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after week. I’m also concerned when I see some compromise on the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The health and dynamic power of the Early Church were directly tied to its identity as a church of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowered a love among the believers for the lost around them. Early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to minister in the miraculous. The sick were healed, and the gifts and fruit of the Spirit were clearly evident. That should be the norm.

tpe: You’ve said you believe God is calling this church back to the basics.

TRASK: We were raised up to be a praying church. We were raised up to be a missions church. We were raised up to be a church that introduces people to Jesus Christ ... a witnessing church. We were raised up to be a church of compassion — not just sending in offerings but also going where people are hurting and ministering to them. I see God calling us back to those basics across our Fellowship.

I’ve been reading the Gospels again, and I have been captured by how many times Jesus healed people. The church must be Christ’s hands extended to bring healing — physically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, in all aspects — to the world in which we live.

tpe: Why is it so easy for us to move away from the major truths of the gospel to our minor differences?

TRASK: It’s really tied to the level of commitment involved. The major truths require something of us. The minor issues over which we differ are usually motivated by emotion. But identifying and remaining focused on eternal truth requires we be a people of the Word.

When we stay Bible-based, Bible-centered, we will stay properly focused. You can’t take a part of the Word; you must major on the full Word of God. We are full-gospel people and that brings about theological balance and balance in the expressions of our faith.

tpe: You’ve said, “It’s not about the Assemblies of God; it’s about the kingdom of God.” Can you elaborate on that?

TRASK: Jesus’ life was consumed with doing the will of His Father. His attention was always centered on the kingdom of God. Our motivation today should not just be focused on our Fellowship, but on the kingdom of God. Everything we do needs to be motivated with God in mind. “Lord, we want to bless Your kingdom.” “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Assemblies of God box isn’t big enough to contain God. We’re not the only fellowship and the only people God is blessing. He is blessing many other churches. We need to recognize that and rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Christ and come alongside them in ministry.

tpe: You want people to find acceptance within this church. How is that put into practice?

TRASK: In the creative genius of God, the Assemblies of God was formed as a fellowship, not a denomination. There’s a world of difference between the two. As a denomination ages, it becomes more protective. But a fellowship is a releasing agency. We have been able to embrace a spectrum of God-given ministries such as Teen Challenge, Master’s Commission and Convoy of Hope. The kingdom of God has been blessed as a result.

I just met with 13 ministers who have moved here from Ukraine. They represent about 300 Pentecostal churches across America that want to be a part of the Assemblies of God.

Under the Iron Curtain, our missionary family came alongside their Pentecostal Union and said, “Look, you don’t have to hang our shingle out. It doesn’t have to be the ‘Assemblies of God’ over the door. We just want to come alongside you and help you do the work of the kingdom of God.”

tpe: Pastoring for 25 years has influenced how you’ve led as general superintendent. There are posters all over headquarters that say, “God, we need Your help” to serve the local church. As a pastor, what priority did you place on Christian education, Sunday School and small groups?

TRASK: A healthy church must have a discipling arm. Whether you call it Sunday School or another name, whether it meets on Sunday morning or during the week, those are not critical issues. It’s not healthy to put a formula on it and say, “You have to have this or that form of ministry.” But there must be a given time whereby new converts are disciplined.

Here’s what happens: A person gets saved and comes out of the world. They are not acquainted with the Christian life. Scripture calls them babes. So what do we do? Do we leave the babe on the doorstep of the church or do we take that new babe and help him or her come to maturity? That’s what discipleship does.

When I pastored in Detroit, we set up small groups in our metroplex area so that those people who drove some distance to church could be brought into fellowship. When people got saved at the altars we plugged them into Christian education, into Sunday School. But we also plugged them into the home fellowship groups so they could be cared for, so that they could be nurtured. We had more than 45 groups in neighborhoods around the metropolitan area.

tpe: How do you perceive the spiritual condition of America?

TRASK: We’re no longer a Christian nation. The children who are dying in abortions, the families being destroyed by pornography, the marriages shattered by divorce — these are just some of the signs that we have turned away from God. We are, by some estimates, the third-largest unevangelized nation in the world. And yet we were responsible for being a

missions agency sending this gospel around the world.

tpe: What are some initiatives the Assemblies of God has in place nationally and internationally to reach the lost?

TRASK: We have not lost our passion for the lost. We have a strong focus on the U.S. side of our missions initiative for planting churches. Perhaps the most effective way to reach the lost of America is to plant churches. A new thrust was born during our Washington, D.C., General Council with the theme of “Every church a parent or a partner.”

We have it in the youth. The Seven Project allows us to go into communities and evangelize, and literally scores of young people are being saved in our high schools.

Teen Challenge, Chi Alpha, Chaplaincy and so many other ministries are touching hurting people in all corners of our culture.

Convoy of Hope and other ministries are doing more than just distributing water and ice and food staples and clothing. Those are vital, but there is an evangelism thrust as well.

On the world missions side, nearly 300,000 congregations around the world are drawing people to Christ, sometimes by the hundreds.

tpe: One of our core beliefs is that believers can receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced initially by speaking in tongues. We have people in our churches who have not yet had that experience. Where do they go to receive a deeper understanding of the Baptism and how do they receive the Baptism?

TRASK: You can read in the Book of Acts about the birthing of the New Testament Church. Jesus said in John 16:7 that it was for our good that He leave in order that He would send us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:4, He commanded the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for this outpouring of the Spirit.

Why is it important that people be baptized in



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the Holy Spirit? Because in Acts 1:8 Jesus clearly said that through that Baptism the believers would receive power. Every Christian, every young person, every boy and girl today needs that endowment of power, that assistance in living for Jesus Christ.

I've had people, as a pastor, be baptized in the Holy Spirit in their homes. I remember one woman was so hungry for Jesus and for this glorious infilling of the Holy Spirit that she began to worship as she was washing dishes. The Holy Spirit came upon her and she began to speak in other tongues.

God is the Baptizer. Go to the Baptizer and say, “Lord, I'm hungry. I want more.” This should be a desire not just for the initial infilling, but also for a continuing fullness of the Spirit.

I would encourage anyone with further questions to share their heart with a Pentecostal pastor. Our own Web site, ag.org, offers teaching about this wonderful gift.

tpe: What would you say to the person who feels like he or she is in a spiritual rut?

TRASK: None of us always feels like we're on top of the world spiritually. The key to getting through the dry times is found in remaining true to the spiritual basics — keep praying, keep studying God's Word, keep fellowshiping with other believers and joining in worship at your local church.

Secondly, find a way to bless others, to minister to others. When you take the focus off yourself and put it on others who need help and ministering to, you find your own joy increases. Paul described the Church as “the body of Christ,” and he made it clear that every part of that Body is dependent on the others. The more you invest yourself in others, the more you will discover God's peace and reassurance flowing in your life.

tpe: This past year we had more people write to *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* to say they received Jesus Christ as their

Savior through the magazine than any other year in our recent history. There are going to be people who read this interview who don't know Jesus Christ. What steps do they need to take to receive Jesus as their Savior?

TRASK: First of all, we have to recognize we're sinners. The Bible says, “All have sinned.” I've sinned, you've sinned, we're all guilty of sin. There is only one Person who can take care of the sin problem. He took care of it at Calvary. When Jesus went to Calvary and died on the cross, He bore our sins. It's impossible to comprehend, but He did.

When I admit I'm a sinner and that I'm guilty, then I throw myself upon His mercy. I say, “Jesus, I'm a sinner. Please forgive me and save me and become part of my life.” Jesus says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20, NIV). There are no exceptions. “Whoever comes to me,” Jesus promises, “I will never drive away” (John 6:45). It doesn't make any difference what any one of us has done, what our background is, how good or how bad we believe ourselves to be, what we have or don't have.

tpe: You have served as general superintendent now for more than 12 years. What have you learned and how has this experience changed you?

TRASK: I've continued to learn how inadequate I am to do God's work in my own ability. I need God's wisdom; I need His empowerment; I am dependent upon Him. Like many people, my personality wants to take the driver's seat. I like to see things happen. When it comes to the work of the Kingdom, God needs to make it happen. So it has brought me back again and again to my dependence and acknowledgement, “Lord, I need Your help.”

God has been gracious to help us. Around the world, He has grown the Assemblies of God in the past decade by more than 15 million people.

He is using the body of Christ, and as the church is faithful to be salt and light in a lost world, God is adding to the church daily.

tpe: Is it fair to say there have been times over these 12 years you have found yourself shutting the door to your office, crying out to God for His guidance?

TRASK: From my earliest days in the ministry, when we pioneered in northern Minnesota, I had a place outside the city that I would go and get alone with God. I believe it is critical to get alone with God and totally commit to His guidance and encouragement. Unless the canopy of God abides over our lives and ministry, the results can be disastrous. We need that guidance more than just during crisis moments. For 49 years I have been on a schedule every morning of beginning my day with prayer.

tpe: What do you pray that God will do in and through this church during the next few years?

TRASK: I pray there will come a fresh

awareness of the Spirit of God and the power of God through fervent prayer. When I pastored, people would be saved Sundays and Wednesdays and through the week because of the volume of prayer. If we can raise the level of prayer in the Assemblies of God I am confident we can see such a growth in this Fellowship and the releasing of the Spirit of God and the power of God that will result in the miraculous and the supernatural and the deliverance of lives trapped by evil.

tpe: You plan to emphasize prayer at General Council in Indianapolis next year.

TRASK: We are taking the Thursday morning and combining the Spiritual Life Report with a concentrated time of prayer, then closing with Communion. We want the message to be repeated again and again: Pastors, congregations, we must be people of prayer. Our churches must be places of prayer. There isn't an Assemblies of God church in America, there isn't an Assemblies of God church in the world, that could not experience a more powerful work of the Holy Spirit through a stronger commitment to prayer.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

“There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

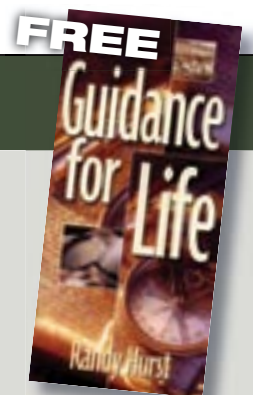
Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.



If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

1-800-4PRAYER

Assemblies of God National Prayer Center