

Generations Unite, Receive Fresh Outpouring at 7:14 Prayer Conference

It's the 99th year of the Assemblies of God, and General Superintendent George O. Wood delivered a 1914 doctrinal foundation message to a 2013 congregation last week at SAGU's National Prayer Conference. The event was marked by unity and a renewed vision to experience and follow the Holy Spirit as the movement's pioneers did.

More than 1,200 took part in the sessions at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas. The conference continued a series of annual meetings, which began in the 1930s. This year SAGU expanded the regional events into a national conference as part of the Assemblies of God 7:14 Prayer Movement.

Dr. Wood set the tone for the sessions with a keynote message on "Praying in the Spirit." He called on the church "to put beneath our feet the floor of Scripture" as he emphasized the Assemblies of God conviction that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He quoted Pentecostal historian Dr. Vinson Synan: "When people are no longer being filled with the Holy Spirit and are no longer speaking in tongues, the Pentecostal Movement is over."

The sessions featured worship music, prayer, preaching and panel discussions, but Dr. Kermit Bridges, SAGU president and the conference coordinator, cited interaction of generations as a highlight of the event: "I saw students going up, praying for people my age and older. I saw vice versa, some of those with some experience praying for the younger. That kind of cross-generational moving in our churches is what is needed."

“It was exciting to see the next generation – not just students but pastors hear words from the Lord, write them down, share them with the conference and have that followed by a prophetic song on stage and a time of seeking God,” said Scott Wilson, Lead Pastor of The Oaks Fellowship. “No person was lifted up. Jesus was lifted up. He was exalted and the body of Christ was built up. When we left, everyone said, ‘Wow, God was in that place.’”

“I noticed a real sincerity, a genuineness and a unity [at the conference],” Clayton Brooks, one of the conference’s three worship leaders, said. “God was blessing something that has been in the works a long time.” He noted a sense of unity at the conference as people from all corners of the movement came together “for a common goal to glorify Jesus and to seek Him.” “There was a special sense of His presence there,” he said. “Something that has marked the people who were attending and something they will look back on and keep seeking.”

Julia Stubbs, a SAGU student from Albuquerque, N.M., expressed her desire to experience God as the movement’s founders had. “It was really cool to see a move of the Holy Spirit and how the revival that happened in the early 1900s could be possible in our age and our movement.”

The conference wasn’t just about the experience. The practicality of the messages became the highlight for many leaders who are praying that the Holy Spirit moves fresh in their congregations. Wilson gave a testimony about the recent movement of the Spirit of God in his church. “It’s a new day at The Oaks. The gifts are functioning and God is here in our midst.”

Rob Ketterling, Lead Pastor of River Valley Church, based out of Minnesota’s Twin Cities, cited Dr. Wood’s message as his highlight. “Sharing his vision gave me something so tangible to bring home to River Valley – not just a great moment but a great tool to bring back.”

General Secretary for the Assemblies of God, Dr. Jim Bradford, expressed his gratitude. "We were very grateful for the partnership with SAGU this last week. They made this a truly multi-generational event. We sense in the heart of new emerging leaders a real hunger passion to seek God. To be able to mentor and pastor that interest is something we really value."

Bridges summed up the event by saying, "The newly formed conference exceeded our expectations. It has such a rich history. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Assemblies of God, our hope is the conference's emphasis on prayer and Spirit-led ministry will contribute to a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit throughout our movement."

The worship experience was recorded and will be released as album through a partnership between Integrity Music and Influence Resources to coincide with General Council in August. "It was great to hear songs written by worship leaders in our movement," Ketterling added. "It's something that's long overdue."

Brooks said all the songs on the project are a result of unity and prayer, written by several different worship pastors from Assemblies churches including himself, Kurtis Parks, worship leader for National Community Church in Washington, D.C., Ryan Williams, Lead Worship & Creative Arts Pastor at River Valley Church in Apple Valley, Minn.

"The goal [of the project] is that people would see what's possible when we come together united and specifically in regards to the movement of prayer," Brooks said. "So much more is possible when people gather together and pray. I think God blesses that. Hopefully that Spirit will travel with the project and people will be led by the Spirit to continue engage each other in prayer and specially the 7:14 Prayer Movement."

The next event for the 7:41 Prayer Movement will be a national day of prayer on July 14 (which is 7/14) in preparation for the biannual General Council, Bradford said. "Our theme as we start our 100th anniversary of the Assemblies of God is 'Believe'," he said. "We're believing God for greater things. The 7:14 initiative is preparing for that as well as weaving into what we're believing and seeking God for ... our nation, grace in churches and becoming increasingly effective in reaching people with the gospel."