



## The Final Issue

As all of you are aware, the ongoing transformation of Church of Ministries and our services to the Church of God has resulted in numerous changes in how we relate to, communicate with, and serve you. A significant step now being taken will be the streamlining of our communication strategy. Beginning in the near future, communication from the various ministries of “Base Camp” will be combined into one monthly newsletter that will highlight the work of the church nationally and globally. With this streamlining of our communication process, the SHAPE newsletter will no longer be circulated as it has in recent years. A big THANK YOU to all who have faithfully been part of the readership of the SHAPE newsletter.

Included in this issue are excerpts from an article that appeared in the first issue, titled “The SHAPE Journey—A

Maturing Ministry.” It is a reminder that in some ways the opportunities and challenges before us have not changed *that* significantly, and that it is each of our responsibility to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” to journey together into the fullness of Christ.

May the peace and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ dwell richly in your hearts as you seek to fulfill the kingdom mission in the spirit of divine love.



*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).*

## Dealing Effectively with Stress

In the previous issue we identified some of the most common causes of the stress that can lead to distress, and negatively impact our health and ministry effectiveness. Let us now consider some ways that we can meaningfully and effectively deal with stress, and assure that it does not grow into an unhealthy *distress*. What practical steps can we take to reduce the amount of distress in life?

- **Spend Time with God Regularly.** Prayer, meditation, Bible and devotional reading, the observance of Sabbath, and time to enjoy the beauty of creation all help keep life properly focused. A growing faith leads to deeper experiences of peace and joy.
- **Love Well.** Self-absorption is unhealthy for a variety of reasons. Get *(continued on page 2)*

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over yourself and learn to see and love your world in the inspiration and power of the Spirit of God. Practice a genuine concern for others.

- **Grow Up Spiritually.** Abolish the “works of the flesh” from your life; cultivate the “fruit of the Spirit.”
- **Develop Emotional Maturity.** The abundant life (Jn 10:10; Eph 4:13) is both a spiritual and emotional experience. Find emotional wholeness.
- **Manage Your Schedule Wisely.** Learn to balance work, rest, and exercise. Don’t make excuses for not doing so.
- **Eat Properly.** A well-balanced diet contributes to greater health and aids in combatting distress. Change bad eating habits without exception.
- **Get an Adequate Amount of Sleep.** Fatigue diminishes our ability to deal with life in a healthy way. Cut out routines that hinder adequate sleep.
- **Keep Your Mind Active—Keep Learning.** Lifelong learners are healthier, happier people.

- **Practice Good Stewardship in Financial Matters.** The misuse of money and possessions can easily lead to distress. Wisdom in material matters reduces stress. If necessary, contact a financial planner/counselor to help you get your finances in order.

Some stress we bring upon ourselves. Other stress comes from sources outside our control. Healthy stress can easily give way to unhealthy distress at any given moment. These disciplines can help us maintain a healthy, God-honoring lifestyle.

## The SHAPE Journey: a Good Journey

Excerpts from SHAPE Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 1

### Expanding Our Thinking

It is possible to utilize the ministry of SHAPE/SHARE to draw pastors and leaders into new practices of holiness and unity—the combination of theology and practice that, taken holistically, help define our distinctiveness as a church group—that is critical to the transformation of the Church of God movement. *There must be intentional, courageous steps taken in order to call pastors to a new level of relationship, accountability and responsibility to the Lord and to the body of Christ we are called to lead into the fullness of Christ* (Eph 4:13). **Movements are empowered and propelled forward, not by institutions, but by relationships and shared passions.** Significant conversation and a renewed commitment to prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit must occur to establish a credible plan for the strengthening of leadership within the Church of God.

### The Big Picture—the “Bigger” Picture

We have yet to emphasize how the commitment to trust and confidentiality can transfer from the cluster to the broader SHAPE community and to the Church of God. If we experience a caring, trusting relationship within the cluster, what can we do to expand that kind of trustworthiness and care beyond the cluster to other pastors involved in the SHAPE journey? We must also consider how covenantal relationships can help lead to transformation throughout the Church of God. One of the most effective ways to accomplish that is to model such behavior in all of our relationships. While trust-building, confidentiality, helping build one another up in Christ, and journeying together into the fullness of Christ are multi-faceted relational experiences, we are each individually responsible for what we bring to our relationships. Modeling

trusting behavior can greatly enhance our corporate ability to move into a higher more God-honoring realm of relationships.

