

Success(ion) in Leadership

It's not often that one spouse inherits a big ministry from the other spouse. But when it has happened, history shows it's been a good idea.

The transition of a major ministry from husband to wife is a rare occurrence in the history of U.S. Pentecostalism. In fact, in modern history only two cases stand out from the 20th century.

In 1907, Marie Burgess started a local mission in New York City. Two years later she married Robert Brown, and together they grew the mission into what became Glad Tidings Tabernacle, a leading congregation in the Assemblies of God. When Brown died in 1948, Burgess became the sole pastor and remained in the position for 23 years until her death in 1971 at age 91.

In 1973, Gordon Lindsay, co-founder with his wife, Freda, of Dallas-based Christ for the Nations Institute (CFNI) died. Freda Lindsay immediately had to take over the day-to-day operations. She was opposed at first, for being a woman, but the 10-man board of directors unanimously elected her as the new president of the ministry. She greatly expanded the ministry's outreach until her retirement at age 94.

The leadership shift at Victory Christian Center from the late senior pastor Billy Joe Daugherty to his wife, Sharon Daugherty, as the ministry's new pastor and corporate president is the first instance of major succession in the 21st century. Pentecostal ministry leader Roberts Liardon believes it eventually will prove to be historic and the best thing for the church's impact. "What we are witnessing at [Victory] is like that of Christ for the Nations," he says. "I believe that Sharon Daugherty and the Victory Christian Center family will bear more fruit for the kingdom than anyone could

imagine.”

Charismatic historian Eddie L. Hyatt says that although such transitions are rare, they usually are successful.

“Historically, wives have done very well in filling the shoes of their husbands because the people already know and respect them and identify them with their deceased spouse,” he says.

“I think of how Freda filled Gordon’s shoes when he died and CFNI exploded in growth. She is one of the most prominent Christian leaders in the last 100 years, just because of the influence Christ for the Nations has had in missions.”