurrection issue. How I wish we would take a clue from the people of the Azusa Street Revival and observe that even in their weaknesses they were not influenced by the fashion, tastes and things of their world, unlike we are these days. Let us keep the rich legacy of these men and women, not relying on our effort and power but on the Spirit of God who can quicken us.

Adeeko Olumide

Ibadan Oyo, Nigeria

CHARISMA'S ONLINE POLL

Editor's Note: In a recent online column, editor J. Lee Grady wrote about the many leaders of the American "house church" movement who have given up on the traditional church. He asked our readers to answer a few questions about the house-church debate: Do you believe traditional churches should disband? Have you left your church to join an "organic" church that meets in a home? If so, what was it about your traditional church that triggered your departure? Here are your responses:

God is moving us away from man-made religious doctrines. When we get to heaven, there will be no Catholic, Southern Baptist, Methodist or Assemblies of God.

Aileen Brown

Yadkinville, North Carolina

I agree that the church body needs to stay as it is. However, I agree that the church should be ministering outside its walls. Those who criticize pastoral structure do not seem to be reaching the lost.

Carlos Rivas

Tampa, Florida

I'm part of a wonderful, Spirit-filled church, All Saints Episcopal. But my parents are in a church where the Holy Spirit doesn't seem welcome. They would benefit from a small home-gathering.

Shannon Bennett

Winter Park, Florida

I have belonged to small churches and megachurches. Most of my spiritual growth happened in the small settings. Growth happens best when Jesus' model of loving discipleship is practiced. Most of the church dropouts are leaving because they are hurt. They will not get healed by leaving but by finding reconciliation.

John LeMaster

Lexington, Kentucky

When one loves God, he or she is drawn to corporate worship. But we must go to church where we are fed. If a person feels fed by worshiping in a barn, let him worship there. Personally, I enjoy choirs, sermons and the reading of the Word.

Richard Thunberg

Palmyra, Pennsylvania

If churches were to be done away with, where would the sheep be fed? There's no way the home-church idea will work. Who will provide accountability?

Andrea Floyd

Cochran, Georgia

I haven't dropped out of church yet, but I sure would consider a house church. I've been at a famous church for 20 years. In fact, I'm one of the worship leaders, and I'm tired of the Holy Spirit being quenched every service. I long for a place

where God can be God.

name withheld

I'm with you 100 percent on sticking with the traditional church. It's been said that Washington state is second to last as the most unchurched state in America (Oregon is last). In the Northwest, people are more concerned about hunting and fishing than church.

Rev. Otis Manning

Spokane, Washington

I believe the traditional church should continue, but I have no problem with house churches because I believe we need both. We should not tell those who go to a house church that they are any less Christian than those of us who attend church in a traditional building.

Valerie Lewis

via e-mail

Part of the problem, I think, is we don't have servant leaders who would be willing to pastor a "gateway" church if it never grew into a powerhouse congregation and paid the pastor a six-figure salary. Until we raise up pastors who are willing to, we will continue to lose church members.

Tim Tremaine

Arlington, Texas

I understand why some house churches start, but I do not agree with all their reasoning. I started Life Changers Church of God in Christ after the Holy Ghost called me to. But some people start house ministries because of disagreements with leadership and other unbiblical reasons. I constantly pray for humility because I believe the focus should be on Jesus.

Rev. Gerald Matthew Mandrell

Life Changers Church of God in Christ
Tallahassee, Florida

I've been a pastor in a house church, and I've seen the Lord move. Now I pastor in an organized church, and the people are more faithful.

We've sent members on mission trips to Finland, Japan, India, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Kenya, Central African Republic, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia, Canada, Lesotho and the Philippines. We went to Africa 28 times. We've seen thousands come to Christ. Our house church sent no one.

Bill Smith
McKinney, Texas

LOOK WHAT GOD DID!

About 15 years ago I used to receive your magazine. I was not a born-again Christian at the time and I don't recall who forwarded my name to your subscription office.

However, through your magazine God touched my life and 10 years ago I was born again. Today I am a pastor called by God to serve.

Rev. Ronald Mogire
Nakuru, Kenya