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The ministry of IFCA International members and churches in church planting is unique, for there is no central agency of control, nor one prescribed formula of "How To..." But rather...

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● **Youth Ministry in IFCA International**

As we look to the future for youth in our IFCA International churches we see the Youth Convention as a key opportunity to bring our young people together annually for fellowship, spiritual decision-making and growth, and the encouragement in Christian living that is a natural outcome of exposure to other teens and groups from our Bible churches all across the country...

Rev. Van Marsceau

Working Together

Rev. Les Lofquist

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, the Apostle Paul wrote that "we are God's fellow workers." The word he used was *synergoi* which actually combines two words: "together" and "work." Today we derive our word "synergy" from the same Greek word, by which we mean combining individual activity into a cooperative greater effect.

That was exactly what Paul was urging the Corinthian believers to do: combine their individual activity into a cooperative greater effect for God's glory, in God's strength. Yet we today frequently misunderstand this verse. Many people think it means: "I am God's fellow worker here, you are God's fellow worker there, and we have no connection to each other's ministry. We are independent and isolated from each other while each of us works with God independently."

As I've observed many IFCA International members around the country, I realize many serve as if they were an island. They serve in isolation, even from their IFCA brothers and sisters. They renew their membership every year and pay their annual dues, but that is all. They do not attend Regional meetings, even when their schedule allows. They do not communicate with their Regional or National officers. They do not get involved in any IFCA International activities. It seems they misunderstand the truth of 1 Corinthians 3:9 and that we are God's synergized workers.

God would have us in IFCA International work together synergistically, cooperating for greater effect in the work of the Lord. It's the command from God and it's something we must do as IFCA International churches.

How can we work together? What can we accomplish? How does IFCA International actually function? These questions and more are answered in this issue of Voice with the hope that you will better understand IFCA International's work. And when you do, it is also our hope that you will become synergized with other IFCA International churches and members. Because together we can accomplish more, for God's glory and in His strength.

Rev. Les Lofquist is Executive Director of IFCA International

A Time to Stand

A Brief History of IFCA International

Dr. Wright Van Plew

Having done everything to stand firm, stand firm therefore
Ephesians 6:13-14

A Time To Stand Firm IN HISTORY

The philosophy known as Rationalism swept across Europe leading to the 19th Century theological expressions of Modernism and Higher Criticism. These anti-supernatural concepts crossed the Atlantic by European trained Americans. Bible believing Christians saw the storm clouds gathering.

As 1900 approached, national/interdenominational Bible Conferences were loosely organized. They provided an ongoing platform for preachers to respond to the unbiblical teaching that was spreading among denominational leaders, seminary professors, and pastors. Then from 1910-1915, a twelve-volume doctrinal response to Modernism sequentially came off the presses. Entitled *The Fundamentals*, these twelve paperbacks ultimately contained ninety articles written by sixty-four authors from every denomination. Financed by the wealthy president of Union Oil Company, *The Fundamentals* were distributed free of charge to over 300,000 Protestant ministers, teachers, missionaries, theological professors, and Christian workers.

There were several results. First, orthodox theology was presented and defended. Second, apostasy was exposed. Third, Bible-believing Christians were galvanized into a more cohesive force. And fourth, those who opposed "Modernists Christians" were given a new name as Bible-believers : "Fundamentalists."

The "Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy" by the 1920s caused many congregations to withdraw from their parent denominations. Departure from their historic doctrines by the leadership and involvement in movements contrary to faith gave the churches reason to "come out from among them and be separate," (2 Cor. 6:17). They did this at great cost, losing many benefits of association and often valuable properties such as church buildings, parsonages, and pensions. But they were "set for the defense of the Gospel," and committed to an uncompromising stand for the truth of God's word. New churches were formed with these principles.

The Scriptural need for inter-church fellowship, counsel and cooperation was recognized at the start by these new churches. The American Conference of Undenominational Churches was formed for this purpose in 1923. During its 1930 Annual Convention at the Cicero (IL) Bible Church, the name was changed to The Independent Fundamental Churches of America in a motion offered by Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, president of Wheaton College. By this time a new Constitution and a more comprehensive doctrinal statement had been prepared and were adopted unanimously. The former magazine, *The Pioneer of a New Era* was renamed *VOICE - An Independent Church Journal*.

A Time To Stand Firm ON FOUNDATIONS

"Has the time come for Fundamentalists to promptly and literally obey the emphatic commandment given to believers in II Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11 and II John 9-11?" This question was asked in the *Moody Monthly* for February, 1930. The inception of the IFCA four months later was an affirmative answer and by 1940, there were 665 members of IFCA and by 1950, there were 1,067 members. (This question in *Moody Monthly* also led BIOLA University historian, Dr. J. O. Henry to title his 1983 History of the IFCA, *For Such a Time as This.*)

The new name, IFCA International, adopted in 1996, reflects the world-wide missionary vision and the increasing number of individual members serving in foreign lands. But it also contains the historical significance of the original name. "F" (Fundamental) indicates that the movement stands firmly upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). "I" (Independent) and "C" (Churches) speak of the nature of the fellowship not being a "church" as a denomination, but comprising individual bodies of believers controlled by the Head of the church through the Holy Spirit. The Articles of Faith and Doctrine are essentially the same as at the beginning. The only changes are to strengthen or clarify them. They include the cardinal beliefs of the historic biblical Christian faith and those Scriptural principles necessary to jointly participate in the Lord's work. It is outstanding among such statements of various Christian organizations, providing a sure foundation for this fellowship of biblical churches and ministries.

A Time To Stand Firm BY OCCUPATION

Jesus said, "Occupy [do business (NKJV)] till I come." (Luke 19:13). The primary occupation of the independent local church is to proclaim the Gospel and to foster Scriptural Christian living. But this applies to world-wide outreach as well to the home field.

The early churches set the example by being interdependent as well as independent. They circulated the Scriptures and extended assistance to one another in times of need. IFCA International provides for such activity. There are many national benefits of interdependence as seen throughout the pages of this issue of the Voice.

But if IFCA International was to continue its growth, it had to do more than recruit new members from apostate denominations. It had to begin new churches by church extension. The development of a church extension program without centrally controlling local churches was discussed for many years in National and Regional circles.

By 1956 the policy was adopted for Church Extension missions to be organized independently to serve Regional areas and become members of the movement as do churches. This brings the church planting effort near to its supporters with better oversight and assistance for developing congregations. In the past eleven years, 17 such missions have completed over 100 new churches plus an average of 40 per year in the process of organization. In the same period, over 5000 professions of faith were recorded. Greater missionary support of these ministries is needed. It is the primary means of growth in the movement.

A Time to Stand Firm WITH VISION

"Our Vision for the 21st Century" was adopted at the 1995 Annual Convention in Colorado Springs, Co. In it, this movement is committed to a mission and vision for this new century as well as excellence in the pursuit of 17 specific goals "dedicated to the ongoing cultivation of a balanced, growing fellowship."

But we today must not forget the men of vision in the first seven decades of IFCA International. They founded the IFCA and set it on its course to face their challenges of the 20th Century. Some of the great men who are part of IFCA International's history include:

Dr. J. Oliver Buswell (president of Wheaton College)

Dr. M.R. DeHaan (founder of Radio Bible Class and *Our Daily Bread* devotional)

Dr. William McCarrell (pastor of Cicero Bible Church, teacher at Moody Bible Institute)

Dr. William Pettingill (consulting editor of the Scofield Study Bible, 1909 edition)

Dr. Judson Rudd (president of Bryan College)

Rev. Peter Deyneka, Sr. (founder of Slavic Gospel Association)

Dr. Charles Feinberg (Dean, Talbot Theological Seminary)

Dr. Lance Latham (Founder of AWANA)

Dr. Louis Talbot (president of Biola)

Dr. Charles Pfeiffer (professor at Moody Bible Institute)

Dr. John Walvoord (president of Dallas Theological Seminary)

Dr. Samuel Southerland (President of Biola University and Talbot Seminary)

Dr. J. Vernon McGee (pastor of The Church of the Open Door, Los Angeles)

Dr. Merrill Unger (professor at Dallas Theological Seminary)

Dr. Charles Ryrie (professor at Dallas Theological Seminary)

Dr. Robert Gray (Pastor of Westchester Bible Church, Westchester, IL)

Dr. Leslie Madison (President of Calvary Bible College)

Dr. Al Platt (president emeritus of CAM International)

Dr. John MacArthur (pastor of Grace Community Church and president of The Masters College and Seminary)

There are literally hundreds and hundreds of other godly men of vision who helped IFCA International reach the 21st Century with a renewed God-given purpose.

Brothers and Sisters of the churches, let us each do our part, facing the future and standing firm in this vital ministry, until our Lord returns!

Dr. Wright Van Plew served in IFCA International as a local church pastor from 1940-1959. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, studied at Wheaton College and received a D.D. from San Diego Bible College. He was involved in establishing the Independent Bible Mission in Michigan and the Bible Church Mission in Southern California. He served as Director of both these agencies. He served 10 years as National Church Extension Representative and is presently Emeritus. He served two terms on the IFCA International Executive Committee and is presently a member of the Benevolence Committee.

A Minister's Mockery of the Faith of our Fathers

Reprinted from the *Voice*, January 1932, p. 16

One who styles himself a regularly ordained minister in an Evangelical Church mailed in the following annotated copy of the doctrinal statement of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America. Note his comments after various paragraphs and at the close.

The Trinity

The triune God, Father-- Gen. 1:1, Son-- John 10:30, and the Holy Spirit-- John 4:24.
"The Holy Spirit could not possibly be other than the Spirit of Jesus."

Verbal Inspiration

The verbal inspiration and plenary authority of both Old and New Testaments 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
"Has no standing is even moderately intelligent circles."

Total Depravity

The depravity and lost condition of all men by nature. Rom. 3:19.
"Nonsense."

Personality of Satan

The personality of Satan. Job 1:6-7.
"Poor stab at explaining problem of evil."

Virgin Birth

The virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ. Luke 1:35
"Sorry myth."

Blood Atonement

The shed blood Jesus Christ, the only atonement for sins. Romans 3:25.
"Butcher house theology."

Resurrection

The bodily resurrection and Lordship of Jesus, and the resurrection of the saved to life and the lost to damnation. Acts 2:32-36; 1 Timothy 2:5.
"What good would a bodily resurrection be in a spirit world."

Justification by Faith

Men are justified on the single ground of faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Acts 13:38-39.
"This is not Christian but Pauline."

Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a Person who convicts the world of sin, and regenerates, indwells, enlightens and empowers the saved. John 16:8; 1 Corinthians 3:16.

Eternal Security

The eternal security of all the saved. John 10:28-29.
"Fatalism."

The Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers are sufficient for the perfecting of the church today, the apostolic sign age of miracles having ceased with the apostles chosen by Christ in person.

The Church

The saved in this dispensation are members of the body of Christ, the Church. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.
"Jesus never intended to break with Judaism."

Separation from the World

All the saved are called into a life of separation from all worldly and sinful practices. James 4:4; Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Two Natures

That those born again possess two natures and that they may be victorious over the old through the power of the new but that eradication of the old is unscriptural.

"Mere Words."

Missions

The obligation of the saved to witness by life and word to these truths and to proclaim the Gospel to all the world. Acts 1:8

Hell

The eternal, conscious punishment of all unsaved men. Matthew 25:46; Revelation 22:11
"Unreasonable and atrocious for a loving God."

Second Coming of Christ

The personal, premillennial, and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

"The most naive of them all. What possible good would a second coming achieve? The promulgation of this idea is effective for keeping the Volivaites and those of like mind in line, but is costing the church at a fearful rate among thinking people."

"The above statements are the answers to your absurd proposition from one who is a regularly ordained minister in an evangelical church. I profoundly believe that your sorry doctrines have no more to do with the teachings of Jesus and the emphases which He magnified than do some of the pagan religions. The world has gone to the "devil" because of such indifference as yours and your cult to the practical teachings of Jesus, the incomparable sin of war, hate, selfishness and the like."

"Happily there is but little worry about in reference to these dying gasps of fundamentalism. Every reputable church in America has repudiated it, leaving the Holy Rollers, Southern Baptists and Moody Institute, not overlooking the Zion City fomenters, in charge. Such idiotic reasoning satisfies certain minds but is anathema to thinking people."

"Cicero, IL., is the proper place for your ideas to emanate, this hell hole of Capone's and characters whom your anti-Christian dogmas have produced. Memphis is the next most "Fundamentalist" town in the country and incidentally has the highest murder rate in the world, not even barring Chicago and Cicero, or is it incidental after all? I do not think it is, rather it is cause and effect."

TRUE FELLOWSHIP IS WORKING TOGETHER

Rev. Robert King

The word *ekklesia*, translated church, appears 114 times in the New Testament. Five of those uses have nothing to do with the New Testament church. The remaining 109 occurrences are used in two different and yet similar or related ways. Most predominantly the word church refers to a local assembly or a limited collection of local assemblies. Paul used the word in its singular form with reference to the church of the Thessalonians (I Thess. 1:1) and of unspecified but individual local assemblies (I Cor. 4:17). In the plural form he used the word of groups of local assemblies in specified areas ("churches of Asia," I Cor. 16:19; "churches of Judea," Gal. 1:22), of an undetermined number of churches ("other churches," II Cor. 11:8), and of all local assemblies collectively ("all the churches," I Cor. 7:17). But, in addition to such uses the same word is also applied to the whole body of Christ, sometimes spoken of as the universal church, without regard to any local assembly or assemblies. The word is so used in Ephesians 1:22&23: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." The church, therefore, is made up of individual believers in Jesus Christ regardless of what local assembly they may or may not be a part of and regardless of whether they are actually assembled or not. In fact, even when the Jerusalem assembly was scattered by persecution they were still referred to as the church (Acts 8:1-3).

Those who constitute this church, the body of Christ -- namely all who believe in Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost to the rapture, have a mutual responsibility one to another. Every believer is endowed with spiritual gifts, God-given abilities for ministry and service, and those gifts are intended for the benefit of the entire body of Christ ("the common good," I Cor. 12:7). While the Corinthian epistle is addressed to a local assembly, even in the immediate context it is made clear that the local assembly is a part of the greater body of Jesus Christ or the universal church. That includes not only local assemblies but individual believers in Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:12&13). While all believers are or should be part of some local manifestation of the body of Christ (a local church), it should be kept in mind that there is but one body of Christ. It is God's desire and intent "that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (I Cor. 12:25).

These truths have very direct application to every believer in Jesus Christ and every biblical local assembly, including those that make up IFCA International. The visions of local assemblies and those individual believers constituting those assemblies must extend beyond their local boundaries. And to the degree possible, they should extend even to the greater body of Jesus Christ. It isn't enough to develop and maintain effective, efficient, and even thoroughly biblical local ministries. Such ministries must be so structured and exercised that they demonstrate the unity of the greater body of Jesus Christ and substantially contribute to its growth and well being. The scope of biblical ministry is such that no one entity, whether individual believer or local assembly, can fulfill its demands alone. The various parts of a body are not intended to function solo but to work together in concert with one another. Ministry is a team effort, and all believers and all biblical local assemblies are members of the same team. The church is one body in Christ.

In recent years even the corporate world is being awakened to the advantages of team effort. In *Growing Leaders by Design*, Harold L. Longenecker observes, "Economic pressures have forced business to focus on team building and value sharing as never before. Teamwork, not adversarial relationships, increases production." However, in the field of ministry the concept of team work is more than just a pragmatic key to greater productivity. It is a biblical model and requirement.

To achieve that end, an avenue or channel is needed through which individual Christians and local assemblies can effectively reach out in ministry to one another, and by which they can cooperate in ministry together. As seen in its mission statement, the fulfillment of that need is the very justifications for both the existence of IFCA International and the membership of its constituency. "Our mission is to

provide an arena for independent churches and organizations to participate interdependently in the common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups for the glory of God." The Regional structure of IFCA International is intended to facilitate the accomplishment of that mission. There are currently 32 active Regionals in the United States. Within the various Regionals believers and churches can and should minister to and with one another in a team effort reflective of the unity of the body of Christ. Through Inter-Regional cooperation those team efforts can be combined giving individual believers and local assemblies the potential of impacting the entire body of Christ. If those kinds of opportunities do not presently exist in your Regional setting, you could become the catalyst to make it happen. Approach your pastor and Regional leaders and ask how you and they might work together to expand, multiply, and magnify your personal ministry and that of your local church and your regional. In the process you and those who join you in the undertaking can become the church as God intends it to be, and IFCA International can more fully realize its true potential and become a fellowship in the truest sense of the word.

Rev. Bob King is Pastor/Teacher, Calvary Bible Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma

All quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

IFCA INTERNATIONAL'S HOME OFFICE MINISTRY STATEMENT

Dr. Richard I. Gregory

The Home Office of IFCA International is located at 3520 Fairlanes Avenue in Grandville, Michigan. It services the Fellowship's 980 related churches and organizations. (703 member churches and organizations and 277 unaffiliated churches having IFCA International pastors) In addition there are 1242 individual members including 61 military chaplains, 133 missionaries, 624 pastors and a variety of other ministry related vocations. The Fellowship has 32 active regionals; 14 area church extension agencies; 2 Bible Colleges and Bible Institutes; 6 Christian camps and conferences; 17 home mission agencies; 5 foreign mission societies.

The seven-member staff oversees and maintains the permanent records, interacts with the Internal Revenue Service and other government agencies with respect to maintaining tax-exempt status for member churches, maintains and distributes material prepared by various committees, informs churches concerning relevant legislation, processes credentials of the members, negotiates sites for and plans the Annual Convention, designs and maintains the IFCA International Web Page, oversees "Operation Partnership" a cooperative ministry with the Evangelical Union of Christian Baptist Churches in Ukraine and Belarus to plant new churches, oversees the ministry of our military and institutional chaplains and provides advice and counsel to churches, organizations and individuals as requested.

The *VOICE* magazine, a bi-monthly publication, is prepared and published. Various other publications such as the Directory, Church and Ministers Handbook, Church Extension Handbook, and the IFCA International church bulletin service are designed and published. Other specialized publications such as "The Statement on Saving Faith," the tract "What is a Bible Church?"; the booklets "The Question of Cooperation" and "Guideline for Pastorless Churches;" an IFCA International Doctrinal Statement study booklet "This We Believe," and a Spanish version of our Constitution and By-Laws are published and made available.

The *Chera Fellowship*, a ministry to widows and widowers, publishes a quarterly newsletter and promotes a program of support for needy widows in the former Soviet Union.

Services for member churches and individuals such as health insurance and a retirement program are organized and administrated. Sunday school material, church envelopes, and specially prepared church advertizing materials are designed and made available to the constituency. The Fellowship's web page provides a link with the constituency as well as a very effective public relations tool in making IFCA International's various ministries known.

The Home Office also provides a pastoral referral service for members and interested churches; personal counseling for pastors, pastors' wives and churches requesting help is also provided.

The Executive Director, Rev. Les Lofquist, and the *Voice* Managing Editor, Dr. Richard Gregory conducted numerous Bible conferences and training sessions for regionals from coast to coast promoting and explaining IFCA International's Vision and Purpose Statements. Mrs. Miriam Lofquist and Mrs. Carol Gregory also conduct seminars for women. Our Administrative Assistant, Mr. Tom Olson, provides counsel for church administrators and financial secretaries concerning available resources for tax and legal requirements. Rev. Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy, oversees the chaplain ministries and maintains our web ministry and electronic communications ministry.

There are many other services the Home Office envisions, but we cannot go beyond the financial resources provided through the giving of our local churches. We appreciate the support given by our member churches. I trust we have been good stewards of the Lord's resources you have provided.

IFCA International's Executive Committee

The Constitution of IFCA International provides for the election of an Executive Committee. The responsibility of the Committee is described as "having the power to transact the business and conduct the work of IFCA International Inc., in so far as its actions are in harmony with the Constitution and By-Laws and policies of the organization." Article X, Section 1, Paragraph c.

The Committee consists of the Fellowship's President, The Executive Director, the Voice Editor and twelve members from the Fellowship at large. All are elected by the members and delegates attending the Annual Convention where the specified elections are held. The President is elected for a term of three years and by Constitutional requirement is re-affirmed each year. The Executive Director is recommended to the convention by the Executive Committee. The convention ratifies the committee's selection. He serves an indefinite term and is not subject to yearly re-affirmation. The trustees serve a term of three years which are staggered so that four new men are elected at each convention from among the Fellowship's members, lay delegates from member churches and organizations. The Committee meets twice a year. The mid-year meeting is held at the Home office usually during the month of November while the annual meeting is held in conjunction with the annual convention.

The committee is empowered by the Constitution to delegate to either individuals or committees the right to transact any of its business or exercise any of its powers. However, any such transactions or exercise of its powers are at all time subject to the supervision and control of the Executive Committee.

It shall be the responsibility to the Committee to appoint all standing and special committees and the editorial staff of the Voice Magazine.

The President of the Executive Committee presides at the meetings of the committee and serves as Chairman of the Annual Convention.

