

## Missiological Reflection

### Globalizing Pentecost in Africa: How can we Proactively Emphasize Pentecost and Mission in Africa and Beyond?

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#### *Editor's Note:*

We are including this Missiological Reflection because of its relevance to Pentecostal Missions today and its historical relevance for the church. This article was first presented as a paper at the 2011 World Missionary Council, Pentecostal Mission Consultation, in Nairobi, Kenya. Used by permission of the author.

#### *Introduction*

This summit's purpose, as I understand it, is to focus on the role of the Africa Assemblies of God in reaching the unreached of Africa and the nations with the life-changing gospel of Christ before His soon return, and to recommend a way forward for the movement. I have been asked to present this paper on the topic "Globalizing Pentecost in Africa: How Can

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We Proactively Emphasize Pentecost and Mission in Africa and Beyond?” I begin with some needed definitions:

First, this paper deals with *globalizing* Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond. The word *globalizing*, as used in this paper, is not to be confused with the concept of globalization—although globalization will, indeed, impact Africa’s participation in missions. Rather, when we speak of globalizing Pentecost and missions, we speak about the focus and target of the emerging missions movement in the Africa Assemblies of God. This focus must include all of Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin, including North Africa. Africa’s missionary focus, however, cannot end at the African coastline; it must extend to all the nations of the world, or, in the final words of Jesus, “to the ends of the earth.”

In true Pentecostal fashion, Africans must be prepared to go, without restriction, wherever the Spirit directs. History has taught us that when a missionary movement limits its focus to a particular people, place, or area of the world, its vision is often vitiated. Not only are the nations neglected, but the church’s effectiveness to the very part of the world they are exclusively focusing seems also to be mitigated. From its inception the Assemblies of God has embraced the world as its parish, and it should be no different for our African church. Globalizing Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond, therefore, speaks of the universalizing of Spirit-empowered, Spirit-directed missions to all people, peoples, and places.

Globalizing thus infers that our missionary emphasis should be on both *all people* and *all peoples*, that is, in the words of Jesus, on “every creature” (Mark 16:16) and “every nation” (Matt. 28:19). As the Spirit directs, we must continue to aggressively target receptive individuals and societies wherever they are found. In doing this, however, we must not neglect the hard places. We must proactively, that is, boldly and intentionally, target the remaining unreached people groups of Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. While the African church must think both globally and practically, they also will need to mandate in ways where African missions takes a keen interest in the redemptive needs of Africa itself—especially those who have not yet been engaged by a Spirit-empowered missionary movement.

In addition, the idea of globalizing, or universalizing, Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond can also be applied to the sending base. We thus call on *all* of the fifty Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA)-related national churches in Africa to proactively take immediate and definite steps to advocate for and experience a nationwide Pentecostal outpouring

in their churches, in preparation for aggressive missionary outreach to those who have not yet been effectively engaged with the gospel. One of AAGA's Decade of Pentecost goals is to engage the 800-plus unreached people groups (according to the Joshua Project) in sub-Saharan Africa by the end of 2020. This will require the proactive participation of every one of our AAGA-related national churches. It will also require creative cooperation between national churches.

God has brought the AG in Africa to this moment in history. With 16 million constituents attending 65,000 Assemblies of God churches in Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin, the potential is breathtaking. We, as God's missionary people, must seize the moment. We must move out quickly in the Spirit's power and proclaim Christ's lordship in all of Africa and beyond.

Further, our challenge is to globalize *Pentecost and missions* in Africa and beyond. Not only must Africa's missionary emphasis be global, but, as indicated above, it must also be authentically Pentecostal. This paper broadly defines the term *Pentecost* as the complete panoply of biblical understanding, teaching, experience, and approach unique to the Pentecostal church—specifically as it relates to fulfilling the *missio Dei*. The term Pentecost thus speaks of all that it means to be truly Pentecostal as exemplified in the lives and ministries of Jesus and the New Testament disciples.

Biblically understood, the purpose of Pentecost is missions, and the dynamic of missions is Pentecost. Jesus' personal teaching on Pentecost was inherently missional. In His final magisterial promise to His church, Jesus clearly defined the central purpose of Pentecost: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As Pentecostals, we take Acts as more than sacred history. It is, rather, our present-day, divinely-conceived guide for missions strategy and practice. We conceive the book of Acts to be the Spirit's strategic outline for the advancement of God's kingdom—not for the primitive church only, but for the entire church during the entire Age of the Spirit, until Jesus comes again.

