WELCOME TO WORD OF GRACE NETWORK

Word of Grace Network is a fellowship of leaders who want to participate in the great end-time harvest. To accomplish this, we must build stronger relationships, so we can work together.

Consider this: If each of us were given a short piece of string and were told to go out and catch fish, how much would we be able to accomplish by ourselves? Yet, if we took the time to tie each piece of string together, we could form a great net and catch many fish. We need to share our gifts, our time, and our resources, to more effectively advance the Kingdom of God together as a network. Within these pages, you can learn more about the vision and values that our network aspires to.

OUR HISTORY

Back in the late 1980s, the Lord had given me a vision for this kind of relationship-based fellowship of church leaders, which was not common in those days. This vision was confirmed in a vivid way through a prophetic presbytery held at our church in 1991, but we waited for the Lord to establish it in His way and in His time. In the meantime, Penn began to relate informally to several other pastors who were more apostolic in their thinking, which was reflected in their desire to do missions together. We began going overseas together, sharing in each other's pulpits, and retreating together for several years. The other thing we had in common was that we had all been part of denominations and networks that did not provide what we were looking for in terms of affiliation. We all wanted to be part of a like-minded group where we could be together and build together, for the benefit of the next generation of leaders. These men would eventually make up the founding members of Word of Grace Network.

In the meantime, I had been asked to help form a fellowship for pastors in Orissa, India for the tribal pastors I was working with. This became Word of Grace – India. (formed in 1996) Whatever I learned during this experience I was able to apply to establishing the network here in North America.

Word of Grace Network was formally launched in 2001, with seven founding members who were all pastoring churches in New York State.

Currently, there are sixty men and their wives who relate to us formally and informally, mostly from New York State and Ohio, but others are from the eastern seaboard and Canada.

A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING

Today, God is raising up many apostolic-minded churches to network together, so they can help bring in the end-time harvest. To do this effectively, we must begin thinking differently than we did in the past. Most of us came out of various denominational backgrounds but the system needed so much time, energy, and finances to maintain, yet it produced so little. My personal experience could be described as walking beside a large combine as it crawled across the field, with all the steam and noise, belts, pulleys, and tracks moving, yet out the back end came a big puff of smoke and a little bale of hay. I did not want to spend any more time being part of something that worked so hard to accomplish so little. During this same timeframe, several brothers with whom I was working in missions found that we could accomplish so much more, because we were all like-minded. That is when I began to make a distinction between apostolic thinking and denominational thinking.

APOSTOLIC THINKING

Apostles tend to bring people together for a common work, strengthen local churches, plant new works, raise up leaders, and do mission work at home and overseas. In many cases, an apostle will also pastor a local church. The life and liberty of that church will attract other like-minded ministries and churches, so they can join together to reach their area.

Apostolic movements have five basic things in common:

1. They gather churches and people around specific purposes, not just around specific doctrinal distinctives.

2. They realize that the form and function of most present-day denominations are not sufficient alone to get the harvest in.

3. They encourage leadership to function with a higher level of authority than what would be allowed in most denominations, who tend to reserve most of their authority to a board function.

4. They tend to have a higher expectation of what a local church can do to impact the world.

5. Apostolic-minded churches are usually connected with other churches out of mutual respect and have common goals.

DENOMINATIONAL THINKING

Denominations are usually made up of those who hold the same doctrine, the same system of government or the same historical roots. Networks can be made up of people who come from many different backgrounds but are like-minded because they share the same values and vision.

Denominations usually place people into fellowship together because they share the same geographic location, whereas Networks tend to link people together because of relationships, despite the geography involved.

Denominations tend to control things from a central government, whereas Networks want to give as much local autonomy to churches as possible.

Denominations tend to require exclusive relationships with their ministers, whereas Networks will work with anyone who is interested in building the Kingdom of God.

Denominations tend to invite people into positions of influence based on rank, tenure, or political influence, whereas Networks tend to focus more on a person's calling, gifts, and the health of their relationships with others.

We have worked with many different denominations through the years, but enjoy this new approach to networking together in order to get the great harvest in. We believe it will be so great, that God will use every available means to get it in, including denominations.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE JOIN YOUR NETWORK?

There are a few reasons people are joining networks these days, such as:

1. *They Like Our Purpose:* Someone may want to join Word of Grace Network because they have a desire to work with others, have a vision to plant new churches, want to help develop new young leaders, and do outreach together, both here and overseas. The Kingdom of God advances best through cooperative effort, and much can be accomplished when like-minded people with the same vision and different gifts work together.

2. *They Want Relationships:* Another reason someone may want to join Word of Grace is because they have a strong desire for real relationships, which not only strengthens our own spiritual lives, but also benefits their local church. The healthier we are, the healthier our churches can be. The central focus of our network, the thing that will hold us together, will be the relationships we intentionally cultivate. If this is not your goal, then there is not much point in joining.