Although many in our Fellowship understand the facts about the function of the Executive Committee many do not understand the way in which this committee ministers. The Executive Director and other staff members regard this committee as a great resource in the conduct of their ministries. When the committee meets at the home office it is a time of renewing fellowship with the administration and staff. Members of the committee often contact the staff asking for resource material, providing encouragement, and being a source of prayer support. When the committee is in session, matters concerning the welfare of the staff are carefully considered. The Executive Director, Voice Editor, Administrative Assistant and secretaries work together with members of the committee in attempting to bring to reality the stated purpose and vision of IFCA International. Through the years IFCA International's Executive Committee has effectively overseen the shepherding of our Fellowship to keep it true to the vision of our fathers and protected from the various winds of doctrine and practice that compromises its integrity.

IFCA International Annual Conventions

Dr. Robert Graves

Conventions: What are they all about and why do we have them? Where did the idea to have them come from? These are questions that are often asked when we talk about IFCA International Annual Conventions. What profit is there and what is accomplished when God's people of like mind come together?

When we think of conventions one of the first things we think of is fellowship. The word fellowship is a translation of a Greek word in the New Testament that literally means to participate together in something related to the work of the Lord and our relationship with one another in Christ. It carries with it the thought of partnership in an enterprise. We find this word, *koinonia*, used twenty times in the New Testament and it is most usually translated fellowship and in some places communion. We first find it in the book of Acts where it says "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." When I think of a convention I think of all of these things. It is a time to meet fellow Christians from all over the country and around the world who love our Lord and are involved in the work of building His church. It is a tremendous blessing to greet them and to encourage them and be encouraged by them. It is a joy to sing together with one another the praises of our God and be strengthened by the testimonies to the faithfulness of our God. It is an opportunity to talk with others who are standing along side of us in the battle for righteousness. There is nothing more encouraging than to see with our own eyes the many who are one with us in the Lord. Elijah was discouraged in the work and asked God to take his life as he thought he was standing alone. But God encouraged him with this message: "I have kept for Myself 7000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (1 Kings 18:19). In Philippians 1:6, the apostle writes to the Philippian church from prison speaking to them of the joy he is blessed with as he contemplates their joint participation with him in the gospel from the first day unto the present. One of the great blessings of a convention is this renewal we experience when we meet with one another. The knowledge of God is working all over the world and we are united with others in the fellowship of the Church lifts our hearts.

The question is often asked. Is there any difference between a convention and a seminar or conference? The answer is yes there is a difference. A seminar or conference is a calling together of people with differing views for a conference that is broad enough to meet the needs of all. A convention is a meeting of people united in a fellowship committed to like doctrine and convictions who come together to strengthen and reaffirm their distinctives. That is what lends great importance to a convention.

We find a Biblical basis for conventions in the scriptures. In the book of Acts chapter fifteen we read there of the first church council. The leaders of the churches from all over Judea and Asia Minor came together to discuss matters with reference to doctrine and current issues within the Church. This is one of the blessings of a convention as we come together to examine current issues in our time. We have opportunity to give and receive information and pass resolutions to solidify our position concerning them. Seminars are held with reference to doctrines that are making inroads into the church of our day or other issues churches face. These seminars are helpful and encouraging. Methods and ministries are presented which challenge our hearts, and display tables telling of many ministries applicable to all phases of Christian work are available for perusal. Many schools and leaders of schools are present and there is the opportunity to talk with them and take home first hand information to our young people.

In the Old Testament we find that God called the people together three times a year to remember Him with different feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Exodus 23:16,17. We find when reading the Old Testament that these times of coming together were neglected sometimes for hundreds of years. This contributed I am sure to the apostasy and idolatry of Israel. In Hebrews 10:23-25 God says to His church, "Let us hold fast he confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful: and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own

assembling together as the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." This is what conventions should be about. Each year we hold an IFCA International Annual Convention for five days. The location varies annually from Regional to Regional in order to allow as many as possible the opportunity to attend closer to home.

By God's grace we come together to be challenged by the word of God. To spend time in prayer with one another to pray for one another. To encourage and strengthen one another in the Lord. To sing together the praises of our God. And then to go home refreshed and renewed by the fellowship of the saints.

Dr. Robert Graves is the President of IFCA International.

IFCA Vision for the 21st Century

Rev. Les Lofquist

The vision of IFCA International has always been forward-looking. As the decade of the '90s began, Dr. Richard Gregory challenged the Executive Committee to draft a Vision Statement for the 21st Century. This would not be a document describing who we are as a Fellowship, but rather it would become a blueprint for where we are going.

After much discussion, the Executive Committee voted to establish a Vision Committee in November, 1993. This new committee went to work, first incorporating many ideas already discussed in the Executive Committee and then considering other ideas in the months and years that followed. They sought valuable input at all levels of IFCA International until a truly representative Mission, Vision, and Goals Statement was approved by near unanimous vote at the 1995 Annual Convention in Colorado Springs.

Here is this document in its entirety:

IFCA International Mission Statement

Our mission is to glorify God by providing an arena for independent churches and organizations to participate interdependently in the common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups.

Vision Statement

We envision ourselves as the Fellowship of choice for independent churches and organizations, desiring to prayerfully work together in the spirit of interdependence.

Goals Statement

In fulfilling our vision we are equally committed to excellence in the pursuit of each of the following goals:

Doctrinal Purity

We are committed to preserving, defending, and proclaiming the historic, fundamental teachings of the Christian faith as set forth in the Word of God, and the biblical world view derived from these teachings.

Unified Purpose

We are committed to the pursuit of unity in the advancement of our common cause. In the pursuit of unity we make the following recommendations:

The evaluation of every organizational undertaking in light of our Mission Statement

The structuring of the Fellowship to provide Regional Representatives to assist their members in the achievement of our unified purpose

The motivation of genuine and practical unity in the pursuit of all our mission goals by the following:

Clearly communicating all these goals to the entire constituency

Developing a network for ongoing interaction with Regional Leadership

Promoting interactive forums that further our causes

Promoting Fellowship theme Sundays throughout our movement

Servant Leadership

We are committed to the development of leaders who reflect the selflessness of Christ in the leadership of those to whom they minister. In order to develop such leaders, we make the following recommendations:

Modeling servant leadership in life, practice, and attitude in all areas of leadership within our Fellowship

Providing open forums for interaction with our organization's leaders

Conducting seminars to equip and motivate men to become more effective servant leaders

Reviewing and recommending books on servant leadership

Pastoral Mentoring

We are committed to facilitating the establishment of an apprenticeship network among our churches for the development of effective pastoral leaders. To achieve this, we make the following recommendations:

Educating the Fellowship regarding the scope and essence of the concept

Developing a suggested Pastoral Apprenticeship Program

Recruiting local churches willing and able to participate

Developing a network for support, information, and accountability

Encouraging schools and men to participate in such training

Expository Preaching

We are committed to effective communication in preaching that emphasizes sound exegesis; historical, grammatical, literal interpretation; with relevant application. To support and encourage this approach, we recommend the following:

Emphasizing expository preaching through Fellowship publications and through both regional and national seminars

Availing ourselves of the talents and experience of those men in our Fellowship who are strong in expository preaching

Recommending resources to enhance and promote expository preaching

Compassionate Concern

We are committed to recognizing and responding to the physical, material, and emotional needs of both Christians and non-Christians in such a way as to bring them the touch of God's love and compassion as well as the light of His redemption. To effectively achieve this we make the following recommendations:

Educating our constituency regarding how they can better respond with God's redemptive love to situations of need

Encouraging local churches to respond appropriately in the name of Christ to physical, material, and emotional needs arising in their communities

Encouraging the Council of Regional Presidents and all Regional officers to be available and actively involved in response to social concerns

Developing a master plan for response to disasters

Refining our ability to respond quickly and effectively to needs arising from financial crises or natural disasters through our Benevolence Committee

Developing and implementing a strategy for keeping those involved in the network and the entire Fellowship informed of needs outstanding and of services being rendered

Emphasizing through Fellowship publications, at Regionals, and at Annual Conventions the social aspects of ministry being carried out in the name of Christ

Effective Communication

We are committed to the development of an effective information strategy to clearly, thoughtfully, and sensitively distribute useful data. To achieve this we recommend the following:

Making full use of printed material

Exploring and using the capabilities of the internet

Investigating the use of technological resources for the dissemination of information when appropriate

Identifying and soliciting the involvement of individuals or organizations who may assist in providing these services

Promoting interactive communication between the Fellowship office and the Regional Presidents

Sensitive Separation

We are committed to biblical separation exercised with a humble, gracious spirit and applied in such a way as to strengthen the body of Christ. To achieve this, we make the following recommendations:

Frank and open discussion on matters of separation

The dedication of seminars and publications to the clarification of the biblical basis, practical application, and gracious spirit of doctrinal and relational separation

Holy Living

We are committed to pursuing and promoting godly character that begins with the renewing of the mind and motivates biblically moral and ethical conduct resulting in personal integrity. To cultivate this, we recommend the following:

That our Fellowship emphasize the need of and scriptural demand for personal holiness

The promotion of resources that contribute to and promote the practice of holy living

Exposure of trends within our culture that undermine holy living

The dedication of seminars to issues pertaining to holiness

Fervent Prayer

We are committed to the practice and promotion of both private and corporate prayer. To facilitate this, we make the following recommendations:

Systematically promoting a broad awareness of the necessity of effective, fervent prayer

Giving special emphasis to the importance of the personal prayer life of leaders

Encouraging those in leadership to provide a consistent example

Promoting available resources that encourage personal and corporate prayer

Establishing a Fellowship Annual Day of Prayer

Evangelistic Zeal

We, being compelled by the love of Christ, are committed to the passionate proclamation of the Gospel to all people because all men apart from Christ are lost and face the horrors of eternal judgment. To promote this, we make the following recommendations:

Developing of lay teams of evangelism to help churches

Emphasizing evangelism at National Conventions and Regional functions

Developing training seminars in evangelism

Promoting enthusiastic use of evangelistic tools

Encouraging our churches to avail themselves of the services of individuals in our Fellowship who demonstrate a passion for evangelism and have the proven ability to motivate and challenge others to evangelize

Emphasizing consistent prayer for the lost

Identifying lost people groups for prayer and evangelistic effort

Encouraging evangelistic preaching at all levels

Relevant Teaching

We are committed to accuracy and appropriate creativity in the teaching of God's Word enabling people to understand and apply God's truth, and to develop a consistent biblical world view. To promote relevant teaching, we make the following recommendations:

Maintaining our emphasis on relevant teaching through Fellowship publications and by seminars at Annual Conventions and Regional functions

Availing ourselves of the expertise of those men in our Fellowship who are gifted teachers

Informing our constituency of available resources that assist in the development of creative, relevant teaching

Encouraging and providing training to help our local churches to develop quality libraries of useful teaching materials