Finally, we seek to *proactively* emphasize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond. During this momentous decade we, as African Pentecostals, choose to not stand with our hands idly folded, passively hoping that a powerful Spirit-empowered, Spirit-directed missions movement will somehow providentially emerge in our Africa Assemblies of God. Rather, we

will intentionally and aggressively pursue our God-ordained destiny. Rather than responding retroactively to the spiritual, economic, and societal forces around us, we will proactively pursue the *missio Dei* in the power of the Holy Spirit. With hearts full of anticipation, as the mariner who embarks on a new journey, we will hoist our sails to the prevailing wind of the Spirit. We will preach and teach persuasively and pervasively on the mission of God. We will aggressively advocate and pray for a powerful new continent-wide Pentecostal outpouring. And we will boldly recruit missionaries and mobilize our churches to send Spirit-empowered missionaries to the unreached people and peoples of Africa and beyond.

#### *A Proactive Missions Model*

As we contemplate a model for the emergent missionary movement within the Africa Assemblies of God, which one shall we adopt? Our natural inclination is to accept without question the models that have been lived out before us. While there is much to learn from those with whom we have partnered through the years, we would do well to revisit the mission model of Jesus and the apostles. After all, did not their societal context more closely parallel ours than does the context of our Western missionary partners? Those first-century missionaries emerged from societies that had been colonized, marginalized, and impoverished. And yet, because they rightly perceived themselves to be divinely called and commissioned, and because they enthusiastically obeyed Christ's command to be empowered by the Spirit, they changed the very course of human history. I propose that the ministries of Jesus and the apostles as portrayed in the gospels and Acts become Africa's guiding missionary model. I recommend that we prayerfully and contemplatively peer again into Scripture, especially the Acts of the Apostles, to find a truly Pentecostal model for our missions endeavors.

What then do we mean when we say that we should proactively adopt a Pentecostal missions model in Africa and beyond? As I envision it, such a missions model must include at least four essential components:

#### *A Pentecostal Understanding of Mission*

First, our missions model must include a uniquely Pentecostal understanding of missions. This means that we must proactively develop and widely propagate a truly Pentecostal

understanding of missions in an African context. In doing this, we must formulate a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in missional ministry. In my considered opinion, such a well-conceived, broad-based, and contextualized Pentecostal understanding of missions is largely absent in our Assemblies of God churches across Africa. Generally speaking, we have not done as well as we could have in articulating and living out such a truly Pentecostal understanding of missions. Thankfully, this lack of understanding has been addressed through conferences, such as Eleventh Hour Institutes and Acts 1:8 Conferences conducted across the continent. It has further been addressed in the development of missional textbooks, such as *The Biblical Theology of Missions*,<sup>1</sup> *A History of the Church in Africa: A Survey from a Pentecostal Perspective*,<sup>2</sup> and others, produced by the Africa's Hope Discovery Series. These efforts, however, must be viewed as just a beginning. Much remains to be done. Here, at the beginning of this Decade of Pentecost, a scholarly study investigating the level of truly missional and Pentecostal understanding in the Africa Assemblies of God would indeed be useful. I, therefore, call on our emerging African scholars to step up and address this issue from a clearly African perspective.

A truly Pentecostal understanding of missions should include not only a Pentecostal understanding of missions, but also a missional understanding of Pentecost. This understanding should clearly answer such questions as, "How does our understanding of, and experience with, the Spirit impact the way we do missions? How does it affect the way we proclaim Christ to the lost? How does it impact the way contextualize the message? How does our experience with the Spirit shape the way we respond to human need? How should our uniquely Pentecostal understanding of missions influence the way we plant indigenous missionary churches? How should it impact the way we penetrate new fields? Or the way we engage unreached (and sometimes hostile) people groups? How does our understanding of, and experience with, the Spirit inform the way we develop effective missionary strategies? Or the way we mobilize the laity for missions? Or the way we raise the necessary assets to fund the mission?" Our experience with the Spirit should dramatically impact the way we approach all of these missional issues, as well as other unnamed issues. A clear and comprehensive Pentecostal theology of missionary praxis is needed if we are to effectively globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond during this providential decade.