3. *They want a structure that releases ministry, rather than restricts it:* We have all experienced both the blessings and limitations of structure. While some structure is needed, we do not want to put all our time and resources into maintaining a system of government that is too top-heavy or cumbersome. Our goal is to keep the structure as light and flexible as possible.

4. *They Want to Build Something for the Next Generation:* One reason to join our network is to help build something for the next generation that we didn't have ourselves. Most of us grew up in denominations that were not especially supportive or healthy. Some of the structures were not safe to be in. The next generation can learn from our experience. What if we worked together to build the kind of network that our young men and women would flourish in? Join us if you want to help do this through our godly example of how we build relationships, maintain healthy accountability, and find balanced teaching. We can also help them by giving them training seminars, reflective retreats, and powerful outreach opportunities, which allow them to build stronger ministries.

WHERE DOES YOUR NAME COME FROM?

The name *Word of Grace* comes from a verse found in Acts 20:32 where the apostle Paul entrusted the churches he had established to their elders, entrusting them to God and to the *"word of His grace".* This is our heart and tends to be the desire of those who affiliate with us.

WHAT ARE YOUR BASIC BELIEFS?

The Holy Scriptures — The Foundation of Truth. We believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, upon which we should build every aspect of our lives.

The Eternal Godhead. We believe the Godhead to be a Trinity, which consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christ — God Reaching Out to Mankind. We believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His atoning death and in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father. We

also believe in Christ's personal return in power and great glory, in His millennial reign and His everlasting dominion.

The Plan of Total Redemption. We believe in salvation, healing and deliverance through the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary.

Daily Christian Living. We believe in personal sanctification, holiness of heart and the overcoming life as scriptural requirements for becoming The Bride of Christ.

The Keeping Power of God. We believe that Jesus Christ can keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

The Spirit-Filled Life. We believe in the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a distinct experience from the new birth, and that the gifts of the Spirit and His miraculous power are as available today as they were in the early days of the church. We also believe it to be equally essential to have the fruit of the Spirit, so that we do not have power without purity.

We Will Live for All Eternity. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of eternal life and those who are lost to the resurrection of eternal punishment.

Human Life Begins at Conception. We believe that life begins at conception and that we should provide the same love and protection before the birth of a child as we would give after. (Psalm 139:13-16)

Sexual Sins. We believe that any sexual activity outside of marriage is sin, including same sex marriage. If such sin were to remain unconfessed as such, it would result in the participant's ineligibility to be part of the Kingdom of God. For this same reason, those who are unrepentant would also be ineligible to be part of our network. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)

Obeying Jesus' Great Commission. We believe in evangelistic and missionary fervor, endeavoring to convert the lost in obedience to the Great Commission. By so doing, we also strengthen the spiritual lives of those who are already His.

God's Order for Living. We believe that it is essential to our growth and development that we honor God-ordained authority both in the home, in the church, and in civil government.

OUR GLOBAL GOALS

Word of Grace has been active in many other countries overseas including India, the Ukraine, Haiti, and Chile, Colombia, Spain, Brazil, Portugal, and several places in Central America. Everyone in our network is involved with overseas missions in some way, either by doing relief work, training leaders, or planting churches, or providing support for those who do this.

It is also our desire to help indigenous leaders build autonomous networks of their own. We tend to relate to those who do not fit into any denominational mold, but who want to be part of something larger than themselves.

We want to show them that it is important to be connected and accountable to others, so we can build safe, healthy churches for our people.

They need to know that it is possible to have real authority without dominating another's faith. To do this, we intentionally limit our own authority, so they can see by our example how we serve the Lord. We desire no other authority beyond what this affords us.

We desire that each native network work with other kingdom-minded ministries who are doing the same kind of work in their area. We want to find ways to bless and support them because "Freely we have received, freely we give."

It is our desire to come alongside those who are already helping the poor, planting churches, providing leadership training, and doing evangelism, rather than going into an area and doing this ourselves.

We desire to support our native partners through counsel, training, and other resources, which will help them fulfill their mission.

We are looking to partner with those who want what is in our hearts, rather than what is in our wallets. It is our goal to avoid creating any unhealthy financial dependencies but to show how to trust the Lord to meet our needs.

We tend to draw those who hold a conservative view of the scripture, have a real reliance on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and whose priority is to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of Word of Grace Network is to build a relationship-based fellowship of like- minded pastors and ministers, so we can work together in missions, both here and around the world.

We have defined our values and vision, established a course of action, and set a standard of accountability so that, together, we can build strong, healthy churches.

To fulfill this purpose, we will focus on the following areas:

- We want to provide a place where church leaders can establish meaningful relationships with those who are like-minded.
- We want to provide general oversight that enhances local church autonomy and inspires accountability among our pastors.
- We want to provide events where church leaders can come together for mutual edification.
- We want to provide resources for ministers and those preparing for ministry, that will enhance their personal life and help develop their ministry.
- We want to work together to do outreach and church planting, which will help enlarge the Kingdom of God.