Expanding the Fellowship press to include teaching materials

Missions Involvement

We are committed to the global propagation of the gospel to people of every nation, tribe, ethnic and language group and the establishment of biblical local churches. In order to cultivate this, we make the following recommendations:

Maintaining a standing International Missions Committee

Continuing to educate our constituency concerning the ministry of world missions

Exhorting our churches to be missionary-sending churches

Involving ourselves as an international fellowship in special mission projects

Church Extension

We are committed to aggressive involvement in planting, establishing, and nurturing biblical, local churches in the United States of America. In order to accomplish this task we make the following recommendations:

Surveying areas of the next state, county, city or town for the purpose of assessing the need for establishment of sound, biblically fundamental, reproductive churches

Emphasizing evangelism of the lost, not taking away members from existing Bible-believing churches

Reaching out to people in their own language and culture

Using a variety of methods in church planting

Including a sponsoring church or churches whenever possible

Providing a vehicle whereby churches planted and served may be brought into a member church relationship with IFCA International

Continued development of IFCA ChurchNet in order to coordinate the efforts of IFCA International church extension agencies and to facilitate mutual encouragement and the sharing of resources

Multi-Generational Ministry

We are committed to ministries which will reach, teach, equip and involve people of all ages and groups (men, women, boys, and girls) so that we may present every one complete in Christ. In order to accomplish this task of discipleship we make the following recommendations:

Encouraging children's and youth ministries within our churches

Supporting wholeheartedly the work of our IFCA International Youth Committee

Strengthening the ministries of and to our ladies in the churches and at all other fellowship levels

Fostering activities for the spiritual development of our men in the churches and at all other fellowship levels

Developing and supporting ministry efforts designed specifically for people with unique and special needs

Developing specific ministries and employing methods designed to effectively reach and minister to significant people groups who are or may come to be identified in terms of generation, marital status, etc. (boomers, busters, generation X, singles, college/career, etc.)

Multi-Cultural/Ethnically Diverse Ministry

Seeking to reflect the ethnically and culturally blended nature of the Body of Christ, we are committed to actively fostering the continuing expansion of ethnic and cultural diversity within our fellowship. In order to fulfill that commitment we make the following recommendations:

Encouraging our existing local churches to work together in establishing, encouraging and actively supporting ministries that target cultural and ethnic groups in their geographic area

Encouraging pastors and Christian workers of all ethnic backgrounds to become members of IFCA International

Providing training and assistance for pastors and Christian workers within our fellowship who are ministering to specific ethnic groups (i.e. Scholarships, mentoring and recruiting)

Continual Improvement

We are committed to the regular reassessment of our methodology, activities, and vision regarding their effectiveness for the glory of God. To achieve this, we make the following recommendations:

Establishing a committee for periodic organizational reevaluation

Developing a tool for regular use in interactive evaluation

Reviewing periodically our mission and vision statements

These goals are dedicated to the ongoing cultivation of a balanced, growing Fellowship

Rev. Les Lofquist is the Executive Director of IFCA International

Voice Magazine

Dr. Richard I. Gregory

The *Voice Magazine* is an Independent Church Journal published bi-monthly by IFCA International. Rev. Les Lofquist, the Executive Director of the Fellowship, serves as the Journal's editor. Dr. Richard Gregory is the managing editor.

The challenge IFCA International faces is to carefully and prayerfully maintain its commitment to biblical ministry. The *Voice Magazine* is a vital instrument in this continuing challenge.

The purpose of the magazine is to communicate, encourage, inform, and motivate individuals and church members in their commitment to Christ, His Word and the establishment and maintenance of His church among all peoples. In order to accomplish this, the magazine is committed to excellence in pursuing purity in its doctrinal content; being relevant in addressing the issues of Christian living; being thorough in presenting the news of the Fellowship; and being on the cutting edge in envisioning the possibilities of interdependence in our common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups.

The content of the magazine usually pursues specific relevant themes with emphasis on doctrinal issues, Christian living, missions and the life of the church. Regular features included Our Women's Voice, Church Extension Page, Our Youth, Chaplain's Page and Fellowship News. The editors provide editorials dealing with the specific theme of the current magazine. Each issue contains a section dedicated to honoring those of our number that have had their crowning day in death as well as a listing of all of those that have just become new members of our Fellowship. The Executive Director endeavors to keep our members abreast of his schedule by including his upcoming itinerary. There is a variety of advertisers including our in house advertising of events and programs like our Annual and Youth Conventions and any other upcoming program or event.

The editor and managing editor consult regularly with the Publications Committee to receive input concerning the magazine's content. When a theme has been chosen, the editors contact prospective authors to contribute articles relative to that theme. Most articles are requested by the editor or managing editor but from time to time articles that have been submitted for consideration are used if they are relevant. On occasion, the magazine publishes an issue using articles from the past. This has been very effective in reminding the Fellowship's constituency of its roots and the issues faced by men of other decades in our history.

The magazine circulation is approximately 10,000 with over 4000 being placed in the hands of decision makers in the life of the church. The magazine is used to familiarize many outside our fellowship with IFCA International through offering complimentary subscriptions to pastors, missionaries and students in Bible Colleges and seminaries. Each individual member and each member church receives a subscription as a part of their membership in the Fellowship. Some churches choose to order bundles of the magazines that are distributed to the churches leadership and members. Through the years the *Voice Magazine* has been a very effective vehicle of keeping churches and members aware of the character and vision of IFCA International.

CHAPLAINCY

MISSIONARY MINISTRY IN YOUR BACKYARD & AROUND THE WORLD

By Rev. Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy

May I suggest an alternate way of spelling "Missions?" Try "Chaplaincy." Obviously, the spelling is different, but the meaning is the same. In our increasingly secularized society it is vital for us to use every means of reaching out to the people in our society who have never or have heard only a distortion of God's life changing truth.

The Chaplaincy is a missionary ministry reaching varied mission fields in our culture. The fields are white to harvest in the military services, state and federal prisons, local police, sheriff and fire departments, civilian and VA hospitals and in the corporate offices of our land. Chaplains reach the men and women who would never darken the door of a bible believing, bible teaching church. IFCA International provides access to these mission fields through the endorsing ministry of the Bible Churches Chaplaincy.

Each of these fields has its own subculture expressed through the language of its profession, the intense demands of its service to nation and community, and the related pressures on the people serving. Consider with me the challenge of missionary ministry in each of these fields.

LOCAL POLICE, SHERIFF AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS

The Chaplaincy ministry provides wonderful opportunity for missionary ministry in your own community among those who serve and protect the public in an increasingly dangerous world. Chaplains are afforded the privilege of riding along with these public servants and sharing in their daily adventures as they deal with the hurt, pain and evil in society. The pressures these public servants face can lead to depression, anger, cynicism, and broken marriages. The lives of many law enforcement officers and firefighters have been changed through the ministry of these Chaplains. The patient, listening concern of Chaplains who befriended and gained a hearing with those that are lonely and often troubled in their personal and/or professional lives has effectively impacted this ministry.

IFCA International pastors across our land have heard a cheerful "yes" or "would you like to start one?" after asking if they could serve as a Chaplain for their local police or fire department. I encourage pastors to seek out this remarkable opportunity to connect in a "rubber hits the road" dimension with your community. Lead the way - be a model of evangelism and mission outreach for your church.

MILITARY- ACTIVE DUTY, RESERVE & NATIONAL GUARD

Military chaplains reach the men and women and their families of the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. They are reaching people from every part of our country and every layer of culture. Many of these will be the future leaders of our society in the military, politics, business and yes, even in the church. Most of these people will not go to a bible believing church to be exposed to the truth. If they attend a military chapel they will hear it only if a bible believing Chaplain is their pastor.

A military chaplain has unique missionary opportunity. He has access to the troops since he is expected to be out and about in the work places of his Base or Post. Military leaders send troubled people to the Chaplain for counsel and help since chaplains have complete confidentiality and those they counsel tend to be more open and honest about their plight. He has opportunity to provide moral and religious guidance to his commander. His ministry is varied and he will at different times serve as a police chaplain, confinement chaplain, hospital chaplain and is always expected to serve as a chaplain in the workplace. He is free to preach the truth of God's Word in chapels and in field services. He has financial resources that civilian pastors only dream about. He wears the same uniform and shares in the same

travels and personal and professional challenges as those to whom he ministers - building special bonds of friendship.

It is important to point out that all of these opportunities are available to YOU as a local pastor if you meet the criteria to serve as a Reserve or National Guard Chaplain. There are openings in this area NOW and the services are eagerly seeking men to serve as Chaplains on active duty. If you are interested in pursuing the military Chaplaincy please contact me as noted at the end of this article.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY

If you are a pastor and visit your local hospital regularly, you may not see much point in thinking of the hospital Chaplaincy. Please consider the importance of reaching those inside this closed professional world.

In addition to the patients who are struggling with pain, fear and hopelessness in the face of impending death, the hospital chaplain reaches the hospital staff and volunteers. They interact with the men and women who deal with the pain, hurt and hopelessness of lives bent and broken by illness and injury.

Unlike a pastor, who is ordinarily permitted to visit only with those from his church, a Chaplain is expected to visit all the patients in the hospital. In this way he makes contact, prays with and when the patient is willing tells them how God is reaching out to them in love through Jesus. Many who would not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the touch of God's love do so through the Chaplain.

We have Chaplains serving in both civilian and Veteran's Administration hospitals. These are fruitful areas of missionary ministry in our backyards.

MARKET PLACE CHAPLAINCY

In our increasingly affluent society, the workplace is a place to make money. The Market Place Chaplaincy reaches out to those working in the corporate world. It is a new form of Chaplaincy and is still growing. The Bible Churches Chaplaincy works with Market Place Ministries, Inc. (MMI) in encouraging men to reach out to those in civilian workplaces. Nearly 300 local pastors are in contract with MMI to provide pastoral assistance when requested by nearby businesses with which MMI has contracted to provide pastoral support. We just received a request for pastoral applicants in several areas of California where MMI outreach is expanding.

There is much more to be said about the missionary ministry of the Chaplaincy. Numerous accounts of ministry blessing in lives are constantly being received. I share some of these in the "Chaplains Diary" feature of each VOICE issue. If you wish more information on pursuing this vital ministry I can be reached, or information obtained as noted below.

Warren Dane, Ch, Lt Colonel, USAF (Ret.) after serving 28 years as an active duty Air Force Chaplain assumed the role of Director of Chaplaincy for IFCA International. He can be reached at:

Email: chaplain@ifca.org

Mail:
10039 Thornbird Ct.
Moreno Valley, CA 92557

Information online: <http://www.ifca.org/Chaplain>

VISION ABOVE AND BEYOND

Mrs. Carol Gregory - Women's Ministry Coordinator

My husband and I were privileged to spend many years in the pastorate. During our years serving the church in Laceyville and Limerick I regularly stood with my husband at the door on Sunday mornings to greet the people. It was a special time for me for I loved to speak to each one personally, shake their hand and look in their eyes. You can tell an awful lot about what is going on in a person's life by their eyes. Sometimes I would see anxiety, hurt, loneliness and even anger. Others just sparkled with joy, hope, happiness, contentment and love.

