



Becoming a Kingdom Network

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

In our Annual State Ministries meeting this past Thursday I shared how we are doing within Florida Church of God Ministries. It is a lot of fun to lead a movement of churches that has grown at a rate of 24% these past five years! We saw many examples of the way churches are growing from one corner of the state to the other in a video report (this video will be up in a week on our website). I want to thank all of you as you are truly focused on transforming your communities for Christ through reaching lost people and building disciples into full obedience of Christ.

I also shared how, after ten years of attempting to build healthy churches that are transformative, we have reached the tipping point. This growth must continue to happen! After a decade as State Pastor it is time to practice what I preach about lifecycles. I teach that somewhere between ten and fifteen years into a lifecycle it is time to work on the next lifecycle and an accompanying vision.

I showed a graph that indicates that our number of churches is beginning to plateau after a 90-year history of growth. Though we are growing in health and community transformation, we are beginning to plateau in this area. We must be about creating **more** healthy growing churches. In spite of being one of the most rapidly growing districts of the Church of God within the United States, we cannot rest on our laurels. There are 18.5 million reasons in Florida and 7.1 billion reasons in the world that indicate why we cannot rest.

As we look at Jesus, he was about the Kingdom of God. As he starts his earthly ministry in Luke 4:43 we read...*he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."* Then as he closes his earthly ministry in Acts 1:3 we read, *"After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."* And over 70 times in the Gospels he mentions the Kingdom.

The scriptures are clear that the church exists to bring the Kingdom here to earth. In other words, the Church of God is only being the Church of God as it is expanding the Kingdom of God. The church is God's instrument for doing Kingdom work. The good news for us is that this is how our movement has always understood the Kingdom of God. There is a sense of "already" and "not yet". The Kingdom is here, but there is so much to come.

Our new lifecycle is to become a Kingdom Network. We need to be about expanding the Kingdom of God through being a network of churches that are planting churches, turning around churches, and creating new relationships with other networks of churches. This will allow us to see more people come to Christ and see those who know Christ come into more obedience to him. Notice, I don't say that the Florida Church of God Ministries will do this, but as a Kingdom Network, our churches will be about this and FLCOGM will expedite the process through coaching, funding, and opening doors to create synergistic relationships.

As I talked about Thursday, it is already happening around Florida, we just need to figure out how to do more of it and how to do it better. I am not sure exactly what this will fully look like, but I know that is where God is calling us.