We trust that as we work together to fulfill these goals, our affiliate churches will have a growing sense of identity and purpose. They will have a connection with something that is local, as well as have an active part in what God is doing around the world.

OUR RESOURCES

The following resources are available for anyone who is hungry for real fellowship, good spiritual food, and to be part of the great end-time harvest.

Annual Conferences. We have a couple conferences a year, so our members can come together to develop and deepen their relationships. These meetings have worship and teaching that is refreshing and relevant for pastors and church leaders. We will also have our annual business meeting during our spring Leadership Conference.

Retreats. There will be retreats in various geographical areas for the purpose of seeking the Lord, gaining vision, deepening our relationships. We also have an annual pastors' campout which allows time for them to seek the Lord and be built up.

Teaching Material. Teaching material is available in book form, on our website, and social media like YouTube, which our members can access.

Pastoral Assistance. Our leadership team will be available to provide consultation and assistance for all our pastors and their churches.

Mission Trips. There are always various trips in the works, which we want those who are part of our network to take part in. We have relationships with some of the best native mission partners in many parts of the world.

OUR VALUES AND VISION

Today, God is raising up many apostles and apostolic-minded churches to network together to bring in the end-time harvest. Apostles tend to bring people together around a common purpose, which often involves strengthening local churches, planting new works, raising up new leaders, and doing mission work here and overseas.

In many cases, an apostle will pastor a local church, and the life and liberty of that church will attract other churches and ministries who want to reach their area. Apostolic-minded churches are usually connected with other churches who share the same values and vision. However, these networks are not new denominations. Their form and function are different.

Apostolic networks have four basic things in common:

1. They gather churches and people around specific purposes, not specific doctrinal distinctives or historical backgrounds.

2. They realize that the form and function of most present-day denominations are not sufficient alone to get the harvest in.

3. They encourage leadership to function with a higher level of authority than what would be allowed in most denominations.

4. They have a higher expectation of what a local church can do to impact the world.

HOW IS THE NETWORK FINANCED?

Just like a local church, we expect those who relate to us to show their commitment by their attendance, participation, relationship to leadership, and financial support, so we would like those who are committed to Word of Grace to show it the same way.

Each Network has its own way of gathering financial support for the group. Some require that the senior pastor direct their personal tithe to support the network. We do not want to tell our members how much they should give, as it would change the nature of our relationship. Instead, we would like each pastor or minister to find a way to give consistently to the ongoing support of the network.

This support goes to pay our staff salaries, office expenses, and helps with our event costs.

Our Leadership Team decides how the finances will be disbursed. An accounting of each year's spending, as well as any proposed spending, will be presented at our annual meeting.

Our treasurer has created a PayPal account for Word of Grace Network donations and support: @WordofGracePennYanNY

HOW DOES YOUR LEADERSHIP FUNCTION?

The leadership team of Word of Grace Network acts as elders, the same as they would in a local church. Their responsibilities are:

1. to establish the vision for and provide direction to the Word of Grace with the input from our members.

2. to ensure that this network functions in a way that honors the Lord and the vision He gave us.

3. to maintain doctrinal purity by issuing position statements as the need arises.

4. to raise up and release like-minded leaders to assist in reaching our goals.

5. to help set the direction and themes for the gatherings, retreats, and seminars.

6. to be available to assist our pastors and affiliate churches, as the need arises.

7. to oversee the finances, including collection, budgeting, accounting, and distribution of finances given in trust by our members. They shall provide an annual report to the network.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE CREDENTIALING?

We believe that the pastors and missionaries of our network should be ordained or credentialed by the local church. This is not only more practical, but it ensures true autonomy of the local church and the best way to ensure accountability. If someone fails to maintain their ministry, the local church can remove their credentials.

Word of Grace can provide temporary credentials for pastors who are in transition from one church to another or for those churches who have not developed to the point where they can do this for themselves.

WHAT DOES ACCOUNTABILITY MEAN TO YOU?

We believe that every church and ministry should be completely autonomous, but with accountability. Here is what we mean by accountability:

INTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

1. You must have a constitution that outlines how you should function in the following areas?

- How the church government is structured
- How decision-making takes place
- How to obtain and remove a pastor
- How to obtain and remove an overseer
- How to manage Church finances in compliance with the State

2. Do you publicly give an account for the major decisions that have been made and allow your members to have input in the major decisions that you face as a church? Is there full financial disclosure? This is usually done at an annual meeting of the members.

3. Are there good record-keeping procedures in place, such as maintaining church minutes and bookkeeping?

4. Is someone other than the pastor looking after the finances of the church?

5. Is there a clear outline of how the authority of the church is structured?

EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Do you have someone known by the members as the overseer of the congregation?