One of the groups of people that always captured my special attention were those that had lost a mate and were living alone. These ladies and men would often linger a little longer to drink in our attention. I remember one oppressively hot Sunday morning when a dear saint of the Lord waited in the line of people going out our door. Her husband had served faithfully as an elder and had died just a few months before while in heart surgery. She also had a bad heart and when she approached I noticed that she was breathing rather heavily and sweating. I said, "Anna, why did you stand in line so long on a morning like this?" She reached out to me and replied, "Because I needed to get my hug." My heart went out to her and others like her who were suffering silently because they were missing that special attention from the one they had so long loved. I thought that there must be something special we could do to minister to these whose lives had been so changed by losing their mate. I began to pray that the Lord would help us to minister to our widows and widowers in a very specific way.

I shared my prayer request and a few weeks later, two of our younger widows came to me and offered to help me start such a ministry. We called it "Chera Fellowship." Chera is the Greek word for "one without a husband." The group began to meet and do all kinds of things together. They had luncheons, dinners, Bible studies, day trips, birthday parties, Christmas banquets and even attended Valentines banquets together. Some began to plan vacations together. The fellowship they enjoyed opened up new horizons to life without their life-long partner.

When we left Limerick and came to IFCA International, my interest and concern for these special people took on a different dimension. Shortly after arriving at the IFCA office I was surprised to learn how many widows of IFCA pastors and missionaries there were. There were well over 80 that we knew of and probably others that had slipped through the cracks over the years. I began to pray about a way we could reach out to them in with some specific ministry. The vision that began with Chera Fellowship at Limerick would now be enlarged to include these precious women who had served by the side of their husband in ministry. Now they were alone and often without a sense of belonging. So, we did the only thing we thought feasible. We started the Chera Fellowship Newsletter. The first issue was an experiment and we printed only 100 copies. It was well received and we began to get inquiries from those outside our IFCA International Fellowship. We realized that we were meeting a real need. Chera Fellowship began to grow. Other widows and widowers asked if it were possible for them to receive it even though they had not been in the ministry. Today, it has grown to well over 1000 issues being distributed each quarter. The reception and effectiveness of this ministry is far beyond my original vision. With the very able help of Nila Rae Phelps as editor, the timely articles about the Lord's faithfulness contributed by our readers, the special helps columns and the letters of encouragement received from each issue, the Chera Fellowship Newsletter began making an impact among those that have lost a mate well beyond our IFCA International constituency. We see its growth potential as unlimited.

I have chosen several letters from recent issues as an illustration of the way in which the ministry of Chera Fellowship is meeting a need.

"Thank you so much for Chera Fellowship. When it arrives in the mail I drop everything and sit down and read it. The magazine gets lots of mileage. My hairdresser asked me to bring it to the shop when I

had read it. Her customers like to read it. It is such an opportunity to witness."
Owego, New York

"Your early issues related mainly to widows and I was very happy when you changed your format a bit toward addressing problems and concerns or widowers. Thank you for changing your thrust to "those that have lost a mate" which now includes men." - St Petersburg, Florida

"What a blessing your Chera Fellowship magazine has been to me since my husband's home-going. The road has been long and some days have been very difficult, but God is faithful. Please continue to send your magazine as I use it for a witnessing tool here in the Senior Residence where I live." Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada

"A friend gave me a copy of the Chera Fellowship publication recently. How wonderful it is. She said I should write and ask to be on your mailing list. I do appreciate being able to get this magazine as it is an encouragement to me. I am a minister's wife and I miss my husband greatly, but I know he is in heaven. God bless you." - Grand Rapids, Michigan

These are just a few of the letters we receive after each issue. Our vision for the future of IFCA International's ministry to those who have lost a mate is above and beyond today's circulation and impact. In a very loving way, we want to reach out to this very special group of people with the love of Christ and the comfort of shared experiences of His faithfulness.

Editors Note: Chera Fellowship is published quarterly by IFCA International and is available to churches in bundles of 5 for \$ 40 a year per bundle. Individual copies, not distributed through local churches, are available upon request without charge from the IFCA International Office, Box 810, Grandville, MI 49468-0810.

Operation Partnership: a Wise, Biblical Investment

Rev. Ernie Baker

One of the highlights of my 19 years in ministry was preaching in a remote village in Ukraine. I traveled there as the only American (actually the first to visit that region) along with a translator, and two Ukrainian Pastors. When we arrived there were about 30 people stuffed into a little village home. We didn't realize the special work the Lord was going to do in that village. We worshipped the Lord with these precious people for about 2 hours. This time included time for two of us to speak. After I spoke an invitation was given and people started responding to the Gospel! When it was time to leave we counted 8 people who made clear decisions for the Lord and many others who were open. In fact, I couldn't hand out literature fast enough! It was a Pastor's "dream come true"! We went on to the next village where we received a similar welcome and response to the gospel. On that missions trip I was able to witness around 30 decisions for Christ and hundreds of pieces of literature handed out. This opportunity would not have been available unless our church had become involved with IFCA International's "Operation Partnership" in Ukraine and Belarus.

It all started at the national convention in June 1993. At that convention a historic resolution was passed to take advantage of "the window of opportunity" afforded by the collapse of the Berlin Wall. We decided to work in conjunction with Slavic Gospel Association to support the ministry of the Ukrainian Baptist Union. What a tremendous ministry has grown out of that decision. It has been good for IFCA International to be involved with ministry in Ukraine and Belarus. Let me give you some reasons why.

The foundational reason is because of the biblical precedent. In 2 Corinthians 8 Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be like the Macedonians who collected an offering for the poor church at Jerusalem. They came along side their fellow believers and ministered to them even though they probably never met them. Likewise, what a privilege it has been for many in our fellowship to come along side the church there. IFCA International churches and individuals are presently supporting over 100 Ukrainian and Belarussian pastors and church planters. The economic situation in the former Soviet Union is horrendous but we have an opportunity to help those in ministry there to not only survive but also minister in the name of Christ.

Our involvement has also been good because it has been a wise investment. It has been wise to invest our time and resources this way because the national church planters there already know the language and the culture. Also, our church planters are godly men who have proven themselves in leadership in their home church before being appointed as church planters. It has been wise for us to invest in such men who live so frugally and minister so effectively in the midst of tremendous economic pressure. By the way, if you haven't increased the support of your church planter recently they sure could use a little extra money!

The wisdom of our sowing there is shown in the fruit already harvested for eternity. Here are some brief statistics from the IFCA International supported church planters. In the last 7 years over 250 churches have been started. Over 200 Bible studies are currently being held that will hopefully grow into churches. 5,250 have been baptized and 3,000 children have started attending Sunday School. The Lord has used our 100 church planters to accomplish this. We have had the privilege of being on the cutting edge of where the Lord of the Harvest has been working in a special way!

Our church planter Victor Smishko is planting a church in the village of Strutinka. There is an interesting history to this little church. His wife's grandparents hosted the church in that village back during our depression years. The KGB found out about the church and came and sent Vera's grandfather to Siberia. They then tore down their house! Their granddaughter is now back in this same village helping her husband plant a new church! Just a few years ago our church provided the funds for them to buy a small home in the village to be used as a "house of prayer"(their term for a church building). The fruit of our investment does not stop there!

The Smishko's daughter will soon be marrying a young man and they will be among the first missionaries from the church in Ukraine to go to Russia as missionaries. The church in Ukraine has now grown strong enough to send out their own missionaries. It has been a wise investment!

"Operation Partnership" has also been good because of the impact those believers have had on us.

We have benefited from their testimonies, speaking and singing at conventions. I personally was thrilled to see the church there as I dreamed it could be--deeply committed to and zealous for the Lord. I remember in particular visiting a church in Kiev of about 200. It was a great joy to hear them pray weeping for joy because of their salvation. It was also a joy to see a hunger for the Word. It was a privilege to meet people who had been persecuted for their faith. My soul was refreshed to see the depth of their Christianity compared to the shallowness of much of American Christianity. It was awesome to see their reverence for God and how their church architecture even depicts this. Wouldn't it be great if this spirit rubbed off on all our IFCA International churches? This will happen as we are involved. What we have invested financially has been paid back at least as much in their example of true Christianity.

Some may wonder why they should join IFCA International. "Operation Partnership" is just one of many good reasons. I would urge you to get involved. For the cost of a few tanks of gas and a meal out each month you or your church could support a church planter and see eternal dividends! It has been a wise biblical investment!

Rev. Ernie Baker is Pastor of Harvest Baptist Church (member church) in Blacksburg, VA and has served there for 8 1/2 years. He is on the Executive Committee of IFCA, has made two trips to the Ukraine and is currently a D.Min. Candidate in biblical counseling at Westminster Seminary.

GIVE YOUR CHURCH A...

Multi-Dimensional Global Missionary Outreach

by Warren Dane - webservant IFCA International

***We are committed to the development of an effective information highway to clearly, thoughtfully, and sensitively distribute useful data."* Vision Statement- IFCA International**

The vision of IFCA International is one that can and should be shared by all our member churches. Whether is it in the countryside, the cities or the heartland our local churches and our international fellowship can use the information highway - the internet and related electronic technology - to provide "useful data" to, among and within our membership. The internet is growing exponentially as its vast global potential is realized by commercial interests, governments, individuals, and yes... even churches. Bill Gates of Microsoft recently pointed out at a White House Conference that we have not even begun to see the potential of internet usage. Our recognition of this potential for outreach with the Good News is illustrated by our IFCA International website.

Visits to our website in one week from other countries (U.S. not included)...

Australia 216	Belgium 2	Bermuda 2	Brazil 24	Canada 111	Switzerland 3
Colombia 4	Czech Republic 7	Germany 36	Estonia 36	Hong Kong 20	India 26
Italy 37	Japan 33	S. Korea 34	Malaysia 4	Netherlands 13	New Zealand 1
Poland 21	Russian Federation 14	Singapore 3	Turkey 14	Taiwan 17	Ukraine 40
United Kingdom 107	South Africa 11				

Visits have come from these and many more nations since we established our website.