*A Spirit-empowered Missionary Force*

Secondly, a truly proactive model of Pentecostal missions means that we single-mindedly pursue a Spirit-empowered missionary force. In doing this, we must ensure that every missionary we receive, recruit, and deploy is truly a man or woman of the Spirit. This means that they must have been truly and powerfully baptized in the Spirit, resulting in both Spirit-inspired tongues and Spirit-empowered witness (Acts 2:4; 1:8). Further, we must ensure that these “Pentecostal apostles” are people sensitive to the voice of the Spirit and able to and walk in close step with the Spirit (Ga. 5:25 NIV). They must be people of much prayer with lives and ministries evidencing both the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. All other personal, academic, or professional qualifications, while important, must be viewed as secondary. The lives and ministries of these genuinely Pentecostal missionaries must clearly demonstrate passion for lost and compassion for the suffering. They must be adept at leading sinners to Christ and believers into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They must further be able to effectively disciple these same believers and lead them into Spirit-empowered missional ministry. Finally, this new breed of African missionaries must clearly understand that the disciples they make, along with the churches they plant, must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and wholly committed to Christ and His mission. This assessment applies both to the missionaries *sent out* by our African churches and to the missionaries *received* by the church in Africa. If we are to truly globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa, we must insist that every missionary, from and to Africa, be a man or woman of the Spirit.

*A Pentecostal Strategy*

Thirdly, a truly proactive Pentecostal model of missions means that we intentionally develop and aggressively implement a genuinely Pentecostal missions strategy. As mentioned above, our unique Pentecostal experience and understanding of ministry must be brought to bear in developing such a strategy of missions. Historically, Pentecostal missiologists have prayerfully probed the book of Acts to find their missionary strategy. They have approached the book as a living paradigm of evangelistic and missionary practice. In doing so they have noted that, in Acts, the Holy Spirit is presented as the executive of the missionary enterprise. From beginning to end He is portrayed as the Superintendent of the Harvest, that is, the one who fills,

empowers, inspires, anoints, directs, sends, guides, enlightens, and encourages the missionary enterprise.

In recent years we have observed the term “strategy of the Spirit” used in various ways and in various contexts by missionary strategists.<sup>3</sup> In the gospels and Acts, we are presented with what I believe to be a true strategy of the Spirit. It is a strategy employed by both Jesus and the apostles. This missionary strategy is notably evident in the missionary ministry of Paul, as presented in the Book of Acts—especially during his Ephesian campaign (19:1-11)—and described in his epistles (most clearly in Romans 15:14-20). A close examination of Paul’s missionary strategy reveals that he was merely emulating the strategy of the God the Father in sending Jesus into the world, along with the strategy of Jesus in sending His church into the world. This strategy includes certain key elements, including the necessity of the “sent ones” being empowered by the Spirit, a clear Spirit-anointed proclamation of the gospel accompanied by confirmatory signs and wonders, and the intentional planting of Spirit-empowered missionary churches. This New Testament strategy of the Spirit further includes the mobilizing of Spirit-empowered missionary churches through formal training, informal mentoring, and sending.

In preparation for his visit to Rome, Paul outlined his missionary strategy (Rom. 15:14-21). This outline can serve as a pattern for Pentecostal missionary ministry today. Here Paul described his missionary ministry as being Christ-centered (vv. 17-19), Spirit-empowered (v. 19), divinely-authenticated by signs and wonders (v. 19), proclamationally-oriented (v. 20), and apostolically-functioning, that is, steadfastly focused on “those who have never heard” the gospel (vv. 20-21). If we are to effectively globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond, our missionary strategies must proactively include each of the above-mentioned elements.

### *A Spirit-empowered Church*

Finally, our missions model must include a commitment to *intentionally* plant thousands of avant-garde Spirit-empowered missionary churches throughout Africa, and wherever else we may go. Jesus himself intentionally and proactively planted a Spirit-empowered missionary church (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4-8) as did the apostles after Him (Acts 2:38-39; 8:14-18; 9:1-7; Rom.15:17-20; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Thess. 1:5-8). Because they expected every disciple to be a witness, they expected every disciple to be empowered by the Spirit. We must expect the same

today, and we must intentionally work to see our churches universally empowered by the Spirit and unwaveringly focused on the *missio Dei*.