2. Are they just a friend of the pastor, or is he a friend of the church?

3. Are they geographically accessible?

4. To whom are they accountable?

5. Are the limits of their authority and responsibilities clearly defined?

6. Are they accountable to a network themselves?

I once sat on a denominational credentialing committee for almost ten years. During this time, I realized that we could not really get to know the pastor who was being ordained or fully understand the needs of the congregation as well as the local church board could. For the most part, it was a shot in the dark. No one can convince me that those who served on this committee were any more spiritual, discerning, or concerned than those who sit on the board of a local church. Our level of risk was also far less than the leaders of the local church. After all, they would be the ones who had to live with the decision we made about the person who was pastoring them. Finally, we did not have any more authority from the Lord to do this than those in the local church had.

Somehow, having credentials with a denomination can give a false sense of connection. We all know that it is possible to have this legal bond but not be in real relationship with the group that

issued the papers. Some may argue that issuing credentials could give the larger body the authority to make sure the pastor conformed to a certain standard in his ministry. Wouldn't it be better to have the desire to conform come out of relationship and respect, rather than the threat of having papers revoked?

I have a few handbooks and policies collected from various organizations that cover all the manifold regulations pertaining to the credentialing process. While some of it is well written, it could all be reduced to a single piece of paper if the local church were the ones who held the responsibility for the pastors' credentials.

The credentialing committee I worked on always had difficulties knowing when their authority came into play in the process of selecting a pastor. For example, if a church decided to call a pastor, they could not do it without our involvement. By the time all the parties gathered together to work at it, the process within the local church was well under way. If the church found a pastor they really wanted and our committee did not feel good about him, there was not much we could do about it. In fact, there were times we consented to a pastor being ordained that we didn't feel good about coming to a church, because of the congregation's desire.

Finally, if those who hold the credentials are not pleased with how a pastor is performing in his role, they can do more about it than a denominational board can. It was always interesting to note that no matter how big the handbooks were, they really did not have any teeth in them. This is not the case when a local church holds the credentials, and it is clearly spelled out in the constitution how they can remove a dysfunctional pastor.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

We would work with a pastor and leadership of a local church to help them become accountable.

- We can provide a sample of a good constitution to any church that is looking for one.
- We believe each church should have an overseer who can help the church in difficult times.
- In order to be considered accountable, we would expect any pastor who joins our network to become fully compliant within the first two years of joining Word of Grace.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN AN OVERSEER?

There are several things you should look for in an overseer, beyond what is listed in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1.

- You should find an overseer who has accountability built into his own life and ministry.
- His relationship with the Lord seems fresh and vital.
- You should find someone who will be a friend of the church, not just a friend of the pastor.
- You should find someone who has pastored growing congregations themselves.

If your church is a recent church planting, you should find someone who has experience in church planting. If your church is redeveloping an existing congregation, the overseer should have experience with that.

You should find someone who is geographically accessible. All long-range relationships should be on a short-term basis.

You will need to talk about what your expectations are, such as: how long will his term last, how often he will preach in the church; how often he should initiate visits with the pastor; is he expected to attend board meetings; is he expected to attend the annual meetings; should he receive church minutes; will he be compensated; at what rate will his travel expenses be reimbursed. You should also talk about how to handle disgruntled people from the congregation when they contact the overseer with a complaint.

THIS ROLE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR CONSTITUTION

The limits, expectations, and qualifications of an overseer should be clearly stated in your constitution. It should also state how an overseer is added and removed. The overseer does not have to be a member of Word of Grace, but it is important that they have a real relationship with that local church and the pastors.

Here is an example of what one local church has included in its constitution concerning the overseer:

The Overseer (Bishop) shall demonstrate a divine call to Pastoral ministry and have the qualifications described in First Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7. The Overseer shall be a Pastor to the Pastors and shall provide an objective source of counsel for the congregation.

a. The Overseer shall be consulted before any major change takes place in the life of our pastors or church.

b. He shall be invited to attend the Annual Meetings of the church.

c. He should initiate contact with the Senior Pastor or church leadership as often as agreed upon at the beginning of the term.

Elections and Appointments

The Elders shall appoint the Overseer for a term of three years, with a review.

Those placed in any position within the church shall assume their responsibilities upon election at the Annual Meeting.

Removing an Overseer

a. Any office may be declared vacant by a vote of the majority of those serving as elders at any regular or special business meeting. Grounds for such action shall be:

1. Unscriptural conduct.

2. Doctrinal departure from the tenets of faith.

3. Incompetence in office.

b. Any incumbent under charges shall have the opportunity for a fair and impartial hearing of his case before the assembly if he so desires.

c. The Elders are empowered to fill by appointment any irregular vacancy until the next annual election of any official capacities.

WHAT DOES LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY MEAN?