IFCA International has realized the opportunities for global and local outreach through the internet and is aggressively opening every new area of outreach potential. Our website is a service to our Regionals, local churches, individual members and visitors providing information and access to:

- who we are and what we believe (doctrine, constitution & by-laws, resolutions)
- how we interconnect (emailing prayer requests, and current issues & answers)
- publications and literature (VOICE, & Chera magazines, Church & Ministers Handbook, IFCA International Bulletin service and much more)
- member church and regional websites
- member church locations
- Executive Director's and Voice Managing Editor's itineraries
- current information on upcoming Annual Conventions
- membership application and renewal forms online (in case you lost yours)
- email address directory of our members (for members only- to prevent unethical commercial use)
- discussion forum for wide variety of topics (doctrinal, sharing ministry ideas, etc)

- chat rooms for dialogue between individuals, or groups (online committee meetings save \$)
- information on Chaplaincy and youth ministries
- contact information for affiliated organizations and missions
- BibleNet media- audio & video provide a record of messages at Annual Conventions & Regionals and in our churches
- links to hundreds of ministry enriching sites for research, study, devotionals, spiritual enrichment

The long arm of the internet provides remarkably effective communication for an extremely small expense. It will work for the Church Extension Ministry, Regional Ministries or with local church applications. If you already have access to the internet all of the information and ministry enrichment listed above can be yours by going to: <http://www.ifca.org>

The information highway is your church's high speed missionary opportunity to effectively communicate the message of the Gospel to your members and visitors from around the globe.

Cyberspace Missionary Outreach Through Your Local Church

Many of our local churches and members are using the information highway powerfully. [Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church](#) and [Byron Center Bible Church](#) are using the audio and video capabilities of the internet to provide for their members and visitors to their site sermons, bible studies, special meetings, videos of the IFCA International Convention, testimonies, daily devotionals, church ministry information, missions outreach information and music ministries in concert.

Numerous member churches are beginning their site ministry and tailoring it to the needs of their church members, their local community and to visitors worldwide through:

- email communication with their missionaries that is economical and instantaneous
- Prayer requests and needs that are communicated and responded to as they occur rather than days or weeks later.
- emailing church newsletters, bulletins, other church related information
- placing on the church website testimonies by church members and others of God's life transforming power to reach the spiritually needy
- providing audio and video of the pastor's Sunday messages
- sending via email and/or placing on their website daily devotionals and Bible studies
- sharing links to other sites that nurture spiritual blessing and growth
- providing Bible study and apologetic materials to evangelize and nurture spiritual growth

We can do more - as far as our imagination under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can reach. The information highway is opening wide, millions of new travelers are entering the highway monthly. We are challenged to use it!!

Your church can grow a unique missionary outreach by adopting the IFCA International Vision and pursuing it. Thoughtfully plan your outreach strategy to include a clear understanding of what do we want to communicate, who do we wish to reach, how should we present the message in its appearance & content, to effectively reach them? Carefully plan your internet/email ministry to communicate with the audience you want to reach (i.e., church members, global visitors, etc.).

Remember to sensitively "speak the truth in love." This is an important guidance principle.

Effectively pursue your goals remembering "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God". Quality in appearance and content should be the norm in presenting the world's most important message!

In an earlier era the Church turned away from quality use of radio and motion pictures to reach their generation and the Enemy is still using it for his ends. We have the opportunity to use this means of communication to reach around the globe with more power for personal impact, at lower cost than any previous form of media.

What will be the cost in dollars and time?

Cost

Normally \$19.95 per month for unlimited internet access from a local number and email use for a personal website. Software to setup and maintain a website can cost \$100 - \$200, depending on what you choose. I use Microsoft FrontPage (webpage design and maintenance - \$140) and Pegasus Email (free). I will be glad to work with churches or individuals if you desire help in these areas.

Time

Most churches will have a person among its membership desiring to develop a website, and some will be highly qualified. Others will learn as they go (much as I am) and grow in their skills. Website development can be a means of spiritual blessing for those involved who are using their giftedness. (1 Cor 12:7) Always remember Bezalel, to whom the Holy Spirit gave the creative ability to construct the Tabernacle for Israel.

Setting up a website and related email ministry takes considerable time, but pays large dividends once up and running. As experience in the use of the technology grows the time required diminishes. Habits make things run quicker and smoothly. As skills in operating a website develop they open even wider vistas for imagination and creativity to enter and flourish in sending out the Good News worldwide.

How shall the fields that are white for harvesting hear without a preacher? Good question. You can give them one who effectively communicates the Good News 24 hours a day 365 1/4 days per year.

Rev. Warren Dane is the "webservant" for the IFCA International website. He also serves as Director of Chaplaincy for IFCA International. He is most willing to help individuals and churches that want to open the door of ministry opportunity on the internet. He can be contacted at: webservant@ifca.org.

The Ministry of IFCA International Regional Representatives

Dr. Richard Gregory

Many years ago IFCA International leadership recognized the value of having men in each regional serve as an IFCA Regional Representative. The program was begun but for reasons unknown to me, it never became the effective tool that it was envisioned to be. When I became the Executive Director there was not one regional that had an official Regional Representative. It became one of my goals to see our regionals appoint men to carry on a continuing ministry in representing IFCA International Regional and International ministries.

There are now four regionals that have officially appointed men to serve as Regional Representatives. However, there does not seem to be a unified ministry description for this position. I have contacted each of these men and asked them to share with me their understanding of the ministry opportunities and responsibilities of a Regional Representative. I have taken these and synthesized them to produce the following recommended ministry description.

Regional Representative Ministry Description

A Regional Representative is part of the ministry team of the Regional. He provides a continuing ministry to the regional leadership, organizations, churches, pastors and laymen. He must share a commitment to the task of assisting the various members of the regional to minister more effectively. He actively promotes regional programs and encourages the cooperation of all in the advancement of IFCA International's unified purpose of bringing glory to God through the provision of an arena where independent churches, organizations and men can participate interdependently in the common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups.

He must be committed to the Fellowship and its vision. He must be a humble servant of the local church. He must be capable of helping those he serves to pursue the fulfillment of the Fellowship's purpose and vision. He must have experience in the various forms of pastoral ministry demonstrating the following:

- 1.The ability to relate well to pastors and other ministry leaders.
- 2.A commitment to the local church and an understanding of its needs.
3. An ability to motive others.
- 4.A ability to effectively counsel others.
- 5.A reasonably thorough theological understanding and awareness of the issues of the day.
- 6.A pastoral compassion and wisdom.
- 7.A reasonable understanding of the history and benefits of IFCA International

Relationships:

To the Regional Leadership: He shall be appointed by the regional executive committee and ratified for this ministry by vote of the regional membership. He shall be responsible to the Regional Executive Committee on the conduct of his ministry.

To other Regional Representatives: He shall maintain contact with other regional representatives and represent his regional at meetings of Regional Representatives at the Annual Convention.

Responsibilities:

- 1.He shall participate in Regional Executive Committee meetings as an ex officio member without vote.
- 2.He shall be responsible for the distribution of all regional publications and mailings.
- 3.He shall be available for pulpit supply for regional churches.
- 4.He shall contact regional churches when they lose their pastor to offer counsel and help while they seek a pastor.
- 5.He shall cooperate with the pulpit exchange network in helping men and churches find ministries and pastoral candidates.
- 6.He shall call upon new pastors and members to welcome them to the regional and to help familiarize them with IFCA International and regional activities.
- 7.He shall be available to head up a mediating team when a regional church or pastor requests help.
- 8.He shall coordinate the interviewing process with new applicants for membership.
- 9.He shall maintain periodic contact with the regional membership to gather prayer requests and provide encouragement.
- 10.He shall be available to visit churches interested in membership to explain the benefits of being a member of IFCA International.
- 11.He shall provide reports and appropriate pictures of regional meetings, programs, pastoral changes and special events to the Voice magazine for publication in Fellowship News Section.
- 12.He shall integrate IFCA International's purpose and vision into regional programing to help provide a unified purpose on the grass roots level.
- 13.He shall maintain an up to date regional mailing and e-mail list.
- 14.He shall submit honoraria and professional expenses to the Executive Committee.
15. He shall submit a quarterly report to the Executive Committee detailing his ministry objectives and accomplishments.

Compensation:

- 1.Compensation is to be determined by the Regional Executive Committee and ratified by vote of the Regional membership.
- 2.All honoraria and professional expenses are to be processed through the Regional books.

Note: Some Regionals have looked to men that are retired pastors who have been willing to apply their compensation to their housing allowances.

Credentials Committee

Dr. Richard W. Gregory

This committee must be the absolute best committee in the fellowship on which to serve! IFCA International is a fellowship built on the ministry of the Gospel and solid, fundamental biblical doctrine. As a result, membership credentials are extended to those individuals, churches, and organizations that clearly and enthusiastically subscribe to our doctrinal statement. It is the duty (and great delight) of the members of the Credentials Committee to prayerfully assess the level of doctrinal camaraderie that exists between applicants and the rest of the membership. This occurs on a monthly basis as we meet to read, discuss and act on the applications that have been received by the IFCA International Headquarters.

On the first Thursday of each month (excluding June and July), our committee of seven members meets from 9:30 - 12 noon. Beginning with a time of prayer, the committee accepts folders from the office staff that have complete applications. The contents of this application folder include:

An application completed in its entirety (every question answered);

An application fee;

A picture of the applicant;

Four pastoral references (two of which are to be from the IFCA International membership); and,

An IFCA International Regional reference.

Until the office staff receives all of these items, the committee has no ability to process the application. The committee is presented monthly with a "tracking sheet" that provides the name of the applicant, date the application was received, and what has yet to be received in order for the process to continue. Any detaining in the processing of an application usually results from the delay of those asked to provide a reference. In light of this, we encourage anyone asked to provide a reference for an applicant to respond as quickly as possible so that the process can proceed unhindered.

As the committee meets, three committee members read each application. We take our time to carefully consider the material provided by the application and the references. We look for a clear testimony of salvation, doctrinal compatibility, evidence of personal & ministerial ethics, and constitutional conformity. The constitution stipulates that an application is to be rejected under the following conditions: use of intoxicating beverages, tobacco or narcotics, immorality, divorce, remarriage following divorce, marriage to a divorcee, membership in an oath-bound society, unfavorable references, doctrinal and constitutional disagreement. In addition, evidence of improper ordination procedure may constitute grounds for rejection by the Credentials Committee.

The great joy of this committee is the opportunity to see the testimonies of salvation, expression of a biblical philosophy of ministry, and proof that God is still raising up godly men of solid commitment to biblical truth. We leave our committee meetings rejoicing in the most privileged committee within our fellowship - because of the way doctrine and grace has been reviewed with such great clarity.

As soon as every application has been carefully read, each man is brought before the entire committee for consideration. Those who have read the application are asked to comment on the applicant and to express whatever areas of concern might exist with the application. When all is determined to be in order, a motion to approve the membership of the applicant is made, supported and voted upon. At times we decide to hold an application pending clarification on some issue or issues - to be considered as soon as the information being sought is provided. When this occurs, the applicant is contacted immediately about the information being sought.