*Toward a Workable Strategy: How can We Effectively Globalize Pentecost and Missions in Africa and Beyond?*

If we sincerely desire to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond, what is the way forward? What plan of action shall we adopt? I suggest that our action plan comprise at least five key elements. It must be (1) solidly biblical, (2) intentionally missional, (3) authentically Pentecostal, (4) boldly proactive, and (5) thoroughly comprehensive. Let us examine each of these elements:

*Solidly Biblical*

The first element of our plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond is scriptural fidelity. We as Assemblies of God believers view the Bible as God's divinely-inspired revelation to humankind. It is our sole and final authority for doctrine and practice. We are unapologetically a "people of the Book." Therefore, any plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond must, above all else, be based solidly on the teachings of Scripture. The first question, then, that we must ask is, "What does the Bible have to say on the subject?" Our challenge is to be relevant to the ever-changing and multifaceted contexts in Africa, while, at the same time, remain faithful to God's word.

Therefore, as we strategize to globalize Pentecost and missions in the Africa Assemblies of God, we must embrace the Bible as our strategic handbook. The story of the early church as depicted in the book of Acts is especially relevant. It is our only divinely-inspired record of how the Early Church carried out Christ's directive to take the gospel to the nations. Our Pentecostal forefathers found great inspiration and insight in its pages, embracing it as their master plan for normative experience and practice. The strategies they gleaned from the book of Acts helped to catapult the Pentecostal church into worldwide prominence, enabling it to outstrip all other religious movements in expansion and church growth, particularly in the Global South. Amazingly, in just over a century, there now exists more than one million local Pentecostal churches around the world.

As a movement we must, once again, take up the book of Acts, not merely to read it as a historical record of the ancient beginnings of the church, but to pour over its pages in search for the best missions strategy. Acts teaches us that the biblical answer to waning of missionary zeal in the church is recurrent and pervasive outpourings of the Spirit. It further teaches that these outpourings must occur in an overtly missional context. These cardinal understandings must become integral components of our plan of advance.

*Intentionally Missional*

A second element of our plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond is intentionality. That is, we must be intentionally missional in all that we do. We are not only a people of the Book, we are also a people on mission. We conceive ourselves to be an integral segment of God's last-days missionary people. In recent years this fact has gripped the African church as never before. Across the continent Assemblies of God churches have begun to re-envision and reinvent themselves. They have become increasingly missional in their posture and practice.

Beginning with the Decade of Harvest of the 1990s, and continuing to the present, our Africa Assemblies of God churches have begun to re-envision themselves as vital players in God's last-days missionary enterprise. They have begun to see themselves, not so much as an impoverished people gathered for personal blessing, but as an empowered people scattered in missional witness. No longer do they conceive themselves to be merely those who receive missionary assistance from abroad; they have begun to re-envision themselves as an indispensable part of God's missionary-sending people. And yet, while all of this is true, in many of our churches across the continent, both national and local, the process has only begun. We must, therefore, wholeheartedly commit ourselves to broadly and proactively encourage through this Spirit-inspired process.

In addition to re-envisioning themselves as full participants in the *missio Dei*, our Africa Assemblies of God churches have begun the arduous, yet essential, process of reinventing themselves. The path leading from Western dependency to true missional indigeneity is long, rugged, and fraught with dangers. The journey requires the wisdom and perseverance that only the Spirit can give. Nevertheless, across the continent our Assemblies of God churches have

confidently begun the journey. While they are at differing points along the way, the good news is that most, if not all, have at least begun the journey. We are believing God that during this Decade of Pentecost, a true missional transformation will occur, not only within the African church, but also in its missionary partners from around the world. With the new challenges of the twenty-first century looming, the unreached peoples of Africa and the world beckoning, and the missionary Spirit of God directing, we must deliberately and boldly reinvent ourselves. New and more dynamic—that is, more authentically missional—paradigms of partnership must emerge as, together, we seek the wisdom and direction of the Lord.

### *Authentically Pentecostal*

A third necessary component of our plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond is a clear understanding of what it means to be authentically Pentecostal. In other words, if we seek to globalize Pentecost in Africa, we must be certain that the Pentecost we are globalizing is authentic. That is, it must be the “real thing” as believed upon, experienced, and lived out by Jesus, the apostles, and first-century believers.

