

The Charismatic Leaders Fellowship

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The "Charismatic Leaders Fellowship", or CLF, is the new name for the "Charismatic Concerns Committee", or CCC, a small group of Charismatic and Pentecostal Renewal leaders also known as the "Glencoe group", or just "Glencoe" to the early members. This unique assembly of leaders was first brought together in Seattle by the late Fr. Dennis Bennett in 1971 and included leaders from across the Renewal spectrum. Some of the early attendees were David DuPlessis, Derek Prince, Larry Christenson, Jamie Buckingham, Francis MacNutt, Kevin Ranaghan, Vinson Synan, Charles Whitehead, Fr. Rick Thomas and other influential leaders from the different streams of renewal.

The first meeting in Seattle was so successful that the "invitation only" gatherings soon became regular occurrences at the Marianist Retreat Center near Glencoe, Missouri. The membership included a variety of participants from different denominations, churches and traditions, including Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Liturgical, Independent churches and others. The personal involvement of these influential leaders made the CCC a significant source of leadership coordination within the overall Charismatic Renewal. It was evident in the earliest days that the Holy Spirit was moving in and through this group of leaders so that they might better promote order, peace and understanding within the Charismatic Renewal.

Recognizing that there were some divisive controversies popping up within the Renewal, this group of leaders sought to bring some unity to the diverse membership by examining and addressing the issues involved. This was made possible primarily by building relationships and friendships among themselves and with other high-profile leaders who maintained what was called "trans-local" or independent ministries. The trusting environment established at Glencoe

led to open and frank discussions that often resulted in defusing or altogether avoiding the public promotion of some controversial issues by different leaders. The same is true today.

Over time the Glencoe/Charismatic Concerns Committee developed a reputation for discussing their often passionately held opinions in a gracious and respectful way. Some examples of the more polarizing topics discussed included things such as infant vs. believer baptism and women serving in leadership. The issues discussed were not, in a sense, "solved" theologically, but they were dealt with pastorally and practically in a way that helped bring peace to these primary leaders, and thus to the entire Charismatic renewal. Sometimes the group discussions would result in an understanding or an agreement that certain issues would not be publicly promoted or encouraged by the different trans-local ministries. The CCC renewal leaders recognized that there were important subjects upon which charismatics and Pentecostals themselves were not in agreement. On the other hand, they could all agree that the more divisive issues were not central to the message of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the renewal movement that the Lord was forming that crossed almost all Church and Denominational lines.

Over the course of years a number of influential and occasionally controversial leaders were invited to speak at CCC. Among them were John Wimber, Rev. Rodney Howard Browne, Rev. Benny Hinn, Dr. C. Peter Wagner and others. Because there was a small number of participants – usually no more than 50 - and because the discussions were not recorded and were "off the record", all participants were able to freely speak when controversial issues came up for discussion. Occasionally there were opportunities for representatives of the opposite sides of an important issue to fully air their views before the CCC members. The discussions that followed were always passionate and almost always enlightening and helpful to the overall mission of bringing peace and reconciliation to the leadership of the different renewal movements. This openness led to much clarity and understanding that might have otherwise been impossible.

The members of the Charismatic Concerns Committee were the driving force behind the now famous 1977 Kansas City conference held in Arrowhead Stadium. The planning committee for that conference came from the CCC when Larry Christenson was chairman and Kevin Ranaghan was secretary/treasurer. The North American Renewal Service Committee, or NARSC, came into existence when Christenson and Ranaghan stepped aside and Vinson Synan and Vernon Stoop took over the Charismatic Concerns Committee/Glencoe leadership sometime later. Subsequent to KC'77 there were NARSC-sponsored conferences in other sites such as Indianapolis, New Orleans, and St. Louis. It is significant that NARSC was the impetus behind an enormous amount of spiritual ecumenism, renewal and front-line evangelism in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's.

But what about now? What is happening with the CLF? The name was recently changed from "Charismatic Concerns Committee" to "Charismatic Leaders Fellowship." This name change reflects the new things that God is doing with the group today. It also reflects the growing realization that most difficulties and controversies can best be dealt with when good relationships and friendships are in place. Beginning around 2010 it seemed that the Holy Spirit was starting to re-energize the group with both new members and with new vision. Some recent and significant changes to CLF include:

- 1) Increased ecumenical and international membership;
- 2) More active events coordination and information sharing between different national and international Renewal movements;
- 3) More prayer for the different Renewal movements and for an increased outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church and in the world; and
- 4) More personal ministry for the CLF members.

Some of the founding gifts and goals of the CLF remain essentially the same and continue to bring both unity and understanding to the world-wide Charismatic and Pentecostal renewal movements. CLF is emerging as something like “neutral ground” where different leaders can assemble and get to know one another.

Some of the more recent Holy Spirit-empowered goals are:

- 1) Reconciliation and relationship building between leaders of the various Charismatic and Pentecostal renewal movements;
- 2) Understanding and addressing problem issues and controversies arising in the Charismatic and Pentecostal renewal movements;
- 3) Increased awareness of the overall condition of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Renewal through presentations by guest speakers as well as CLF members; and, finally
- 4) Providing leadership networking initiatives as guided by the Holy Spirit (such as with the formation of NARSC).

As the relational beginning point of the historic Kansas City '77 Conference, CLF has a unique place in the worldwide renewal movement. It is combining the wisdom of age and experience with the energy and vision of youth. This is being accomplished by including early renewal leaders, as well as a growing number of the current generation and the next generation of renewal leaders from the US and around the world. It is now evident that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is still growing around the world and is still bringing both unity and renewal to the Bride of Christ. The Charismatic Leaders Fellowship has been, and continues to be, a powerful tool of the Holy Spirit for bringing unity, reconciliation and evangelization to the world today.