There has always been a tension between being autonomous and being accountable, especially when it comes to ordination and membership, which are the basis for speaking into each other's lives and ministries. Our Network is built in a way that ensures mutual accountability without encroaching on local autonomy. We believe that each mature* local church should be completely autonomous; that is, locally governed, locally credentialed, and locally supported.

1. LOCALLY GOVERNED

We do not want to have the kind of authority that allows us to come into a local church and tell them how to function or who their pastor should be. This authority should rest at the local church level. Our authority, or influence, comes from our example, teaching, and the advice we share when asked.

However, we do require that each pastor and affiliate church be able to show that they are truly accountable. This includes having a good working constitution to help guide the church in decision-making and that shows them how to properly change pastors. It would also involve having an overseer appointed who can help them through any difficulties that may arise.

Our leadership team does not automatically provide oversight for all our pastors or churches, as our responsibility is to oversee the entire network. We would only provide specific oversight or pastoral care for a congregation if we were asked to do so on a short- term basis if they were in serious trouble. If this is case, our leadership team may require that a different approach to church government be put in place, which we feel would improve the life and function of the local church. This level of involvement would only occur if a congregation was in a crisis.

Our leadership team would provide a consultation and pastoral care for the pastor, overseer, or churches if it was formally requested of us.

2. LOCALLY CREDENTIALED

We think the ideal is that each local church should provide the credentials needed by their own pastors. Our goal would be to help the local church, so they could do this legally, and with responsibility. Word of Grace would only provide temporary credentials for a pastor that was in development or transition. We would also help any church we planted with this kind of assistance while they are getting started.

3. LOCALLY SUPPORTED

Word of Grace Network does not own local church property or financially support pastors. Both of these would prevent the local church from truly being self-supporting and would require too much legislation, restriction, and oversight from our leaders.

In terms of accountability, we would want to know that each church is fiscally responsible and that they give a proper accounting to their members annually.

* A mature church is one that has developed to the stage that it can stand alone and has its own incorporation, constitution, and leadership in place.

WHAT DOES APOSTOLIC MEAN TO YOU?

We not only believe that apostles still exist today, but we see their contribution as being vital to our church growth and development.

THE GIFT OF AN APOSTLE

The Greek word "apostolos" means "one who is sent forth" as a messenger and one who represents the name or authority of the person that he speaks for. The role of an ambassador is as close to this concept that we see today. The modern term `missionary' is similar because both are "sent forth" but many denominational missionaries are not sent out with apostolic authority operating in their ministries. This prevents us from saying all missionaries are apostolic.

THREE CATEGORIES OF APOSTLES

The following section was first presented as a white paper to a group of us Mennonite pastors, back in the early 90s, when there was very little written about the ministry of apostles. It is likely the first thing I had ever read about apostolic ministry. It was not an original piece by the author, but something he compiled from a variety of sources. Today, it appears in many books, so I will not credit it to just one source.

Many reject the idea of modern-day apostles because we only think of the first twelve as being apostolic, which no one can be compared with today. This is true, but we should see three basic categories of apostles.

JESUS WAS THE CHIEF (FIRST) APOSTLE

> *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus . . .* (Hebrews 3:1)

Jesus serves as our foremost model of the ministry of the apostle. We can look to Him alone for the full expression of what an apostolic ministry looks like. This is also true of the prophet, evangelist, pastor/shepherd, and teacher. When He ascended, He divided up His ministry into five parts and gave them to men so that they would continue. I also think He divided them up so that no one could function alone, but we would need each other to fulfill His ministry. Team ministry is necessary to fully express His ministry in the earth.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE LAMB

The next group is made up of the first apostles:

> *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.* (Matthew 10:2–4)

> *Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* (Revelation 21:14)

We have so elevated the Twelve in our thinking that it is difficult for some to consider that there may be other men with the same gift and calling today. But the fact is there were other apostles in the New Testament church other than the original twelve.

If we limit our list of apostles to the first ones, we will have trouble figuring out where to put Matthias, Paul, and Barnabas.

The fact is, there were about 22 apostles overseeing the Church in its early days, when there were only a few thousand people to care for. Today, we should expect many more apostles to oversee a worldwide Church.

> *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* (Ephesians 4:11–13 KJV)
>
> *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.* (1 Corinthians 12:28)

These verses teach us that apostles were needed to help build up the Body and that this was an ongoing work, needed until we have attained the unity of the faith. If this were true, they are certainly just as needed today as they were in the beginning of the Church.

We are told that God has appointed them, but nowhere is it taught that any of these ministries has been *unappointed*. Apostles will be needed until the Church is perfected and presented to Jesus. Until then, every gift is needed to get this accomplished.

A LIST OF OTHER APOSTLES

There are at least ten apostles mentioned specifically in the New Testament, besides the original twelve. Here is my list:

Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy:

When Paul was writing to the church at Thessalonica, he included Timothy in the greeting in verse 1:1, and always referred to him throughout this first chapter whenever he uses the words, "… we… us… our."

