

Why This Ministry Is Devoted to Helping Pastors Stay Pastors

Becoming a pastor is no easy thing. Remaining a pastor is even harder. For that very reason, Andrew Wommack Ministries serves those in the ministry trenches with its Association of Related Ministries International program, known as ARMI.

ARMI Liaison Rich Van Winkle is pastor of The Shepherd's House Church in Lewisville, Texas.

"You're just out there and nobody's there to help you," he said. "Dorothy and I were out in western Kansas in a small town, and we just struggled. I reached out one time to John Osteen, and he saved my ministry. That's what ARMI is about. Seasoned ministers can reach out to other ministers and help them."

Mark Machen, who is senior pastor along with his wife, Jennifer, at Life of Faith Church, an independent, full gospel church in Birmingham, Alabama, is an ARMI regional advocate (RA) over four states. He also sees the need for support.

"Many of them are tired," Machen said. "Many of them are broken. They don't have good, healthy relationships. They need people. They need somebody to pour into them."

Wommack founded ARMI to help local pastors and ministers in need, especially those who feel they have no one to call on for counsel or even anyone like-minded with whom to fellowship.

Building Lifelong Friendships

Any minister who appreciates Wommack's teaching ministry can benefit from ARMI.

“It’s not about denomination,” said Van Winkle, who started in ministry in the United Methodist denomination. “The connection is Andrew’s ministry. If you’re connected with Andrew, if you want to become an ARMI member, you can. It brings like-minded ministers together. In fact, what’s exciting is that for some of them who have been in denominational churches, this has just turned their life upside down.”

Machen has observed Wommack’s humility in his approach to this organization.

“What I really love about ARMI’s focus isn’t just that it’s just trying to create another ministers’ organization,” Machen said. “Andrew has, from the beginning, been about, ‘How can we help ministers?’ So, for me, it’s about the relationships we are building. It’s not about what Andrew Wommack Ministries necessarily can do for me. I’ve built such lifelong friendships through this organization and have pastors I can call if I need help or if I have questions or if I need prayer or if I just need to talk about what’s going on. Sometimes you can’t just talk about it with your congregation.”

RAs also exhibit that kind of humility as they seek to serve.

“I’ve spent a couple of years with a lot of the regional advocates, and when some of these guys have got 20, 30, 40 years of experience in ministry but how humble they are, it just absolutely blows me away,” said Bryan Nutman, director of ministry relations at Andrew Wommack Ministries.

It takes a humble heart, too, to reach out to a fellow pastor in friendship. Machen initiated just such a friendship through ARMI with Chris Barhorst, RA over Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania, and pastor of True Life Church in Greenville, Ohio.

“I intentionally reached out to him, just start calling every couple weeks,” Machen said. “It’s built the friendship where we get to talk the Word together. ‘Man, what’s God saying to

you? Here's what God's saying to me.' We're able to pray for other members who are in our organization, those we have relationship with, and it's just amazing the strength that comes with it."

The efforts of these two pastors have paid off in rich relational dividends.

"I'm not out here on an island alone trying to build a church or trying to pastor a church without any idea of what I'm doing," Machen said. "From that standpoint, we provide a way for people to grow spiritually, to be healthy spiritually. Ministers who've been in ministry a long time, they may get tired. You need people to come alongside you and just lift up your arms and encourage you."

Much of that encouragement comes through ARMI events called Coffees, where members gather in a central location and spend about an hour and a half to two hours together.

"Sometimes we have a lunch or guest speaker," Van Winkle said. "Each RA gets a general guideline of what we want—fellowship, prayer for one another. Somebody might have a short message, but the main thing is to build relationships and to help churches."

In this age of social media, Barhorst believes in the power of connection. He calls the Coffees "regional reunions."

"I'm just trying to get people together and to get people to connect," he said. "Sometimes it's not easy because people are busy. I like to tell people relationships take time and effort and work, but they are necessary and they are worth it."

As an RA, Machen hears one primary concern from ARMI members.

"When we do get-togethers, the No. 1 thing we hear from pastors and ministers is 'We just need someplace where we can have fellowship with each other,'" Machen said. "We're not

trying to create events where we teach them ... The No. 1 need we hear is for people they can talk to and build relationships with because they don't have that in their church. They don't have that in their community."

