

# My Miracle!

By

Rev. Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

The service starts. It's Saturday night. We're at the General Conference service in Columbus, Ohio. From the corners of the conference center march a steady stream of battle-worn soldiers; not those involved in physical combat in the Middle East (although we thank God for them), but those involved in spiritual warfare for the souls of men and women living in far flung places of the world. They serve a superior General, one Jesus Christ; march to a different drumbeat, the call for world evangelism; and are armed with remarkable artillery, the timeless Word of God. They wear unusual uniforms; costumes from their respective nations and proudly, yet humbly, raise the flags of their nations for thousands of onlookers to catch a glimpse.

The trusty cameras quickly turn and focus on the platform. Dignitaries and leaders watch and pray in anticipation. The choir sings; setting the mood for all to lift up their eyes to look on the fields. Perhaps, you wonder, *"Who is in charge? Where is their leader?"* As the cameras swing in for a close up, the leader will be easy to spot. He will be the one you see getting a little antsy—well maybe quite antsy—little beads of sweat streak his faintly reddened face, and you spot

him saying something. As you struggle to listen or to decipher his words, you think you hear; *"Oh, God help us! In Jesus name! Help us, in Jesus name!"* It looks like the leader could be stressed, tired, worried—a little of these, or even all of these. Chances are he had little sleep last night, or for the last several nights, hasn't eaten properly all day, and has found it difficult to focus on friendly discussions and greetings. Some comment, "It seems like his mind is somewhere else; in another world." Such an analysis is likely true for his thoughts are never too far from the 6.6 billion people in our world: lost, waiting, dying! Tonight, those thoughts are constant and the fears real. He wonders, *"What if this service fails? I couldn't stand failing our pastors, missionaries, and our world. There are too many missionaries on deputation that desperately need to get back to their fields. Some are traveling so long and their budgets so high they are getting weary and discouraged. How can we possibly make a plea for men and women tonight when we do not have a place for them to travel on deputation?"* The thoughts stop, and a song starts in his mind. It's not the one the choir is singing, but maybe one he's heard and sung for years, *"If He carries the weight of the world upon His shoulders, I know my brother that He will carry you!"* His foot stops tapping, the sweat stops flowing as he realizes: *"the weight of the world is not on my shoulders alone. I serve a God that carries the weight of the world. I am part of a wonderful fellowship of United Pentecostal Church saints and ministers that work together to carry the burden for, and of, the world."* What

has transpired? The leader realizes that he is in the midst of a miracle—in the general conference foreign mission's service— serving as a launching pad for hundreds of individual miracles for missionaries, saints, and pastors involved in sacrificial giving.

You might wonder how I—the writer—know so much of the behind-the-scenes scenario, coupled with personal knowledge of the leader on the platform. Never fear. It is I? I'm the sweating, antsy, guy on the front row. I'm the General Director of Foreign Missions. This particular service and the world outside this continent are part of my heartbeat. And this extraordinary Saturday night is my miracle. I hope it will go down in history as your miracle too.

Sitting there on the platform is a little like filling the shoes of Abraham on his mountain-top journey with his son, Isaac. Here is the wood, the fire, and the altar, but where is the sacrifice? The Lord will provide, and He did. It was Abraham's miracle (not to mention Isaac's). I think I understand a bit of what Elijah experienced on Mount Carmel. Here is the sacrifice, altar, and flooded trenches, but where is the fire? The Lord will provide, and He did. It was Elijah's miracle (not to mention Israel's). Or consider Noah, weary from building the ark with only dry land in sight. Where is the rain? The Lord will provide, and He did. It was Noah's miracle (not to mention his family's). Abraham, Elijah, and Noah waited, and sweated; until God moved. And so, I sit on the platform doing

the same. Thanks to my trusty Foreign Missions team, everything is in order. Missionaries are present, choir ready, pledge forms on hand, ushers standing by, program prepared, projects planned, altar clear...all things are as ready as humanly possible. The Lord will provide, and He did. It was my miracle (not to mention hundreds of others).

For me the miracle began, and blessings started to flow, in our general conference business sessions. Several items were on the floor with a direct impact on the Foreign Missions Division. When it was all said and done, I was humbled and honored with the unprecedented support of our ministerial fellowship. I appreciate the confidence expressed, will not let my good friends down, and our division will remain transparent in all we do.

The Foreign Missions Board was expanded to allow for two additional pastoral board members and two foreign missions district directors (check your resolutions for details). We now have three new board members. Brother Mark Parker from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma will fill the unexpired term of Brother Paul Mooney (as board member-at-large). Brother Brian Orffer will represent the Northwest region, and Norman Paslay will represent the Northeast region. We appreciate the untiring efforts of Brothers Paul Mooney, B. J. Hurst, and D. D. Davis throughout their years of service on the Foreign Missions Board.

Back to the Foreign Missions Service, the miracle escalates as support is raised for fourteen missionary families. This means they will be able to go to their fields from the General Conference. The deputational trail will be substantially cleared so that we can appoint new missionaries. Two missionary families were appointed at the General Conference, bringing the total to six in 2006.

When you combine the Partners in Missions pledges (based on ten years) given to the fourteen families; the project pledges for the crusades; the offering taken in the first part of the service; the pledges taken as Brother Willoughby challenged the conference; and the money left on the altar, you will find that the giving as a result of this one service could exceed seven million dollars. We are still continuing with 1,000 people giving 10,000 dollars each. A special website is available to follow the giving, testimonies and miracles sparked in this service. Check it out at <http://mymiraclestory.com>.

Over thirty expressed interest in missions and we have cards for each. I am sure there were many more who surrendered to the Lord's will but didn't fill out the cards.

If you could see me now, you would note that my foot is still tapping, but this time because I'm so thrilled and excited. And little beads of sweat are

flowing. Now, it's because I just took a little praise break. It's mesmerizing. It's my miracle!