Therefore, in determining our way forward we will not raise our finger to the sky to test the ever-changing winds of doctrine or practice that all-too-often blow through the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. Neither will our way forward be determined in the fickle courts of public opinion, or by the latest church growth theory or leadership trend. Nor will we be driven by the ever-shifting waves of donor preference, no matter how tempting or generous their offers may seem. Rather, our eyes will remain fixed on the mandates of Scripture and our ears will stay attuned to the voice of the Spirit. We will faithfully seek to discern His will and His way. Rather than asking, “What is the anticipated logical outcome of our strategic decisions?” we will first ask, “What is the source, or origin, of this strategy? From whence does it come? Does it rise out of human reason or out of the Spirit’s impulse?”<sup>4</sup> As authentically Pentecostal missionaries, our strategic decisions must not be intellect-driven, emotion-driven, or donor-driven; they must, rather, above all else, be biblically informed and Spirit-driven. In other words, our focus must be on a biblically-sound, missional exegesis of Scripture, accompanied by a clearly-discerned voice of the Spirit.

*Boldly Proactive*

A fourth element that we must incorporate into our plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond is proactivity. That is, we must assume a posture that is boldly proactive. If we are to lead our churches into powerful Pentecostal and missional renewal, we must regard the issue as our top priority. We cannot view it as one among other equally-important agenda items. It must become, and remain, “job number one” for the church. The issue of authentic Pentecostal revival is of such significance that it demands our primary and sustained attention. The quest for the Spirit’s empowering presence must be placed and remain at center stage in the church’s planning and activities.

Jesus Himself placed the empowering of the church at center stage. To Him it was not a side issue, to be tabled and taken up at next quarter’s business meeting. In His mind it was of highest importance, demanding the church’s immediate and focused attention (Luke 24:29; Acts 1:4-8). We, too, must be gripped by this fact: if the Africa Assemblies of God is to become the missions force that God intends for it to be, we must have recurring and widespread Pentecostal revival. And this revival must occur in a thoroughly missional context. All other issues must become, and remain, secondary.

This missional revival can only be accomplished through a determined and energetic pursuit of authentic Pentecostal power. We must, therefore, pursue every means possible to actively encourage individual and group initiative across the continent. Further, we must persevere in our pursuit of Pentecostal renewal until the desired outcomes are achieved—a Spirit-empowered, missionally-focused church actively engaged in reaching the unreached with the good news of Christ.

*Purposefully Comprehensive*

A fifth component of our plan to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond is comprehensiveness. If we are to see a powerful Spirit-empowered missionary movement rise out of the Africa Assemblies of God, our strategy for bringing Pentecostal and missional renewal to the continent must be all-encompassing. In other words, it must target every facet of Assemblies of God church life. Not only must the issue of Pentecostal revival target every person in the church, but it also must be addressed in every available forum, utilize every necessary

means, and be applied at all possible times. This comprehensive approach must include the following:

1. *Every person.* When calling our churches to Pentecostal and missional renewal, efforts must be made to ensure that every person and every grouping of people in the church is adequately targeted, which thus includes national, district, sectional, and local church leadership. It also includes departmental leadership, such as Sunday school, men's, women's, youth, university, humanitarian, and children's ministry leaders. Institutional leadership must not be neglected. Bible school administration and teachers must be targeted, since these individuals are often the key influencers in the church. In targeting every person, care must also be taken to include diverse language groups and differing economic and social strata. Our effort to globalize Pentecost and missions in the Africa Assemblies of God must reach to every member and attender in the church.

2. *Every forum.* In designing a comprehensive response to the need to bring authentic Pentecostalism to the church in Africa, every forum and delivery system must be employed. The general assemblies and special gatherings of the church must be utilized, including general councils, district councils, sectional councils, local church services, home cell gatherings, school chapels, spiritual emphases, and more like-minded institutions.

Print and broadcast media must also be put to use and distributed widely. Print media could include books, tracts, flyers, magazines, Bible studies, and sermon outlines. New lessons and study guides could be purchased or produced for Sunday school and home cell study. Broadcast media, including radio, television, and the Internet should also be used.