The key to long-term impact rests in the regional director/coordinator’s commitment in establishing leader connectivity and growth as a major component of strategy for state/regional ministry. While numerous initiatives regarding congregational health and growth are being embraced in parts of North America, SHAPE/SHARE continues as a viable option for long-term development due to its inclusion of spiritual growth and development and relational connectivity as part of its vision and also because of its relatively low financial burden on already stretched budgets. The more regional leadership can move toward a relational paradigm in all structuring and programming, the more effectively we can build a strong foundation for the implementation of

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effective ministry tools for optimum kingdom service.

Annual regional rallies could enhance the ability to widen the impact of the SHAPE experience to the broader SHAPE community (beyond one's cluster) and contribute to our ability to transition from one cluster/region/state to another and maintain

a SHAPE relationship. The more we can extend the SHAPE experience to settings beyond the cluster, the more we can influence the church beyond seeing SHAPE as a program and instill "ministry in community" as the way we do ministry in the Church of God.

### A Road Well-Traveled

We have travelled far; we have travelled well. But in many ways the journey is still young and there is much to

experience and learn. This journey is much larger than the ministry of SHAPE. As we journey onward, let us think more and more from a kingdom perspective rather than from a SHAPE perspective. If SHAPE was truly a gift from God, then I am certain God's vision of the future of this ministry is much larger than anything we have asked or imagined!

## TOGETHER!

In 2014, when LeBron James returned to the Cleveland Cavaliers, Nike produced a commercial that portrayed the entire city of Cleveland coming together to support the team in their pursuit of an NBA championship. It was a moving scene as people of every age, race, economic, and social sphere came together to stand as one in that pursuit. And the team's role?

"Let's go. Bring it on in everybody, let's go. Every single night, every single practice, every single game, we gotta give it all we've got...everything we do on this floor is for this city; we owe them...We gonna grind for this city. They gonna support us, but we gotta give it all back to them...the toughness we have on the court, it's gonna come from this city...the whole city of Cleveland: It's time to bring them something special..."

"Hard work on three, together on six. Let's go. One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five six: TOGETHER! One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five, six: TOGETHER! One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five, six: TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER!

TOGETHER! From images from all across the city: TOGETHER! And then the phrase we have all come to recognize: *Just do it!*

I am moved every time I see that clip, not because of Cleveland and LeBron, but because that is my hope for the church. Surrendering our wants and desires and ideas and fears and hurts and wills to the sovereign God of eternity who created us in divine image to fulfill the work of creation through our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and in the power of the Spirit, we will understand ourselves differently, serve more faithfully and effectively, and most importantly, a skeptical, unbelieving world will see more powerfully the reality and glory and love and grace of Jesus.

God is up to something new. It is time for all Christ-followers to step up. Surrender. Obey. Love.

"Let's go. Bring it on in everybody, let's go. Every single day, every single hour, every single minute, let's give it all we've got...everything we do in life—alone or together—is for the Lord; we owe God everything... We are going all out for Jesus. He has given

us everything we need, and we are going to give it all back to him...the toughness and perseverance we have will come from him; he has given us the kingdom. It's time to bring him something special..."

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"Here we go, come on! Hard work on three, together on six. Let's go. One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five six: TOGETHER! One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five, six: TOGETHER! One, two, three: HARD WORK! Four, five, six: TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER! TOGETHER! From every race and ethnicity and tribe and gender and economic and social sphere: TOGETHER!

***Let's do it!***

## Here and There: SHAPE Happenings

Pastors from the Eastern States gathered in Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania, October 12–14 for their annual retreat. Paul served as resource leader as this group sought to come together and make a commitment to sustained fellowship and growth together as kingdom servants. One new cluster of pastors has already met since then with other groups now being formed.

Plans continue for SHAPE expansion to the island of Barbados early next year. Please pray that funding of this project can be worked out soon.

As budgeting for the new year is underway, please let Paul know of your SHAPE/SHARE plans for 2016.

The third cohort orientation retreat was held at Whitehall Camp in Western Pennsylvania December 3–5. SHAPE continues to impact the pastors and ministry of the Church of God in that region. Cluster leaders who have been in training in recent months are: Curtis Clark, Doug Crump, Bill Hunley, and Lee Rupert. Much thanks to the vision and leadership of regional pastor Rebecca New-Edson and regional coordinator John Milliron.



*2015 Eastern States Ministers' Retreat*