

Former Church of God Overseer Raymond Crowley Passes Away

Dr. Raymond E. Crowley, former general overseer for the Church of God, passed away at his home in Virginia last night. He was 92 and the oldest surviving former general overseer in the denomination.

Crowley's life is a testimony of God's favor on a chosen servant who was born into a rural setting and rises to serve in the highest capacity of his denomination. Born and raised in the tiny seaside town of Chincoteague, Virginia, Crowley's early experience was with the Pilgrim Holiness Church. Converted at the age of 8, Crowley began his ministry on March 12, 1937, months before his 15th birthday. As a 16-year-old teenager, he was assigned his first pastorate in Eldorado, Maryland, and before he turned 20, he had pastored three churches in three states.

After two more pastorates he returned to his roots in the Delmarva region and began a pastorate of the prestigious Salisbury, Maryland, Church of God in 1946. The next year he received his ministerial licensure, followed by ordination in 1948. He led the congregation at Salisbury for 14 years before accepting the pastorate at the Canton, Ohio, Church of God.

From 1960 to 1970, Crowley's pastoral leadership and church growth caught the eye of Church of God leaders and at the 1970 General Assembly, Crowley was appointed state overseer of Northern Ohio. He served in this capacity for the next four years until his ministerial peers elected him to the post of assistant director of evangelism and home missions. Four years later he was elevated to general director of the department.

In 1982, Crowley was elected at the general assembly, held in Kansas City, to serve as first assistant general overseer. In

1986, in the centennial year of the Church of God, Crowley was elevated to the post of General Overseer of the Church of God and served for the next four years.

Leaving the general overseer's post at the age of 68, Crowley was not ready to retire, so he was appointed to the state of Florida to serve as state overseer, a post he filled until 1994. At this point in his ministry, Brother Crowley was content to return to his home territory, but while assuming he would be in retirement, "Pastor" Crowley would assume a six-year pastorate of the Church of God in Pocomoke City, Maryland.

"Raymond Crowley was a man of the people, who never forgot his roots," stated General Overseer Mark Williams upon learning of Crowley's passing. "The fishermen along the Eastern Shore of Maryland instilled a hope and optimism, and a work ethic that characterized his life and ministry. I never tired of hearing his stories of Chincoteague or his memories of Canton, Ohio. His mind was that of an executive, but his heart was that of a pastor. He was a pastor's pastor and never lost his passion for the lost."

Phillip Morris, who served alongside Crowley as a pastor on the Eastern Shore and penned a book on the life of Crowley titled *Uncharted Waters* said, "The church was changed by his (Crowley's) call to prayer, but his greatest impact on my life was his humility."

"Experienced adviser, supporter, confidant, teacher and mentor par excellence; that's who Raymond Crowley was to me," stated Dr. Lamar Vest, current president of the Pentecostal Theological Seminary and Crowley's successor at general overseer in 1990. "I will forever be indebted to Raymond Crowley for teaching me the importance of celebrating the opportunity of service above the benefits of reward."

Tom Madden, current overseer for the Church of God in the

Delmarva-D.C. region stated, "Dr. Crowley was one of the most compassionate leaders our church has ever known. He loved God and the Church of God and would speak proudly about it. There was never a conversation we had that he didn't tell me that he was praying for me. I knew he really was because he was a man of prayer! He will be greatly missed in Delmarva-D.C." Madden went on to say that last month at the regional camp meeting a scholarship fund was established at Lee University in Crowley's honor. Crowley served on the Lee University Board of Directors from 1994 to 2008.

Raymond Crowley was married to Frances through most of his ministry, including his tenure as general overseer. While serving as state overseer of Florida, Frances passed away. In 1994 he wedded Mary, who has been at his side for the past 21 years.

"For Raymond Crowley," Williams concluded, "there was no greater place (than) God's will; no greater purpose than winning people to Jesus; no greater peace than decreasing that He might increase."

Funeral arrangements are pending and will be released as soon as received.