3. *Every means.* The church must use every means at its disposal to address the need for Pentecostal and missional renewal. In addition to those mentioned above, these means could include preaching, teaching, writing, seminars, revival meetings, and specially-called conferences and assemblies.

4. *All times.* A comprehensive response to globalizing Pentecost and missions in our churches cannot be limited to a single event or even a series of special events. One gathering, or even a series of gatherings (such as an Eleventh-Hour Institute or an Acts 1:8 Conference—as significant as these events can be), will not get the job done. That is why AAGA's ten-year

Decade of Pentecost emphasis is called for, where the church throws the full weight of its influence and resources behind these most pressing of all needs.

#### *DECADE OF PENTECOST AS METANARRATIVE*

In March of 2009, at the quadrennial meeting of the General Assembly of the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance in Honeydew, South Africa, the assembled delegates from across Africa unanimously adopted a resolution declaring 2010-2020 as a “Decade of Pentecost” in the Africa Assemblies of God. In the resolution AAGA called on its “constituent national churches to promote a Pentecostal awakening in their churches aimed at empowering the church for greater evangelistic, missionary, and church planting involvement.” The resolution further stated that “the Assemblies of God in Africa set as its goal to see 10 million of our members baptized in the Holy Spirit” during the ten years from 2010 to 2020. Since that time, other goals have been advanced, including the following:

- Marshaling 10 million new Spirit-empowered witnesses who will actively share the gospel with their friends and neighbors.
- Aggressively planting tens of thousands of new Spirit-empowered missionary churches across the continent.
- Mobilizing 100,000 intercessors who will pray daily for a powerful Pentecostal outpouring on the African church.
- Recruiting, training, and deploying hundreds of cross-cultural missionaries to Africa and beyond.
- Engaging the 800+ yet-to-be-reached-tribes of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Decade of Pentecost was officially launched across Africa on the Day of Pentecost, March 23, 2010.

Most of our AAGA-related national churches across Africa have officially joined the Decade of Pentecost emphasis, setting aggressive evangelistic, church planting, missionary, and renewal goals. These national churches have begun to actively mobilize themselves to achieve these faith-filled goals. This Decade of Pentecost emphasis holds the potential of becoming the most fruitful evangelistic and missionary thrust in the 100-year history of the Assemblies of

God in Africa, even surpassing the now historic Decade of Harvest emphasis of the 1990s. I, therefore, propose that the Africa Assemblies of God World Missions Commission enthusiastically embrace and aggressively promote this AAGA initiative as its primary method of globalizing Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond. I do this for three reasons:

*The Decade of Pentecost as Mobilization*

True Pentecostal revival is about empowering the church to complete the Great Commission of Christ (Acts 1:8). As previously stated, if the Africa Assemblies of God is to maximize its effectiveness in mobilizing itself to send missionaries to the nations, proclaiming the gospel to the lost, overcoming and defeating demonic opposition to the gospel, planting Spirit-empowered missional churches, showing Christ's compassion to the hurting, and reaching the unreached peoples of Africa and beyond, the movement must experience a continent-wide Pentecostal outpouring, with millions of its members being baptized in the Holy Spirit and empowered for the task at hand. Further, as noted, this continent-wide outpouring must be experienced in an overtly missional context, as is was by the Early Church. AAGA's Decade of Pentecost emphasis provides an efficient framework. As more leaders, pastors, churches, and missionaries across Africa embrace the initiative, it will gain even greater momentum. Further, the Decade of Pentecost emphasis has huge promotional potential. It is a theme which we can all rally around, both in Africa and in America, to help create missional awareness and raise the necessary prayer and financial support needed to move quickly forward.

*The Decade of Pentecost as Alignment*

Leadership practitioners understand that for an organization to achieve maximum effectiveness, it must achieve what is known as "organizational alignment." In other words, every part and person in the organization must be unified and moving in the same direction, seeking to fulfill the same clearly-defined goals. If we are to effectively globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond, continental unity is essential.

