

George Wood Dedicates Orlando, Fla., Megachurch

Faith Assembly of God in Orlando, Fla., dedicated a magnificent new facility on a multi-acre campus on Wednesday with George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, and other dignitaries participating.

It's impossible for us to report on every church dedication, but since I've been good friends with pastor Carl Stephens for 35 years, and since I attended the service, I wanted to write this personalized report and extend my congratulations to a great pastor and great congregation.

I've known Carl Stephens since he served faithfully as a youth pastor at Faith Assembly when it was still quite small. He was single back then and he still jokes with me about how I tried to get him to date one of the single editors on my staff.

Carl was made the senior minister 25 years ago, and the church has grown to be one of the largest churches in Orlando and in its denomination. He enjoys a tremendous reputation in our city. I know that whenever we need pastors to stand up for righteousness, Carl Stephens is one of the first to step forward.

George Wood has recently been in the national limelight for his words of condolences to victims of the massacre in the movie theater in Aurora, Colo., and later for speaking up about the controversy regarding Chick-fil-A and its president and chief operating officer, Dan Cathy.

Wood has served faithfully in the Assemblies of God for many years, rising to become general superintendent in 2007. In a day of decline with many denominations, the Assemblies started a new congregation nearly every day in the last year. The Assemblies is now reputed to be the largest Protestant

denomination worldwide. The denomination is significant in the United States but even larger in places such as Brazil, Korea and Australia, where it is the largest Protestant denomination.

Wood praised God for some of the advances that have been made, including someone coming to Christ in an Assemblies of God church somewhere in the world every 14 seconds. Trained as a lawyer, Wood has developed a dynamic speaking style. I still remember a sermon he preached on Leah several years ago.

Wednesday night—after great praise and worship music and many prayers of dedication—Wood told a humorous story about how he was once locked out of a building in Jerusalem that had been named in his honor because the guard had been instructed to open the door to no one (not even its namesake). He said it helped him to understand the Scripture about how Jesus stands at the door and knocks and can't be allowed into his own church.

I appreciate the leadership that George Wood is giving nationally and Carl Stephens is giving on a regional basis. I was encouraged to attend the service, to see some old friends and to realize that while the church seems to be under attack at many levels that in many locations such as Faith Assembly it is alive and well and God's kingdom is moving forward.