As soon as each application has been addressed, the committee then takes the time to sign each application, attesting to the fact that it has been read and approved by the Committee. Before adjournment, the members of the committee take time to pray for each application by name - asking the Lord to bless their personal lives, families, and ministries.

One matter that ought to be clarified is that the Credentials Committee is not involved in the renewal process. It deals only with new applications for membership. The Executive Director of IFCA International is the one responsible for the renewal process.

Referral Exchange Service

Rev. Steve D. Spacek

The time when a church is without a pastor or when a pastor is seeking a church can be a great challenge. It can lead either to discouragement or greater dependence on the Lord. Those going through this time of apprehension and pressing needs often look for support and guidance to help them in their search.

There are basically two approaches in helping someone in times like these. You can either do everything for them or you can teach them how to do something for themselves. The latter is a discipling approach "equipping the saints for the work of service" (Ephesians 4:12) and it is the principle followed in the Referral Exchange Service. This service provides contacts, "how-to" handbooks, and personal guidance.

The Referral Exchange Service is not a Personnel Agency or Placement Service. These types of services try to match specific qualifications and requirements of potential candidates to church situations. By doing this they sometimes limit the availability of contacts, personal involvement in the process, and discernment of the Lord's choice.

As the name implies, the Referral Exchange Service introduces prospects and churches to one other. This is accomplished through a monthly Personnel Listing (those seeking ministries) and the Positions Listing (those seeking personnel). Both lists provide a basic sketch from which either party may directly contact the other. Organizations may request resumes from those on the Personnel Listing and personnel may send their resumes to those on the Positions Listing. This allows both parties to have greater freedom to share current materials and a greater control and involvement in the process.

This service is provided to members of IFCA International and to churches that subscribe to the IFCA International doctrinal statement and meet our screening criteria. To apply for this service, one needs to complete the application on the web site at www.ifca.org or request the application packet from the office.

**Comprehensive handbooks are available to guide each party
and to take the guesswork out of the search process.**

Searching for a Shepherd is an innovative how-to manual for the church seeking a pastor or other personnel. Learn to save hours in screening and selecting a qualified pastor for your church.

Applying the principles and procedures in this manual will give an objective, thorough, and orderly process for the pulpit committee and congregation. The contents include: The Presuppositions, The Preparation, The Procedure, The Postscript, The Precautions, and a Bibliography. The appendix provides:

Biblical Qualifications of Church Leaders, Pre-Qualifying Telephone Interview, Resume / Application, Positions Statement Format, Reference Form, Candidate's Interview Form, Church

Summary Profile, Church Detail Profile, Position Description Format, Placement Agency Letter, Acknowledgment Letter, Prospect Letter, Reference Cover Letter, Clarification Letter, Interview Letter, Candidate Letter, Formal Call Letter, Rejection Letter, Confidential Cover Sheet, and a Referral Agencies Directory.

Searching for a Flock is a unique handbook for a pastor or minister seeking a position with a church. Learn to save time in qualifying and finding a responsive church. Following the guidelines in this handbook will provide an orderly and thorough process you can use with confidence. The contents include: The Preparation, The Promotion, The Procedure, The Postscript, The Precautions, and a Bibliography. The appendix provides: Biblical Qualifications of Church Leaders, Biographical Sketch

Format, Resume / Application, Positions Statement Format, Pre-Qualifying Telephone Interview, Prospect Letter, Church Summary Profile, Church Detail Profile, Candidate's Interview Form, Church Interview Form, Formal Call Letter, and a Referral Agencies Directory.

Personal assistance is offered to pulpit committees or candidates in working through the process. Having someone to clarify issues, to give sound advice or just to listen can lessen apprehensions. In keeping with our IFCA International mission to "participate interdependently" we engage the assistance of Help Ministries to facilitate this ministry. To order the handbooks or request assistance, contact Help

Ministries at 229 Gerloff Road, Schwenksville, PA 19473 - (610)287-4250 or visit their web site at <http://www.hm.org>.

Rev. Steve D. Spacek is the Executive Director of Help Ministries. He is the Regional Representative of Eastern PA Regional and serves on the Executive Committee of IFCA International.

The Pastorless Church

Dr. Ronald E. Workman, DD

When a congregation experiences the loss of their pastor it is often a time of emotional, mental and spiritual adjustment. Such a time can be healthy and positive or it may be stressful and difficult. Varying circumstances prevail in each church's situation, but a basic need now becomes evident: the need of maintaining a consistency in the pulpit ministry and assuring the congregation of the availability of "Pastoral" care.

Too often today we are witnessing the "break-away" of people from our churches due to an inconsistency of ministry from the pulpit, pastoral compassion and the inability of Lay-leadership to discern and meet the needs of the congregation. The results can be discouraging and disastrous! This becomes especially apparent when the Pastor leaves and the church faces the challenge of "staying the course" and preparing for a new pastor. It is in such times that a congregation's character comes forth and the genuineness of their faith and faithfulness is revealed.

In Ephesians four the Holy Spirit identifies the "Pastor/Teacher" as one of the gifts to the church, a high and holy calling. Through the years God has used "Pastors" to fulfill a unique role in our lives: preaching and teaching the word, encouraging, comforting, and exhorting to Christian Living, protecting, nurturing and caring in sacrificial ways. Many such pastors are now in retirement and yet feel the compulsion to keep on with their "calling" but in a more limited role. That role being an "interim pastor."

The interim pastor is an invaluable asset and blessing to the local church! He brings years of experience and insight to the congregation and the lay leadership. He is prepared to help the church in areas of unity, healing and objective counsel.

When a pastor leaves there can be times that communication breaks down and follow through in various areas of the church's ministry is lacking. This lends itself to questions of direction and focus and some may begin to wander in their quest for fellowship and spiritual sustenance. The role of the interim pastor helps to alleviate such fears and uncertainties.

Preparing a congregation for a new pastor is a most significant contribution of the interim pastor. He brings genuine "Objectivity" into discussion and wise counsel to the church leadership. If the church is in need of ministry evaluation this is an opportune time for establishing renewed vision and setting goals.

The type of 'interim' is adaptable to the specific needs of the church. By far the best arrangement is to have a "full-time" interim pastor. However, "part-time" and "commuter" interims can be very helpful.

The time between pastors need not be one of loss or indecision for the congregation. With the right leadership it can be a time of blessing and even growth.

Interim Ministries, Inc. was founded to provide experienced pastoral care and leadership for churches facing such interim seasons in the life of the church. God has blessed IMI with over thirty associates who are available for interim pastorates. We are seeing interest throughout the country and have interims presently in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Tennessee and Utah, with inquiries from three other states.

IMI is a member organization of IFCA c and it is our desire to strengthen and support our churches in their time without a pastor. There are four men who serve with us as representatives for this ministry and are located in Florida, North Carolina, Missouri and Utah.

We invite your inquiries and covet your prayers for our IFCA International churches-especially when they are without a pastor. Brethren, we need each other and together we can meet the needs of our fellowship by combining our efforts for the sake of our Lord's Church.

Further information is available through the IMI office at 1585 North Luce Ave, White Cloud, MI 49349 or e-mail: rworkman@ncats.net. Phone: 800-763-7093

Dr. Ron Workman is a graduate of Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music and seminary. He's spent thirty-two years in the Pastorate, ministering to six churches. Dr. Workman is the founder and director of Interim Ministries, Inc. He is a member of Clearwater Christian College Board of Directors, IFCA International and Brazil Gospel Fellowship Mission Board. Dr. Workman is also the President of the Cornerstone Christian Academy Board, Fremont, MI.

CHAPLAIN'S DIARY
GOD AT WORK IN PRISON
by Chaplain Steve Francis
Centinela State Prison, California

Following are two of many accounts of changed lives that our Prison Chaplains continually witness in men who turn to God and experience His life transforming power.

The miracle in the life of the man we will call "M"...

In II Chronicles the Lord told Jehosaphat, "The battle is not yours, it is the Lord's." One of the activities that take up much of the inmate's time is the appeal process. Many go to the law library each week to do research on how to get an appeal on some loophole or precedent in set by another trial. I have told many inmates that they should not be appealing to "the man" but that they should be as the Apostle John and develop calluses on their knees from praying to the Lord. "The most effective appeal is one that is presented to the Lord in prayer, the battle is not yours but is His."

On a Sunday morning an inmate demonstrated the truth of that instruction. "M" came into my office to ask me a question. After answering his question he asked to share something with me. nineteen years ago he was sentenced to life in prison for a kidnapping. He was seventeen years old. He said that he was serving for another man's crime. M had stood in a line- up while the victim picked out another individual as the perpetrator. Yet he was charged and tried for the crime.

Three years ago, while at Ironwood State Prison in Blythe, a man walked up to him and asked if he remembered him. He said, "I was picked out of your line-up. I did do the crime that you were charged with. I am willing to sign an affidavit to that as the statute of limitations is up and I get out in three years anyway." Within two weeks M was transferred to Centinela and he thought that the affidavit would never be signed.

M was assigned to D yard and given a job in the kitchen. He began attending chapel services faithfully. However he had a problem. He began stealing food from the kitchen on a regular basis. M asked the Lord to help him stop his stealing. Within a few days he was caught and found himself in "the hole" (Administrative Segregation).

When he got out of "the hole" he was placed on A yard. There are thirty-three prisons in the State of California with approximately 165 yards. The chance of two specific inmates getting together again at another prison is not remote but there is a good chance it may not happen. When M left the "hole" he was again approached by the same man and he said that he would still sign the affidavit if M would hold off acting on it until April after the other man paroled.

On Thursday the document was signed. In April it will be filed with the court and M should be acquitted shortly thereafter. While in the "hole" M prayed that if the Lord got him out of prison he would serve him in any way that the Lord led. He continued to pray that if he had to stay in prison he would serve the Lord in anyway he led.

There were a few dry eyes in the chapel on Sunday, but not many. We rejoice together at this brother's news and we will continue to pray for him as the days proceed.

A Muslim shares how he came to Christ

I would like to share with you a testimony that was given in the C Yard chapel. I was moved by it because we have so many Muslim inmates and they are difficult to witness to. We have seen a number of them accept Christ, but with this testimony, I believe that more will respond to the Gospel of Christ.

"As a young boy I was not raised in a Christian home. I did not have any knowledge nor idea that I was a lost soul. As I reached the age of twenty, I was approached by men who were Muslim From the Islamic faith. They were very persuasive, I accepted the idea that Islam is the true Religion that God had ordained. I was so persuaded by them that I declared my obedience and faith to Islam (Shahadah - one of the Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith). I diligently sought and learned about the faith until I was able to pray in Arabic, read and write in Arabic and was able to confound many weak and new Christians about the "discrepancies" in the Bible. There was nothing that could have moved me from the Islamic Faith.