And yet, we must come to terms with the daunting fact that mobilizing and unifying a movement as massive and diverse as the Assemblies of God in Africa is an almost impossible endeavor. Thus the question asks, how do we go about unifying 16 million constituents from

hundreds of language, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds who are attending 65,000 local churches and are affiliated with 50 national churches across sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean basin? Add to these potentially-fragmenting dynamics the fact that these churches, and the missionary organizations they work with, are already actively engaged in a multitude of potentially competing and conflicting programs and initiatives. Further, how can we facilitate unified action between missionary sending agencies and missionary receiving churches; as well as between missionaries with their own agendas and national churches with sometimes contravening agendas? How can we foster unified action between various national churches in neighboring countries—and sometimes even between national churches within the borders of a single country? How can we unify the visions of national church leaders with those of local pastors and churches? How can we unify the various training, humanitarian, evangelistic, and missionary initiatives across the continent, each with their own goals and emphases? How can we bring new and emerging churches and ministries into alignment with what is already happening in existing churches and ministries? These and a multitude of other factors mitigate against unity in the Africa Assemblies of God and its partnering organizations. How then do we bring Pentecostal and missional alignment to the Assemblies of God in Africa?

I suggest that AAGA's Decade of Pentecost initiative can serve as the grand metanarrative, or unifying theme, for the Africa Assemblies of God and its missionary partners. If universally embraced and fostered, the continental emphasis can become a powerful aligning force in the Assemblies of God in Africa for the next 10 years and beyond. Its theme is broad enough in scope to include everyone and every organizational entity in our churches, yet narrow enough to keep us all moving in the same direction, that is, towards the fulfillment of the *missio Dei* with the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### *The Decade of Pentecost as Corrective*

The Decade of Pentecost emphasis can serve the Africa Assemblies of God in yet another crucial way, that is, as a corrective. Like a ship that has lost its bearings, much of Africa's Pentecostalism has drifted frighteningly off course. In many cases it has forfeited its missionary soul, becoming self-centered and self-engrossed. Tragically, in far too many instances, this departure from that way includes the involvement of some of our own Assemblies of God churches. Many have been swept away by the prosperity mania that has engulfed much of the

continent. While we believe in and advocate a truly biblical prosperity, one aimed at equipping and enabling the church to fulfill its missionary mandate, the quasi-biblical, hyper-prosperity, as advocated by many, must be challenged and corrected. If Pentecostalism in Africa does not recapture its missionary soul, it is in grave danger of becoming sidelined as God's agency for evangelizing the nations before Christ's soon-coming. The Decade of Pentecost is a ready vehicle that can serve to remind us of who we are: we are God's last-days, Spirit-empowered missionary people.

### *Conclusion*

As we contemplate Africa's missionary future, and our part in that future, we must come to terms with what it means to be truly Pentecostal and truly Assemblies of God. And, as we seek to more clearly understand and more pervasively disseminate to our churches the concepts of what it means to be authentically Pentecostal, we must prayerfully address two issues. First, *we must learn to do Pentecost missionally*, that is, we must "missionize" our Pentecostalism. We must abandon the self-serving, inwardly-focused hybrid of Pentecostalism that has overtaken much of the continent, and we must, once again, enthusiastically embrace the mission of Jesus and joyously respond to His final mandate of Acts 1:8.

Not only must we learn to do Pentecost missionally, *we must learn to do missions Pentecostally*. In other words, we must "Pentecostalize" our missions. As we seek to fulfill Christ's command to take the gospel to the unreached of Africa and the nations, we must never forget that God has freely given to us His Spirit to enable us to accomplish this task. We must be ever conscious that the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, as He was upon Jesus, to anoint us to proclaim the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, and to proclaim deliverance to the captives. Never again can we relegate our Pentecostal experience and understanding to the church building, as we must take it to the streets and ultimately to the nations. Whatever we do, whether preaching the gospel, planting new churches, penetrating new fields, showing compassion to the hurting, training pastors, or whatever else we do, we must do it all in the Spirit's power. May the Lord of the Harvest empower us and guide us as we seek to globalize Pentecost and missions in Africa and beyond

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<sup>1</sup> Paul B. York, Springfield, MO: Life Publishers International, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Spain, Springfield, Life Publishers International, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> I myself expand on the term in *Empowered for Global Mission: A Missionary Look at the Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers, 2008), 240-248, and in *Implications of Lukan Pneumatology: A Doctoral*

<sup>4</sup> I first discovered this concept in the writings of the late Anglican missiologist, Roland Allen.