Van Winkle notes that ARMI also welcomes missionaries as members, and one of its RAs is a missionary.

"We're trying to connect with missionaries and with the field ministers," he said.

Van Winkle is in his early 70s and sees himself as a spiritual father.

"I've got a lot of these younger pastors I'm connected with, and that all happens through ARMI," he said. "They can call me. Some of them have gotten really, really close with me, almost like a Paul-Timothy-type relationship, so that's always been my heart, and ARMI has given me the ability to do that."

Nutman says ARMI has just under 500 members. He believes the body of Christ needs more spiritual fathers.

"First Corinthians 4:15 says there may be 10,000 teachers but not enough fathers," Nutman said. "To me, there [needs to be] a very big emphasis on spiritual leaders who get to raise spiritual kids to stand on their own shoulders for them to go higher."

Helping in Tangible Ways

As a longtime pastor, then an RA and now liaison for the entire ARMI program, Van Winkle has a heart to support other pastors. He sometimes gets down to the nitty-gritty matters of church life to assist a pastor in need.

"I'm helping one now with redoing the constitution in their church, rewriting the bylaws, so mainly my associate pastor is walking them through that," Van Winkle said. "They come down and eat with us. ARMI opens that kind of avenue even to the

point of, for instance, if they really needed me to come minister in their church or come help them, we're open to doing that."

Van Winkle stopped going to ministers conferences a long time ago, but thinks ARMI is more useful.

"One of the things about ministers is we don't trust each other," he said. "A lot of the ministers conferences you go to, it's all about how many people who are in your church. ... I quit going to those years ago until I met Andrew, then it was a whole new relationship."

Van Winkle said ARMI is not how many people are in a church. Rather, the message he wants to communicate to pastors is: "We love you. We're your brother in Christ. We want to build a connection."

As for the RAs he leads, he is building them into a team.

"We're just a bunch of guys who love Jesus and love people, and that's really how simple it is," Van Winkle said. "We do whatever we can to minister."

ARMI Coffees also are not limited to members, as the organization seeks to serve ministers in the entire region. The RAs don't even ask if the ministers who come want to join the group. Over time, some see the value and join ARMI, which costs \$360 a year per member, \$420 for a couple. Those who apply must be licensed or ordained and be active in ministry.

ARMI's ministry comes from the heart of its founder, Nutman said of Wommack.

"He wants to be able to provide not only physical resources but human resources for the basis of growing, developing and encouraging ministers and pastors to fulfill their own calling in ministry," Nutman said. "That's really what ARMI is about, us as a support to as many ministers and pastors to fulfill

their own calling in God.”

Wommack makes his *Living Commentary* software available online, provides continuing education options through the ministry’s Charis Bible College, offers webinars, publishes newsletters and gives many more benefits to ARMI members.

ARMI’s tagline is “Devoted to Your Growth.” When pastors are growing themselves, they revive their churches.

“They’re there to be able to transform themselves but also transform their church,” Nutman said. “There are also many testimonies how their church has grown, how their church has changed. All of them do what they do because their lives have been totally transformed by the message of the unconditional love and grace of God.”

Though resources are important, they’re not the be-all and end-all of ARMI’s work.

“We’re not purely just resources, resources, resources,” Nutman said. “We’re about how much we get to pour into the other ministers.”

It all goes back to the beginning of the association. Early on, Wommack couldn’t afford the products that would help him in ministry. But as his ministry grew, he knew he wanted to be able to provide resources free of charge if someone couldn’t afford them. Today, thanks to his partners, Nutman said 50% of Wommack’s material is given away free.

“Truly Andrew’s heart is to disciple others so they go out and provide the gospel to other people,” Nutman said. “As Andrew says, ‘I can only touch so many people, but if I can disciple and train other leaders to have their own ministries and to go out and minister, that’s what this is about.’”

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the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of believers around the world. If you are thirsty for more of God's presence and His Holy Spirit, subscribe to CHARISMA and join a family of believers that choose to live life in the Spirit. [CLICK HERE](#) for a special offer.