

Former White Supremacist Encounters God at COGIC Church

After a particularly divisive presidential election year, many Americans are keenly aware of barriers of understanding and communication that remain among races. But in one small, Columbia, Tenn., church, racial reconciliation is becoming the norm—even against all odds.

After a three-day revival, Elder Christopher J. Taylor, pastor of New Life Church of God in Christ (COGIC) was feeling good about the move of the Lord, yet nonetheless physically tired. He knew he had to press forward, as the church was hosting a Community Giveaway where hot soup and stew would be served, and clothes, shoes and houseware items would be distributed—all free of charge.

“We are not a wealthy church,” Pastor Taylor admits. “However, my wife and I agreed to go ahead with this outreach activity, because of the needs in our community.”

“Little becomes much in the hands of the Lord,” adds Shelley Taylor.

When Pastor Taylor pulled up to the church, there were people already waiting for the doors to open for the giveaway. Between 40 and 50 guests came to shop through the men’s, women’s and children’s clothing. Treat bags were distributed to the children, and hot food served. Pastor Taylor had a chance to dialogue with several families.

On Sunday morning, Pastor Taylor opened up the front door of the church to Clay, his fiancée, Wanda, and three children for Sunday School. To some, it would seem strange to see the African-American pastor welcoming in the white family. But for

Pastor Taylor, it reflected what he and his wife have been witnessing at the church since he was installed as pastor in June. The church regularly welcomes whites, blacks and several mixed-race families at each service. What was once an all-black congregation is being quickly transformed to a community of racially diverse believers.

Before Sunday school, Clay made a confession to Taylor that would forever change both of their lives. It was not until altar call that Clay shared his testimony with the entire church. Clay was a leader in the Aryan Brotherhood White Supremacist Group. He acknowledges, "I have spent the last 5 years making folks' lives a living hell." But just the day before, after New Life's three-day revival, Clay and his family came to the church for their community outreach.

Clay says he felt something when he shook hands with the pastor and talked with him. He knew it was God. Clay spent the entire night wrestling with himself and the Lord and discussing what he felt about the ministry. He knew the Lord was calling him to be saved and to join the ministry. He later told Taylor that God said he and New Life would, "take the city."

His fiancée also went to the altar for prayer. With the laying on of hands, she felt the power of God and was convicted of her sins. She accepted Jesus Christ and joined the church. Clay is "on fire for the Lord," and believes the Lord is calling him to one day minister to youth about the danger of gangs.