Paul continues to do this in chapter 2, verse 6 saying, *"Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 2:6).

This means Paul thought Timothy was an apostle.

Barnabas:

Barnabas was sent out at the same time Paul was and has always been included in the list of apostles. I think he was a prophet, according to Acts 13:1, but was functioning as an apostle. It clearly says this in Acts 14:14, *"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out."*

Andronicus and Junia (Junia was a woman):

Paul mentions this couple in Romans 16:7, who were a dynamic apostolic team:

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Titus and two unnamed brothers:

Titus obviously travelled with Paul and suffered with him, but the title of apostle is not obviously conferred upon him in the book of Acts. However, the word *messengers* used in Paul's letter is the word *apostolos*:

"If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ." (2 Corinthians 8:23)

In Philippians 2:25, Paul also referred to Epaphroditus as a *messenger*, which is also *apostolos*.

James, the brother of Jesus:

James, who gave oversight to the church at Jerusalem, was also considered to be an apostle (see 1 Corinthians 9:5, 15:5–8; Galatians 1:19).

MODERN-DAY APOSTLES

In my opinion, there are several high-profile apostles in modern history, such as St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland. St. Boniface was called the "Apostle to the Germans." Count Ludwig Von Zinzendorf who was the leader of the Moravians, and I see John Wesley as an apostle. Hudson Taylor went to China with apostolic grace, as did John G. Lake, who went to South Africa. Charles G. Finney was called an evangelist, but he planted churches, went abroad, and was the most influential minister in the church for several generations. Today, I would see John Wimber and Bill Johnson as apostles, though neither have used this title. There was a time when no one in their right mind would claim to be an apostle if they wanted to be respected. It was just not done.

These days, there are many people who claim to be apostles but do not have the stature of these men who functioned as apostles. At the same time, we are seeing a trend where many people claim the title or are proclaimed as such, but I am not certain they have the authority that comes with the calling.

Often, the calling of an apostle is specific to a region or a people group. Paul wrote that he was an apostle to the Gentiles and that Peter was an apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:8). The apostle becomes a father of the work, and he may remain as head of the ministry with several leaders under

him or he may move on, as Paul did, turning the established work over to others. The apostle Paul is the best type to illustrate all the statements above.

To say that all apostles must be sent somewhere else to work, as we see in the lives of Paul and Barnabas, is overly simplified. For example, the apostle James (the Lord's brother) was based in Jerusalem, heading up the largest church in the world, but there is no evidence that he travelled anywhere (Acts 21:20). I think there are apostles who are based in one location, perhaps impacting a large city while building an influential church instead of starting many churches in different locations, like Paul did in Acts 19:9–10.

Today, there are those sent out as missionaries, but who carry neither the apostolic authority nor grace to build anything in the Kingdom. Some only have administrative or supervisory abilities, recognized by their denomination.

Often, when people lay out the list of things that make up an apostle, they will say they need to have seen the risen Christ. Paul used this as one of his claims of being an apostle, but we should not impose this upon everyone else. Not all apostles in the New Testament saw Jesus after He was resurrected. For example, there is no proof that Barnabas, Timothy, or Silas had ever experienced such a vision, yet they were clearly listed as being apostles.

This may sound like a contradiction to my statement about no one having all the gifts, but I believe apostles will often function to a limited degree in each of the other four ministry gifts. By this I mean they will often act like a prophet, preach like an evangelist, feel like a pastor, or think like a teacher. Paul would be the best example of this, but it isn't true across the board. However, an apostle should raise up pastors, evangelists, teachers, and release other ministries into their calling.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

The apostle has grace to minister each of the other four ministry gifts in a limited way: prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher. The apostle often will raise up pastors, evangelists, teachers, and other leaders to help them fulfill their calling. Often, the calling of an apostle is specific to a region or a people. Paul wrote that he was an apostle to the Gentiles and that Peter was an apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:8). The apostle becomes a father to the work, and he may remain as head of the ministry with several leaders under him, or he may move on, as Paul did, turning the established work over to someone else. The apostle Paul is the best type to illustrate all the statements above.

AN APOSTOLIC TEST

Of course, in this day there are some who present themselves apostles. Even in the New Testament we find people doing this. Within the church at Ephesus, after Paul left, a few people claimed to be apostles. In the book of Revelation, the Lord commended them for being able to distinguish between those who were true and false apostles. They had some kind of test.

> *"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. Do not marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers*

of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

"I know your works, and your labour, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil: and you have tried those who say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars..." (Revelation 2:2)

I wish I had a copy the one they used. If I were writing my own, I would hold up the person who claimed to be an apostle by the following characteristics:

Apostles have the grace upon their life to carry a revelation of Christ. In Ephesians 3:5, Paul speaks of the mystery *"…which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:"*

One of the functions of an apostle is having the ability to unfold the revelation of the Church. Stated more simply, the greatest purpose of apostolic ministry is to bring a revelation of Jesus.

