

'Look What the Lord Has Done'

Every movement needs a voice, and since 1975 *Charisma* magazine has chronicled charismatic Christianity, covering the highs and lows of the world's largest wave of renewal since the Azusa Street Revival.

Stephen Strang, a fourth-generation Pentecostal whose grandmother was ordained in the Assemblies of God in 1914, was a reporter for the Orlando, FL, newspaper when he first got the idea to launch a magazine that would track the work of the Holy Spirit around the world. The vision took form in 1975 when Strang convinced the leaders of his church, Calvary Assembly of God, in the Orlando area, to underwrite a "magazine about Spirit-led living," which he named *Charisma*. The first issue debuted in August of that year.

Though it was at first merely "a church magazine," it reported on national trends and issues. By the early 1980s, *Charisma* had become the primary source for what was happening in the Pentecostal-charismatic community, replacing several earlier magazines that ceased publication.

Through the years *Charisma* has introduced many newcomers to a wider audience just as their ministries were beginning to become known. In 1979, the magazine profiled a popular radio Bible teacher named Marilyn Hickey and a relatively unknown Canadian evangelist named Benny Hinn. In later years, it introduced the ministries of leaders such as healing evangelists Charles and Frances Hunter and megachurch pastor T. D. Jakes. In its history, *Charisma* has published cover stories or articles on every segment of the movement and every major leader.

In 1981 Strang set out on his own. Inspired by counsel from his friend and mentor Jamie Buckingham, who wrote *Charisma's* Last Word column from 1979 to 1993, Strang formed what is now

called Strang Communications Company.

A pivotal point in the growth of the burgeoning publishing ministry was its “merger” in 1986 with *Christian Life* magazine founded by Robert Walker. In 1954, Walker, a leading evangelical, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and gradually began covering events in *Christian Life*, such as when Pat Robertson, newly out of seminary, founded a tiny ministry called the Christian Broadcasting Network in 1960 or when singer Pat Boone was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1969.

Strang has sought to continue Walker’s legacy, and Walker served as editor emeritus for *Charisma* and *Christian Life* until his death in 2008.

Today Strang Communications, based in Lake Mary, Florida, has become a major publisher of both English and Spanish Christian books under various imprint brands focused on health, politics, fiction and spiritual topics. Recently the company has had a string of best-sellers, including several on the *New York Times* best-sellers list.

Embracing the digital revolution, Strang Communications now publishes 10 e-newsletters and 3 digital editions, and offers a *Charisma* News Mobile App that provides original news articles that inform readers about the work of the Holy Spirit worldwide, and inspire and empower believers to live life in the Spirit.

At Strang Communications, publishing is a family affair. Strang’s wife, Joy, not only serves as co-owner and COO, but she also founded SpiritLed Woman magazine. The couple’s oldest son, Cameron, along with his wife, Maya, own Relevant Media Group, which serves the 20-somethings’ generation by publishing Relevant magazine.

Through the years, Charisma has tackled a wide range of issues addressing the problems of spiritual abuse during the discipleship movement of the 1970s, speaking out about

integrity during the televangelism crisis of the late 1980s, challenging abortion during the Reagan and Clinton eras, and championing racial reconciliation in the 1990s. Along the way it also has encouraged denominational unity, expressed support for Israel, and championed the persecuted church.

In 2005, *Time* magazine recognized Stephen Strang as one of the nation's 25 most influential evangelicals, noting that he "combines a sense of mission with sharp business acumen." *Charisma* even wrangled an interview with President George W. Bush in 2004 and presidential candidate John McCain.

Strang's vision to "proclaim Jesus worldwide" not only includes an international distribution program, but it has also caused the company to launch initiatives into the secular arena, such as publishing the best-seller *The Faith of George W. Bush* and John Bevere's *The Bait of Satan*.

Through its books, conferences, periodicals and special events, Strang Communications has helped inform and unify charismatic Christians around the globe. Some people think the company experienced overnight success, but Strang says the growth is the result of patience, tenacity, and faith. "It's not what I've done," Strang wrote in 2000 when *Charisma* celebrated its 25th anniversary. "It's, 'Look what the Lord has done.'"