SHAPE Jamaica

The first SHAPE training outside of the United States and Canada took place November 6–8 in Kingston, Jamaica, as nine pastors from across the country gathered for three days of intensive training as SHAPE cluster leaders. Gathering at the United Church Conference and Retreat Center in Meadowbrook, the group spent long days in relationship building, being introduced to the core values of SHAPE, and experiencing the SHAPE journey.

The interest in SHAPE for Jamaica was initiated by Lenworth Anglin, former executive director of the Church of God in Jamaica. The process is now under the leadership of the new executive director, Adinhair Jones, of Kingston, and the national SHAPE coordinator, Milton Davidson, of Montego Bay.

The original plan called for the establishment of one cluster of pastors in the Kingston area, Region 5 of the Church of God in Jamaica. After the three days of training, enthusiasm was running so high that the final decision was to launch five clusters in four regions of the country. Plans for promotion and recruitment were established and the dates of March 5–6, 2015, set for the cohort 1 orientation retreat.

Participants in this leader training retreat were Milton Davidson (Montego Bay), Lloyd Francis (Savanna-La-Mar), Joseph Gordon (Kingston), Dave Gosse (Kingston), Wilmer Jackson (Kingston), Adinhair Jones (Kingston), Michael Lewis (May Pen), Winston George Lewis (Kingston), Christene Simpson (Charles Town), and Gareth Wright (National Evangelism and Ministers’ Conference).

Following the conference, Paul was privileged to preach at the Olson Memorial Church of God in Kingston and meet with congregational leaders to discuss congregational life and ministry. On Monday he was asked to speak to over five hundred students (continued on page 2)

Here and There: SHAPE Happenings Across North America

Pastors from across Michigan gathered at Fa-Ho-Lo Retreat Center in Grass Lake, Michigan, October 13–15, for the fourth cohort orientation retreat. Cluster leaders for this cohort are Mike Harmon, John Mc Climans, and Nathan Workman. Participants include Gary Bryan, Rayvon Bufkin, Doug Irving, David Rails, Chris Slosser, Henry Swart, and Steve Gulick. Bill Jones serves Michigan as regional pastor and SHAPE director.
(continued from cover) for the opening chapel at Ardenne High School. The Ardenne schools, established in 1927 by missionaries George and Nellie Olson, serve over 2,500 students in three programs in Kingston.

Please pray for the work of the Church of God in Jamaica and the launch of SHAPE.

Unless otherwise noted, SHAPE articles are written by Paul Dreger. He has served the Church of God for thirty-nine years as pastor, area administrator in Tennessee, and currently national director of SHAPE (Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence).
Thinking About Thoughts

12:30 a.m. I was awakened abruptly by these words:

♪♫ You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille, with four hungry children and a crop in the field… ♪♫

I rolled over, my mind racing:

♪♫ I've had some bad times, lived through some sad times, but this time the hurting won't heal. You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille. ♪♫

I had not thought of that old Kenny Rogers song in years, and yet, there it was at 12:30 a.m., waking me from a sound, restful sleep. “Where did that come from?” I thought to myself as I stumbled to the bathroom. The song stuck with me the rest of the day.

And then just a few nights later, 2:00 a.m., it happened again. Only this time is was:

♪♫ Casey would waltz with a strawberry blonde, and the band played on… ♪♫

Any other lyrics to the song were absent, but the melody carried on to the end of the song. Now that song was written in 1895 and was popular in the early 1900s. The only reason I know it at all is because it was in The Golden Record Library collection that my parents bought when I was a little kid. I don’t think I have thought about that song since then and I was perplexed how it had ever popped up again in my memory.

I don’t know about you, but I don’t have much control over the random thoughts and dreams that invade my sleep from time to time. They come and they go of their own accord (some not as quickly as I would wish), leaving me amazed, bewildered, amused, and occasionally annoyed. Most of them have been long forgotten—those random, uninvited night time guests to my slumber and repose.

But I do have control over my waking thoughts. Although I cannot always determine what invades my thoughts, I can give permission to how long they stay and how much they influence me. It is easy to be consumed by negativity, to be haunted by false assumptions, disturbing news, and unwarranted fears. I choose how and when to respond to life. And when I choose from a divine perspective, I live with the peace and joy the Lord has promised.

Although I cannot always determine what invades my thoughts, I can give permission to how long they stay and how much they influence me… I choose how and when to respond to life. And when I choose from a divine perspective, I live with the peace and joy the Lord has promised.

• Follow the sure word of Scripture: Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies (Phil 4:8–9 msg). To think that way will not be easy. We are drawn from within and without to fall into negative thought patterns. Fight those negative patterns. Work at it! Do it!

• Refuse to give in to self-debasing thoughts. None of us is perfect, and we should not carry the burden of thinking we are—or should be. Stop negative self-talk every time. It is not fair; it is not true.

• Learn that failure is not your enemy. Sometimes we do fail. Sometimes life is negative. But that is true for everyone. Learn from your mistakes and failures. They do not define who you are; they are stepping stones to growth, development, and maturity.

• Validate assumptions or don’t make them at all. It is not always about you. It is not always negative. And even if it is, it is probably their problem. Don’t make it yours.

• Learn to love yourself as God loves you. You are fearfully and
wonderfully made. No matter what life has handed you, God can heal, deliver, and cleanse. Learn to love yourself. Until you learn to love yourself the way God loves you, it will be difficult for you to love the world the way God loves it.

- Strive to live life with excellence. Do your best, not anyone else’s, and be at peace with that.

- Learn to laugh. Start each day with a smile and laughter. It is amazing how that simple formula can change your attitude for the entire day and prepare you to face with a positive attitude whatever comes.

- Surround yourself with positive people whenever possible. Sometimes we struggle with our thoughts simply because we are hanging out with negative people. Choose your friends wisely.

If you find yourself stymied by any of these suggestions, find someone to help talk you through why that is so. In fact, find positive, godly people to share life with regularly.

There some thoughts I cannot choose—like “Lucille” at 12:30 a.m. But what I can choose, I strive to choose in a way that honors God and helps me live in the peace and joy God has offered. Don’t settle for less.

(continued from page 3)