"One season, while incarcerated in Riverside County Jail (Banning Road Camp), I met a man who was the county warehouseman. I was assigned to work in the warehouse because I had some computer experience. As time passed we became friends. We spoke about many things pertaining to life, family and religion. One day he asked me a question that I will never forget until the last breath of life is taken from me. He asked me, "What atonement was given to the Islamic faith by God?" You see, at one time he too was a Muslim in his younger days. He knew Islam very well, so he had knowledge that one of the attributes of Islam is, "Believing in all of God's books." He went on to say that the Jews had sacrificial lambs, bulls, pigeons and turtle doves to make atonement for their sins. The Christians had Jesus Christ as their sacrificial lamb for their atonement. Again he said, "What atonement was brought to the Muslims by God?"

"I was totally lost and confused. He went on to show me Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." He also showed me that Ishmael (from whom the Muslims claim to be descendants) was circumcised by Abraham (Gen. 17:25). Which means that Ishmael was taught the law of God by Abraham. He continued to tell me that Abraham taught his sons (Ishmael and Isaac) about the sacrifices.

"The questions that really left me stunned was, "If God gave commandments to the Jews regarding how to atone for sins and gave Christians an everlasting atonement (Jesus Christ), what atonement for sin has he given the Muslims?"

"I asked him, "Then you are saying, none of my sins have been forgiven me because there was no blood shed for me?" He replied, "By the Holy Bible, you are lost and dead spiritually." I felt low and stunned because I was living in ignorance and was headed for Hell. I asked him what I could do to follow God the right way. He led me in the sinners prayer. I now know that the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) was the sacrificial atonement for my sins."

I hope that this testimony of faith will challenge people who are lost and living in ignorance in a faith that is not based on the atoning death of the Lamb of God, Who is not dead but is living and is seated at the Right Hand of the Father. The Bible says Jesus, "is the way, the truth and the life, nobody can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ" (John 14:6).

Please pray for the Prison Chaplains representing you and consider how you and/or your church can be of help in prison ministry. Volunteering to lead Bible studies, provide music or preach at worship services in nearby jails or prisons are ways you can be involved. Our Prison Chaplains find that many inmates become believers through those ministries and then come to the larger institutions in which they minister. Your church can also minister to men or women who have been released from prison and want to begin a new life desiring a church home by opening the doors of their church to them. [Ed. Director of Chaplaincy, Ch, Lt. Col. Warren Dane, USAF (Ret.)]

IFCA International Church Planting

Dr. Roy E. Sprague

Two weeks ago, I had the privilege to meet with 9 couples who made the decision to begin the Five-Milton Bible Church. This new church will be the only Bible-based church in a community of 9,000 people. They have committed themselves to the Statement of Faith of IFCA International and are asking God to use them to reach out to people with the love of Christ.

Yesterday I received an E-Mail from an IFCA International Church planter in Idaho. He wrote, "Please send me any materials that can be of help; I'm meeting with 6 couples this coming Friday night who want to start a church in Idaho City!"

We recognize that the propagation of the Gospel throughout the world will involve translation ministry, school ministry, radio ministry, and a host of other ministries--but always the establishment of biblical, local churches will be primary, and emphasized as that which God is doing in the world, "building His Church."

It's with this Biblical mandate in view that IFCA International has expressed its commitment to church planting as declared in the following Vision and Goals statement

We are committed to aggressive involvement in the planting and establishing of biblical, local churches.

In order to accomplish this task we make the following recommendations:

1. Surveying the next state, county, city or town where there is no doctrinally sound, fundamental church for the purpose of starting one.
2. Emphasizing evangelism of the lost, not taking away members from existing Bible-believing churches.
3. Reaching out to people in their own language and culture.
4. Using a variety of methods in church planting.
5. Including a sponsoring church or churches whenever possible.
6. Emphasizing the value of those churches planted and served to affiliate with IFCA International.
7. Developing a strategy for the coordination of Church Extension efforts.
8. Continuing the development of the IFCA International ChurchNet in order to share resources and encouragement for Church Extension agencies.

This declaration is not just the commitment of IFCA International Church Extension agencies; it is the call of God for every member and every church to involvement in Gospel outreach.

Such a heart of compassion will keep our eyes open to neighboring communities and their spiritual need. It will result in evangelism and personal witness; it will cross language, color, and cultural barriers; it will allow for a variety of methods, creativity in approach, and acceptance to change.

This involvement in church planting will recognize the importance of working together, the strength of inter-dependence, and the value of IFCA International fellowship and membership. Such inter-dependence is the foundation of the Adopt-A-Church plan, which has so greatly been used of God! I trust your church has become involved.

The ministry of IFCA International members and churches in church planting is unique, for there is no central agency of control, nor one prescribed formula of "How To..." But rather there is a pooling and sharing of resources and materials from across the country through IFCA International ChurchNet. From this, each local church, and each Regional church extension agency compile their own specific strategy for church planting in their geographical area.

But some would ask, "Church planting here in America? Shouldn't we spend our time and money reaching the heathen?" The facts are that an increasing secularization and a growing immigrant population make the United States a needy mission field.

There are also those who have the perception that there are more than enough churches in the United States already. We do well to carefully investigate the facts. Statistics reveal that approximately 170 million people in the United States do not know our Savior. The number of church people in the USA is rapidly declining. In 1900, over 66 percent of the American population were professed Christians. Today, only 22 percent belong to a Bible-believing church, and over 110 million are unchurched. In fact, there are over 30 million Americans who are militantly anti-Christian. Thus, even with all the churches that exist in America, and even with all the Christian radio and TV programs, our beloved country is now the fourth largest spiritually unreached mission field in the world! Yes, the opportunity exists in the USA, but the response is apathetic. In many of the 350,000 churches in America, the Gospel is not preached, nor is Biblical doctrine taught.

As we approach the year 2000, leading missiologists cite statistics that indicate there is an overwhelming response to the Gospel throughout the world. People are turning to Christ in thrilling numbers in almost every country of the world--that is, every country except the United States of America.

It's true! In America, the missionary sending country, we are losing ground. In 1900 there were 28 churches for every 10,000 people. Today there are but 9 churches for every 10,000 people in the United States. The inroads of humanism, liberalism, and anti-God belief in America is frightening. If present trends continue, by the year 2025 the United States of America will be the center of atheism and unbelief.

To evangelize, and then disciple this growing number of unbelievers, we need a multitude of missionaries who will plant Christ-centered, Bible-believing churches. And the people who are members of Bible-believing churches need to be instilled with a vision for Mission Field America. The fact is, if we do not catch a vision for church planting in America, there will also be a dwindling base for mission outreach worldwide. Church planting in the United States is an investment in world missions. For each church planted represents future missionaries, more people praying for world missions, and a broadening financial base for world missions.

The bottom line--the primary reason--for planting churches in America is that there are unsaved people, perhaps people living next door to you or me, who need to hear the good news of salvation by grace through faith. Our investment of life, time and finances in church planting is an investment in the eternal souls of men, women, boys and girls--indeed, an investment for eternity!

The time is now! The time for Church planting! The time to make a difference for the outreach of the Gospel.

Youth Ministry in IFCA International

Rev. Van Marsceau

For many youth groups in our IFCA International churches the big event of the year is attending the Annual Youth Convention held the last full week of June. This is a week full of spiritual challenge and competition in a variety of areas such as sacred music, Bible quizzing, preaching, storytelling, drama, puppets, and sports. Held each year on a different college campus, the Youth Convention provides an opportunity for our youth to have a big trip to begin the summer.

In the past few years we have been on campuses in Illinois, New York, Michigan, Colorado, Florida, and Oregon. More than 350 teens and over one hundred adults from more than 40 churches and 15 states are represented. It is a fantastic week of friendship-building among teens and adults alike, and for many it is the only time to fellowship with other IFCA International youth groups from around the country.

Since spiritual impact is the primary goal of the week, there is a great deal of focus upon our morning and evening rallies. These are wonderful times of singing, worship, special music, and challenging speakers. Our teen-to-counselor ratio is usually in the six-to-one range and each evening small group devotional and prayer times wrap up our busy days.

Our largest areas of competition are Bible Quizzing and Sacred Music. The commitment to excellence in these areas is obvious as teens demonstrate the results of their hours and hours of hard work in either intense competition or careful review by a panel of judges. Young people who are not involved in the afternoon competitions have time to get involved in special trips, activities, and recreational opportunities. Following our evening sessions, there is time to relax. Some head for the gymnasium for competition in volleyball or basketball, while others have time to enjoy some food and fellowship at the snack bar.

The official written purpose statement for IFCA International Youth Conventions is as follows:

To create a climate in which our young people will be motivated to a higher level of devotion and service to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Through our areas of competition, to assist young people in their personal growth in Christ, to strengthen Bible knowledge, to be selective in their choice of Christian music, to attend conservative Christian schools and to promote fun and wholesome relationships.

The Annual Youth Convention is planned and administrated by an appointed group of individuals who make up the IFCA International Youth Committee. This is a group of about six pastors and laymen who serve three-year terms. They meet at the home office of the IFCA International each November for a three-day planning session, and then attend the Youth Convention each summer to provide leadership. For more than 30 years the IFCA International has provided the Youth Convention, and it is the faithful service of the youth committee that has been used by the Lord to make convention week a great tool for spiritual impact.

As we look to the future for youth in our IFCA International churches we see the Youth Convention as a key opportunity to bring our young people together annually for fellowship, spiritual decision-making and growth, and the encouragement in Christian living that is a natural outcome of exposure to other teens and groups from our Bible churches all across the country.

We are praying that in the near future God will enable us to recruit a full-time Youth Representative who would work out of the home office in Grand Rapids, MI. He would work with the Youth Committee in planning the Youth Convention, as well as be available as a consultant, guest speaker, and visionary for youth ministries in our churches.

What a great opportunity we have in IFCA International to touch the lives of literally thousands of teens! What would happen if we had teens from over 400 IFCA International churches joining together each summer rather than over 40?! As a former youth pastor, I used the IFCA International Youth Convention as a key annual event on our youth calendar for more than a decade. Through the years we have taken dozens and dozens of teens to these conventions and I can give first-hand testimony to the fact that this is a week is a week that God uses to capture the hearts of our teens. Nearly every year we saw our teens making decisions to attend Bible College, enter missions and full-time Christian service, get right with God in the area of holy living, and even some to be saved! I am a firm believer in the fact that one of the greatest tools available to our churches and youth leaders is the annual Youth Convention. See you there in June!

Rev. Van Marsceau is the Pastor of the Fellowship Bible Church located in historic Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. He is a graduate of Appalachian Bible College, and served in full time pastoral youth ministry for 13 years. Also, he presently serves as the chairman of the IFCA Youth Committee.