Apostles have the grace upon their lives to father and mentor others. Paul told the Corinthian church, which he had planted: *"For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me."* (1 Corinthians 4:15-16)

Many of the apostolic ministries I have met have the "feel" of being a "father". Not only have they "begotten" and raised up sons in the faith, but they also have such a fatherly nurture and care that it makes younger ones want to be "adopted".

Apostles are usually team players. While an apostle can sometimes seem to be a jack- of-all-trades; he knows the overall objective can best be served through a team effort. A survey of the apostle Paul's ministry shows he always traveled with a team and mentioned many fellow-laborers in his letters by name.

Apostles are general contractors for the building of God. Paul called himself a master builder. The term "master builder" is actually "architekton" in the Greek language and is the derivative of our word "architect" who has the big picture. He knows what is to be built.

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:9-11)

Apostles usually have governmental authority. One of the consequences of being sent by God is having authority. If you are sent by God, you will have God's authority backing you up.

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power". (1 Corinthians 4:19-20)

Paul was saying, in essence, "Talk is cheap, but let me see what power you carry".

TITLES AND TERMINOLOGY

While we believe that there are many apostles today, we do not use this title when referring to one another or ourselves. We prefer to let the grace we carry speak for itself.

We believe that the elder who leads the church, which is called the presiding elder, or Senior Pastor holds the highest level of authority within a local church and all other five- fold ministry must defer to this office.

ANABAPTIST VALUES – OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

Most modern church groups draw their primary values from some movement that came out of the Protestant history. Some draw inspiration from Luther, others from Calvin, while many others have drawn from Wesley. Many of the people who have been part of Word of Grace came from Anabaptist backgrounds, such as Mennonites or Amish. We feel it is important to keep the best part of our heritage, honoring what God has imparted to us. In our case, we feel it is important to maintain the good example set for us by the early anabaptists, who made an invaluable contribution to the early Protestant Reformation. Some of their distinctives are still needed in the church today.

They believed that doing what Jesus said is central to our quality of life together. In a day when many people professed to be Christian, the Anabaptists insisted that you must show that you are a believer by doing what Jesus taught.

They believed that our relationships with others are a way of measuring the depth of our relationship with the Lord. The early Anabaptists seemed to put more of a premium on working at healthy personal relationships than most other groups at that time.

They believed in the priesthood of all believers. They did not believe in a domineering form of church government that controlled people's faith. The Anabaptists were some of the first to call for servant leadership. They also understood from scripture that everyone should do their part to minister to the spiritual needs of others, even if they didn't have the education required of priests.

They believed that there should be a great importance placed upon maintaining close and well-ordered communities and families. The Anabaptists wanted to get back to the Book of Acts, which meant having a strong sense of community where mutual aid was used to help each other. They cared for their own and stayed close together.

They believed that the weapons of their warfare were not carnal. They understood that Jesus taught and demonstrated non-resistance because He knew that this would effectively stop the devil. Ours is a spiritual conflict, which needs to be fought by spiritual means.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Here are some answers to the questions most asked about Word of Grace Network.

WHAT DO YOU REQUIRE OF MEMBERS?

Membership within Word of Grace Network is made up of those who are in five-fold ministry, who serve here or overseas. We also accept those who serve in the congregation as worship leaders, youth workers, or those who have some kind of special ministry within the local church. As a member, you will be invited to give input in our major decisions our leadership team makes on behalf of the network.

To initiate the process of joining Word of Grace, please fill out an application so we can learn more about you. An appointment will be arranged for you to meet with one of our leadership team. You must agree with our statement of faith, and we hope that you walk with an open heart concerning the other doctrinal positions that are important to us. Read through the material here carefully, as it can help you decide if we are the right group for you.

Because our goal is to build close relationships, we want to get to know you. This takes time, so we require all pastors to go through a waiting period where we can walk together to see how deep your commitment is to our values and vision.

The pastor becomes a member of Word of Grace, not their church. The church is simply affiliated with us.

Churches planted by Word of Grace will automatically become eligible to be a part of our network.

Please attach a short (1-2 pages) of personal biography aimed at helping us get to know you. Attach your church's constitution.

Give the name of your overseer. (even a proposed name)

E-mail these to: pennclark7@gmail.com

When making your monthly contribution, please make your checks payable to: Word of Grace Network and send them to: LaReta Riehl (Treasurer) 3800 Route 14A Penn Yan, NY 14527

Or use our PayPal account for Word of Grace Network for any donations or support you give by going to @WordofGracePennYanNY

ADDITIONAL DOCTRINAL POSITIONS

There are several important doctrinal positions we have taken that we feel you should carefully consider before joining our network. While you must accept everything in our Statement of Faith to be a member, these are additional doctrinal positions we want our members to move towards.

