

## **We Are “Growing Family”**

Isaiah 54:2-3 The Message

*You're going to need lots of elbow room  
for your growing family.*

*You're going to take over whole nations;  
you're going to resettle abandoned cities.*

Notes of emphasis

- Oasis City Church is expanding
- Goal is to work towards “one church, two locations”

### **Bishop Joseph L. Garlington, Sr. Official Statement:**

Bishop Joseph L. Garlington, Sr., and Pastor Barbara J. Garlington, the founding pastors of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, and the Governing Board of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh have appointed William Themelaras, a former staff pastor at Covenant Church, as their successor. We recognize his gifted apostolic leadership as a founder and Senior Pastor of Oasis City Church. Oasis City Church is a thriving congregation in Columbus, Ohio, which he co-planted with his wife Lynne and Pastors Adam and Tara Stewart nine-years ago. Pastor Bill Themelaras is the current President of the Reconciliation! network of churches, and his energetic leadership is serving to advance RMI's mission and vision. Pastor Themelaras will now add to his sphere of responsibilities the role of Senior Pastor and CEO of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh while continuing his apostolic oversight as Senior Pastor of Oasis City Church. Pastor Lynne, his wife and ministry partner, will add additional strength to this new venture. Pastor Barbara will continue to serve in a pastoral capacity and other areas of her interests and passion, as well as "whatever her hands" find to do. Bishop Joseph L. Garlington, Sr, will continue to function as Chief Overseer of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, the Presiding Bishop of Reconciliation! An International Network of Churches and Ministries, as well as the President of Bishop Joseph Garlington Ministries.

## **FAQ**

### **How did “One church, two locations” come about?**

Pastor Bill has been a spiritual son of Bishop Joseph Garlington for over 15 years. This included being sent out from Covenant Church of Pittsburgh to found Oasis City Church in Westerville, Ohio. Oasis City Church has become a thriving local church body impacting Central Ohio and providing a platform for Pastor Bill's growing apostolic influence nationally and internationally. Bishop Garlington has been praying for a successor to lead CCOP into the future. Numerous prophecies have been given to both Bill and Bishop as well as both Oasis City Church and Covenant Church of Pittsburgh that have pointed to this as God's plan. Multiple advisors have been included for wisdom and guidance over the past year who have also affirmed this.

### **Why are we pursuing this?**

Oasis City Church is an apostolic church existing to build and expand the Kingdom of God. Our vision is for a multiplicity of locations - whether planting or adopting - as the Lord leads. Because of our Founders' (Bill & Lynne, Adam & Tara) history with Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, we believe this is part of God's plan.

### **What are the benefits of this?**

Multiplication is a biblical imperative. We are multiplying. We are becoming one church in two locations. Our family is growing and God's Kingdom is expanding in two churches, two cities, and two states under a unified apostolic vision.

### **How often will Pastor Bill preach?**

Pastor Bill will share his time and the pulpit between these two locations.

### **How does this affect the Oasis City staff?**

Pastor Bill will remain the Senior Pastor of Oasis City Church. The OC staff will continue to operate as a team. Pastor Adam will assume more local responsibilities to care for the staff and congregation. Our team is mature and highly gifted. Our staff Executive Team which consists of Bill, Lynne, Adam, Tara, and Sharon will continue to focus on OC local pastoral oversight and ministry matters. Pastor Adam will lead the staff in efforts to implement plans and vision.

### **How does this affect the Elders of Oasis City Church?**

The OC Elders are being organized and equipped to fulfill many of the pastoral needs of the congregation. Both Pastor Bill and Pastor Adam will share responsibilities in equipping the Elders to share in the work of the ministry and caring for the church.

**How will the budget and finances be managed?**

Both churches will maintain their current structure regarding finances. As we continue to move towards the model of “one church, two locations” we will take the appropriate measures of accountability and financial management to maintain and achieve financial integrity. The Board of Directors for each church oversees this process.

**What will this cost?**

Both churches have budgets to manage this plan. They will share in any responsibilities to maintain staff and ministry expenses. Neither church is assuming undue liabilities. Both campuses will continue managing their own operations cost, missions goals, and financial integrity within their own congregations.

**What will change?**

Actually, most things week-to-week will not change dramatically. Except for Pastor Bill's preaching schedule, some will only see that the change will feel more like an expansion of our family. Both churches will realize that they have family in neighboring states and cities. We will be moving towards the vision of “one church, two locations” and celebrate this expansion. Both churches will be blessed by one another's resources and strengths.

**What is the timeline for this?**

Pastor Bill will become the Senior Pastor of CCOP on April 1st. The process of sharing time between the two cities will officially begin then. The overarching goal of “one church, two locations” will take time and be implemented over the course of 2021 and even into 2022.

**Why is Bishop Joseph making this decision for CCOP?**

This decision is the result of more than five years of planning, praying, and preparing. In his six decades of ministry, Bishop Joseph has influenced many significant leaders in ministry worldwide. These men and women have been used by God to raise up great churches and ministries. One of these leaders is a “son of the house” who has proven his ability to grow leaders and ministries. Bishop desires that one of these “sons” who carries the spiritual DNA of Covenant Church be entrusted with continuing and adding to the heritage and the historic vision of Covenant Church. As a result of prayer, fasting, and prophetic counsel, Bishop Joseph believes that Pastor Bill is God's choice for this assignment.

**Since Pastor Bill will be traveling back and forth, is there a plan to raise up more local leadership?**

Yes! The goal for both churches is to have local pastoral leadership to cover the congregations. Pastor Bill's plan is to raise up and strengthen the pastoral teams. Oasis City Church is blessed to already have Pastor Adam in high level leadership. Covenant Church of Pittsburgh has long standing pastoral teams as well and Pastor Bill's desire is to appoint specific leadership there. This may take some time to reorganize and rebuild, and we trust God to guide this process.

**Is Covenant Church of Pittsburgh changing its name?**

Not at this time. Covenant Church Of Pittsburgh has a rich 40 year history with significant name recognition that will be important through the initial transition period. We are moving towards "one church, two locations" and are open to what God has in mind in the future.

**How is Bill becoming the Senior Pastor at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh part of his apostolic calling?**

Apostles build. Apostles send. Apostles are spiritual fathers. They are uniquely gifted at awakening people to discover who they are and helping them reach their potential. They build hubs and systems that are centers for God's presence and extending the Kingdom both inside and outside of the church. As Oasis City Church expands, Bill's apostolic influence will increase accordingly to cover multiple locations.

**What does this mean for Restore Ministry?**

Restore Ministry will still remain strong. Pastor Lynne will help to establish Restore Ministry at CCOP as well. CCOP already has some inner-healing ministries that will integrate well into a consistent ministry model for both locations. This will be something we look at for CCOP in 2022 and beyond.

**What is Bishop Garlington's role?**

Bishop Garlington and Pastor Barbara Garlington are the founders of CCOP. Bishop Garlington is the presiding Bishop over all Reconciliation! Ministries International® churches, of which both CCOP and OC are members. He will remain very visible and continue functioning as the Presiding Bishop of CCOP and RMI.

**Will there be a formal installation?**

Yes! The official installation will take place during Presence Conference, June 2021 at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh.