

A portrait of Charles T. Crabtree, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is sitting in a dark leather chair, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a window with light coming through.

# CRABTREE CHARLES T.

## A FOCUS ON DISCIPLESHIP AND UNITY

*After announcing his resignation as assistant general superintendent, Charles T. Crabtree sat down for an interview with Editor Ken Horn. Crabtree served as assistant general superintendent for 14 years.*

**tpe:** Brother Crabtree, how did you make the decision to not run again for office?

**CRABTREE:** Four years ago I turned 65. In the natural that is a time to really think about

a change. After praying about it I basically got direction from the Lord to run one more time. I knew at that time it would be wise to step down at the end of this term and allow new leadership to move in.

**tpe:** You originally came to national headquarters as Decade of Harvest director from a successful pastorate. Talk about your five years in that post.

**CRABTREE:** I was not seeking any kind of position. I was very happy as a pastor. It was divine direction. The Decade of Harvest (1990s) was a wake-up

call to the Assemblies of God. I look at it as a process that God wanted us to go through. Even today I get calls from places where Decade of Harvest churches were started that would not have been had we not set goals. We did not meet a couple of those goals but were able to track the prayer goal.

We do know that hundreds of thousands of people were praying. We did reach the goal of credentialed ministers. We did raise the level of church planting in those first couple of years. But the Lord used it worldwide. There are some countries that have exploded because of the Decade of Harvest. I believe the American church overall has been strengthened. If we had not had the Decade of Harvest, I think we would not be as strong as we are today.

**tpe:** When you were elected assistant general superintendent, was it a surprise to you?

**CRABTREE:** I went to the General Council in Minneapolis extremely happy where I was. To tell you the truth, I was sitting there in total shock. I knew that it had to be a divine appointment.

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Ken Horn photos



Ramona Crabtree, pictured at her piano at home, has ministered alongside Charles T. Crabtree throughout his ministry.

# REFLECTIONS

## of a friend

By Glen D. Cole

The name Charles T. Crabtree symbolizes much in the Assemblies of God world Fellowship. He has been involved as an evangelist, a very successful pastor, a church executive, a writer, a dedicated family man, and to those of us who have been privileged to know him up close, a musician and a humorist. He has been referred to as “the preacher’s preacher,” the man who is always ready to proclaim the Word of the Lord (and without notes).

Charles Crabtree’s zeal has endeared him to hundreds of thousands throughout the world. Ramona, his very gifted companion, is always by his side. She is a woman of grace, rare musical ability, with a passion for Jesus Christ and the marvelous gift of hospitality. The Crabtree home has been a source of joy and refreshment.

One of the high privileges I have experienced is to know Charles as a friend. The Proverbs declare that “a friend loves at all times” (17:17), and refers to “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (18:24). I have been refreshed so many times by my friendship with Charles Crabtree.

We have served as fellow pastors and as district and national executives together. The character and steadfastness of this man have made his contribution to this Fellowship, and to my life, endearing and lasting.

When serving on the Executive Presbytery in the late 1980s a search began for the director of the Decade of Harvest, which was to be a major thrust for the Assemblies of God leading into the 21st century. I felt the Spirit of God whisper the name of Charles Crabtree into my heart after many weeks of Presbytery search and inquiry.

The recommendation was strongly supported by the brethren, and 19 years of leadership to this Fellowship, as well as the broader Body of Christ, began — five years as the director of the Decade of Harvest, and 14 years as the assistant general superintendent.

We pause at this time of retirement to say “thank you” to Brother Crabtree for his faithful life and dedicated service. I have counted it one of the greatest privileges the Lord has granted to me to know this man and to call him friend. The vitality he has carried into this work has blessed us all.

GLEN D. COLE has served as senior pastor of Capital Christian Center in Sacramento, Calif., as superintendent of the Northern California-Nevada District, and as an executive presbyter of the Assemblies of God.



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*a convicted murderer*

*entered Peoples Church, sloshed fuel around*

*and lit pews and people on fire.*

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*tackled and held the man, while others put out the flames.*

*One of the women was hospitalized with second-*

*and third-degree burns on her back.*

*More than a dozen pews were burned*

*and the carpeting was destroyed.*

Senior Pastor Scott Erickson was not only grateful for the response by church members, but also for AG Financial Insurance Solutions and Church Mutual Insurance Company’s assistance.

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Pastor Erickson adds, “Both of the women who were injured have made a full recovery. Thank the Lord.”

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**tpe:** How did you see the Fellowship change during your 14 years as assistant general superintendent?

**CRABTREE:** That's a short time and a long time. The

four of us [including General Superintendent Trask, General Secretary George O. Wood and General Treasurer James K. Bridges] are the longest-running team in history in those positions. This Fellowship is facing some

## CRABTREE wraps up tenure

For the past 14 years, Charles T. Crabtree has been at Thomas E. Trask's side as second in command. Crabtree, 69, was first elected assistant general superintendent in 1993, succeeding Everett R. Stenhouse, who served for eight years in the post.

Crabtree is finishing his second four-year term. The Fellowship voted to extend the length of service in 1999, after he had served three two-year terms.

He came into the job after serving five years as director of the Decade of Harvest, an aggressive evangelism effort by the Assemblies of God in which 5 million people made decisions to accept Christ as Savior.

As assistant general superintendent, Crabtree has overseen the Division of Church Ministries, which includes all adult, youth and children's outreaches of the Fellowship. Crabtree also directed a \$9 million remodeling project at the Assemblies of God headquarters in Springfield, Mo.

Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, Crabtree grew up in Bangor, Maine. He graduated from Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo., and was ordained by the Iowa District in 1962. He served as pastor of First Assembly of God in Des Moines, Iowa, starting in 1963, and as pastor of Bethel Church in San Jose, Calif., beginning in 1974.

Crabtree has written several books on doctrine, church administration, and pastoral theology, including, *This I Believe*, *The Contemporary Pastor*, *Planning for Victory*, *Pentecostal Preaching*, and *The Pentecostal Priority*. Crabtree and his wife, Ramona, have three grown daughters.



Lane Simmons photos

tremendous issues. One is discipleship. We are seeing a worst of times and best of times scenario.

We are seeing the best of times in the energetic mission of this church. We are addressing the issue of evangelism in the inner cities like we have never done before. We are seeing creative ministries rise up. We are seeing the use of technology. All of these things are the very best of times.

The worst of times is that there is a lack of real commitment on the part of many of the Lord's disciples in America. The Church, in many cases, is not depending on the power of the Holy Spirit as it should. In the last number of months, I've been almost consumed by the crisis of discipleship.

I think that is the vortex, the hinge on which everything is going to swing — the quality of discipleship in the Assemblies of God. What kind of disciples are we going to produce in the 21st Century? And because the quality of the church is based upon the quality of the people, what kind of people are we developing? Are we developing church people or are we developing Christ's disciples?

**tpe:** We had a question submitted to the magazine recently: Is there a difference between a believer and a disciple?

**CRABTREE:** A vast difference. If you look at the great study in the Sermon on the Mount, you have to come to the conclusion that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is simply an open door to discipleship. Most people are believers in Christianity and in some of the teachings of Christ and they kind of believe in the Resurrection, but there's a huge difference between

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# Accepting the discipleship challenge

Retiring Assistant General Superintendent Charles T. Crabtree told General Council attendees in Indianapolis Aug. 9 they must take discipleship more seriously if the Assemblies of God is to be viable in the future.

Citing the current abysmal retention rate of new Christians in churches, a vibrant Crabtree cautioned those gathered to retool methods if current models aren't working.

At Conseco Fieldhouse, Crabtree made an impassioned plea for listeners to apply a sevenfold discipleship strategy he outlined.

While the U.S. Assemblies of God recorded 5,339,144 salvation decisions in the decade ending in 2005, Sunday morning attendance during the same period grew only 221,790. That spells a new convert retention rate of just 4.2 percent, not counting transfers from other bodies and natural population growth. Such low numbers are a failure in fulfilling the Great Commission, according to Crabtree.

"No one can say with integrity that we keep more than one in a hundred," Crabtree said. "That's not acceptable. It must not continue. We're doing something wrong. Decisions being made are not authentic."

According to Crabtree, pastors and lay leaders must explain to individuals that making a salvation decision should make a life-changing difference. Those who fail to be integrated into the life of the body will perish spiritually, he said. Too often Christianity in American culture results in no-cost discipleship, a deceptive faith, and lip service to a God of convenience, he said.

As in the New Testament, ministry needs to happen more than in a building on a Sunday morning, according to Crabtree. Church shouldn't just be left to a pastor behind a pulpit, but must involve laity ministering to fellow believers throughout the week, he said.

"We have pretty much placed Jesus under house arrest in a time capsule on Sunday morning," Crabtree asserted.

Laity cannot be idle spectators while pastors burn themselves out, Crabtree stressed. Nurturing new believers must be a priority in churches, many of which have no follow-up program once someone has raised that hand or walked that aisle, he said.

Crabtree chastised churches for bragging about salvation decisions when there is no effort to mentor the new believers. Pastors cannot love crowds and hate individuals, he said.

"Anyone who thinks a new Christian can survive in a hostile spiritual culture without tender, loving care is entertaining a fantasy," Crabtree said.

Crabtree commented that 70 percent of those who are filled with the Holy Spirit don't do anything about it afterwards. Pentecostals shouldn't be so enamored with the initial physical evidence that they ignore the importance of being guided daily by the Holy Spirit.

Young people are understandably cynical of speaking in tongues if it is only a dead-end experience that qualifies someone for office, Crabtree declared. If they see people being healed by the power of the Holy Spirit, it will change their outlook, he said.

By John W. Kennedy in Indianapolis

- 1 Isa. 28-30/Gal. 4
- 2 Isa. 31-33/Gal. 5
- 3 Isa. 34, 35/Gal. 6
- 4 Isa. 36, 37/Eph. 1
- 5 Isa. 38, 39/Eph. 2
- 6 Isa. 40, 41/Eph. 3
- 7 Isa. 42:1-44:23/Eph. 4
- 8 Isa. 44:24-46:13/Eph. 5
- 9 Isa. 47, 48/Eph. 6
- 10 Isa. 49:1-52:12/Phil. 1
- 11 Isa. 52:13-55:13/Phil. 2
- 12 Isa. 56, 57/Phil. 3
- 13 Isa. 58-60/Phil. 4
- 14 Isa. 61:1-63:6/Col. 1:1-23
- 15 Isa. 63:7-66:24/Col. 1:24-2:23
- 16 Jer. 1, 2/Col. 3
- 17 Jer. 3, 4/Col. 4
- 18 Jer. 5, 6/1 Thess. 1
- 19 Jer. 7, 8/1 Thess. 2:1-3:6
- 20 Jer. 9, 10/1 Thess. 3:7-13
- 21 Jer. 11, 12/1 Thess. 4
- 22 Jer. 13, 14/1 Thess. 5
- 23 Jer. 15, 16/2 Thess. 1
- 24 Jer. 17-20/2 Thess. 2:1-3:5
- 25 Jer. 21, 22/2 Thess. 3:6-18
- 26 Jer. 23-25/1 Tim. 1
- 27 Jer. 26, 27/1 Tim. 2
- 28 Jer. 28, 29/1 Tim. 3
- 29 Jer. 30, 31/1 Tim. 4
- 30 Jer. 32, 33/1 Tim. 5
- 31 Jer. 34, 35/1 Tim. 6

October



mere believing and making Jesus Lord. We have many cultural Christians.

**tpe:** Will you miss your role as assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God and if so, what about it will you miss?

**CRABTREE:** I think I will miss it like I miss the pastorate. I look back in fondness, much like the years I spent as an evangelist. I still miss that in a sense. I look at my role of 25 years as a pastor, and I miss that in a certain way. I will miss being assistant general superintendent for the same reasons.

I was in God's will, and I am the type that when it is over, it is over and I have no regrets. I will have no desire to hang on. I did my best. I was in the will of God. My last day in office, I will walk away, and it will be over. And I'll be going through new open doors with the Lord.

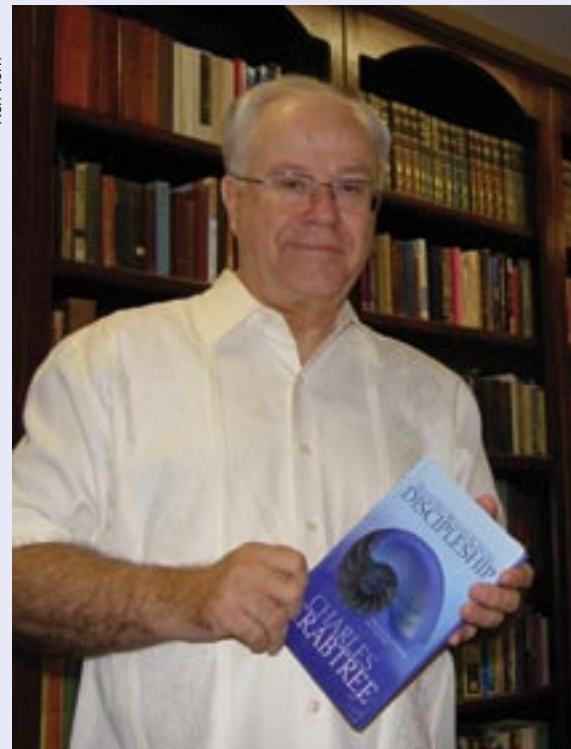
**tpe:** How would you like your ministry to be remembered?

**CRABTREE:** I would like to be remembered as a person who wanted God's will more than his own and who had absolutely no ego involved, but I did anything that God has seen fit to use me in.

**tpe:** Final thoughts?

**CRABTREE:** There is a plea in my spirit; there is so much that needs to be done in this country. The critical spiritual need is so great. Let's begin to

Ken Horn



Charles Crabtree in his home library with his latest book, Transformational Discipleship.

respect each other and to edify one another and to recognize that the Spirit's anointing is unique on everyone. It's time to stop criticizing one another. It's time to understand that God is using some very creative and innovative methods everyone is not going to agree with or be comfortable with. But our job is to be workers together and build one another up and not tear each other down.

**tpe**extra

Express your appreciation for Charles T. Crabtree's ministry on the link at the top of [tpe.ag.org](http://tpe.ag.org).

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