Elders Rule: We believe in headship in all things. This is modeled in the Godhead, established in the natural family, set up by God in Israel, used in the synagogue and ordained for the Church in the New Testament (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The "eldership" form of government, with a senior pastor or chief elder presiding over the flock, is the preferred way to provide leadership in the church. The elders are to the Church what parents are to a family. They are the spiritual parents of the local assembly and are responsible before God to raise up and equip the members of the church to be able to function in their God ordained callings. You can ask for our paper on this. You can read my book, Pillars of Authority to learn more about this.

Spiritual Headship: We believe that every believer in Christ must be subject to God's authority in a specific local church for spiritual protection and long-term fruitfulness. (Hebrews 13:17). Training for Ministry in the Local Church. We believe that much of the teaching and values emphasized in the seminaries is not suitable for developing solid pastoral leaders and church planters. We encourage more local training of our leaders. You can read my book, Honoring Headship to learn more about this.

Women in Ministry: In our minds, it is without question that women can function in ministry, as supported both by scripture and church history. However, each church

would be responsible to determine within themselves how far they would allow a woman to function in the government and pastoral offices within their own local church. You can ask for our booklet concerning this called Women Silent In Church? You can read my books Five Keys and Honoring Headship.

Divorce and Remarriage: We do not want to add anything more to the confusion of conscience that already exists in many pastors and church members today concerning the divisive subject of divorce and remarriage. Neither do we want to add any more to the statistics that document the staggering amount of divorce and remarriage that already has occurred both within our churches and society, so we ask our pastors to pledge to abstain from encouraging either divorce or remarriage until they have done the following things:

- They have meditated deeply upon what Jesus and Paul taught about the subject.
- They have looked at the fruit of divorce and remarriage.
- They have a clear conscience on the position they hold.
- They have shared their position openly with their congregation.

Ask for my book about this topics to learn how I arrived at my position.

WORD OF GRACE APPLICATION

(This application is for North American residents only)

Date of Application: _____

Your Full Name: _____

Your Preferred Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Number: _____

Office Number: _____

Home Number: _____

Church Name: _____

Church Address: _____

Church Web Address: _____

FAMILY INFORMATION (use more paper if need be)

Your Marital Status: _____

Your Spouse's Name: _____

When were you married? _____

Have you been faithful to your wedding vows? _____

Do you have excessive debt or poor credit score? _____

Your Date of Birth: _____

Your children's names and birthdays: _____

Tell us about your ministry:

What do you feel your primary calling is?

Can you explain your ministry more fully?

What year did you begin full-time ministry?

Do you maintain a regular Sabbath day other than Sunday?

Please give a chronological history of your ministry:

List any special giftings or grace that you can contribute to the network:

What is your vision for ministry?

Please list three references with their contact information. These should be people who know you well:

Why do you want to join Word of Grace?

Have you gone over all the material on this carefully?

Do you have any concerns or questions about what you read?

Do you have any ongoing issues or spiritual concerns we should be aware of?

We are based in the beautiful Finger Lakes region of central New York State.

E-mail this application to: pennclark7@gmail.com

Please make all donations payable to: Word of Grace Network Attention Treasurer: LaReta Riehl 3800 Route 14A Penn Yan, NY 14527

If you would like to give electronically, or set up PayPal to give automatically, use the following link:

https://paypal.me/WordofGracePennYanNY?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US

Please send all checks to LaReta Riehl at 3800 Route 14A Penn Yan, New York 14527, made payable to Word of Grace Network.

If there is a place that you would like to go with us, either overseas or here in North America, just let me know. This is a good way to get to know each other further.

ANNUAL EVENTS

In the past we have had annual events which we everyone is encouraged to attend. These meetings are also open to our guest. At our 2019 spring convention we will decide what events we will build into our calendars for the foreseeable future.

Our Spring Leadership Conference which is held in Penn Yan, New York, each spring. These meetings are open to anyone who is in ministry, preparing for ministry, or in leadership within the local church.

Our CampMeeting is usually held each summer near Penn Yan. This is something for the whole family.

Our Fall Pastor's Campout or Road Trip usually takes place in the fall of the year.

Our Youth Gathering is an event designed to help our young people to network among themselves.

We also provide personal retreats upon request at our Discipleship House in Penn Yan.

MY BOOKS

We have several books that can enlarge on what we have written about here. They are available in print and as eBooks at www.wordsmithpublishing.store.

These include:

A Life-Giving Church, which is our vision for the local church.

Becoming Apostolic, which describes how we see apostles and their relationship to the five-fold ministry gifts.

Pillars of Authority, which talks about how we see authority at work in the local church.

What Jesus Said About Divorce and Remarriage

Headship: God's Order For The Family and Church

Updated in Nov2026.