

Randy Clark Leaves Vineyard

Clark, prominent in the 1990s Toronto revival, cited emphasis of his ministry and a 'discomfort' with Vineyard as key reasons

Randy Clark, senior pastor of Vineyard Christian Fellowship of St. Louis—but probably best known for being the catalyst whose series of meetings in 1994 helped spark the revival at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship—resigned his church and left the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC) in September.

“[Since Toronto] I’ve felt I belong to the church [universal] and not a particular denomination. I didn’t feel I was to be limited there,” Clark told Charisma.

Clark said he is moving his Global Awakening Ministry to work with Charles Stock, senior pastor of Life Center, a non-Vineyard church in Harrisburg, Pa.

In an e-mail about his resignation sent to Vineyard pastors, Clark said the new partnership would allow him to focus full time on an international ministry of “equipping the saints to effectively pray for the sick, move in words of knowledge and other gifts.”

Clark also expressed concerns about the direction of the Vineyard and stated in the e-mail that he is leaving partly because of a “growing discomfort fitting in.” The concerns he noted include the composition of the Vineyard’s accountability structure and an uncertainty that those who want to affiliate with the Vineyard will see signs and wonders in Sunday morning services.

John Wimber, the late founder of the AVC, prophesied over Clark in 1984 that he had an apostolic calling and would one day have a "translocal" ministry. Clark's e-mail stated he "will always thank God for the profound effect the Vineyard and its leaders have had upon my life" and that he hopes they will always think of him as being a "friend of the Vineyard." Bert Waggoner, AVC's national director, said he is grieved about Clark's departure. "Randy has blessed the movement, and I think highly of him and his stirring up of the things of the Spirit. He was a gift to us as a community of churches."

Clark told Charisma the Vineyard movement is undergoing a problem experienced by many groups that have lost a founder.

"There's a tendency to lose its power dynamic and [those] seeds are present in the Vineyard. [The AVC] has a task force for everything that's important but no task force for renewal. I'm afraid [that's] being lost. I'm not bitter, but I have a grieving concern," he said.

Waggoner, however, said that he does not see any such shift in the Vineyard, just a diversity in ways of expression.

Although Clark emphasized that his new move is in response to what he believes is God's direction for his life, he said in his e-mail that it was during a meeting with Waggoner and Happy Leman, Clark's regional overseer, that Clark learned his "Armenian" leanings and "open view" of God were alienating him from about 70 percent of the Vineyards.

So-called open theology is a controversial doctrine that many believers say questions God's sovereignty and omnipotence. The debate has been fueled by book releases on the subject from

open theist and college professor Gregory Boyd, whom Clark invited to speak at two of his conferences during the last few years when, according to Clark, he was not as controversial.

Waggoner said he had told Clark these were issues that could be worked through but that the key issue for Clark was to hear the voice of God and proceed based on that.

Clark wrote, however, that “I thought these types of [doctrinal issues] were not big in the Vineyard, that what really mattered was whether or not we were ministering to the sick, the poor, the lost, the demonized, in the power of the Spirit and with the love of God.”

Waggoner said although that is true, with more than 600 churches in the AVC there is so much diversity that some issues are more important than others to pastors.

–Jeremy Reynolds