



Can Leaders Remain Too Long?...When its Time to Say Goodbye

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Acts 13:36 [LAB] *“For after David had served his generation according to the will of God, he died and was buried, and his body decayed.”*

On an idyllic Thanksgiving holiday morning I called one of my Philadelphia sons in the Gospel and asked him, how often do you change the oil in your automobile? He was vague with his response and finally admitted that he went by the service sticker info and occasionally the mileage. After convincing him that this was not a gimmick, he remarked that he really did not have exact information to the question. After getting his attention I asked the real question, how often should we change leaders in the church? I had just googled an article on, “When Should You Change Your Oil?” –Ronald Montoya The first thing suggested is to “let the manual guide you.” Secondly, “trust your oil life monitor.” The monitor based on mileage and will switch on a maintenance light when the vehicle reaches a predetermined mileage range. Numerous sensors throughout the car records conditions and habits of the driver. Thirdly, use the time estimate. The Toyota Prius recommended an oil interval of one year or 10,000 miles. Fourthly, get an oil analysis. An oil analysis will tell you the condition of your oil, and can reveal any problems that your engine may be experiencing such as traces of fuel and coolant in the engine oil. The article concluded that the 3,000 mile oil change myth is designed to keep people in the business busy. If this much attention is given to an automobile, what about our church leadership? Who monitors how long leaders remain in office in the church? I believe that we need to devise a system where leaders cannot remain if office indefinitely. This applies to pastors, Bishops and all church leaders including, but not limited to our National Supervisor and Supervisors, Presiding Bishop, General Board, Board of Bishops and Jurisdictional Bishops in the Church of God in Christ.

I am convinced that my calling is to stand *“in defense of the Gospel”* according to **Philippians 1: 17** and to challenge church leadership. I do not respond to unsigned internet lies and garbage generated by cowards. The only thing I have is “the pen of a ready writer” according to Psalm 45:1. What I say may be offensive to some and liberating to others. I plan to write an open letter to the Church of God in Christ in January and publicly resign as Ecumenical Officer, an appointment by Presiding Bishop G.E. Patterson in 2004. All the

details of my Ecumenical journey and much more will be set forth in my forthcoming book scheduled for Winter/Spring 2016, titled, **Why COGIC Must Change or Die...Recapturing the Essence of our Holiness-Pentecostal Faith.** My book will detail the root of our present crisis and a possible alternative course of action out of this morass. With the eye of an historian and the passion of a theologian who has served the church, God has enabled me to be fully capable of engaging in meaningful discourse about the future of our faith.

David served his generation and died. Many of our leaders are dying in office and attempting to continue serving. With tunnel vision we are attempting to do what we perceive to be best for the individual rather than what is best for the church. It was disturbing to see our church consecrating people who were virtually invalids to Auxiliary Bishop, a title that has come under severe scrutiny. No disrespect to these dear servants of God, but their astronomical fees should have been waived. There are able persons who are not in wheel chairs who can think and make critical decisions, but who are deliberately and intentionally overlooked for purely personal and political reasons. This kind of behavior should not exist in the church. If you are not angry about this policy you may need psychiatric help. The requirement to have (30) thirty churches is not constitutional. It is an informal policy designed to reward friends and punish adversaries. Fellowships are not illegal. If Fellowships are illegal then the National church should refund the excessive reports made by these men. No one should be compelled to remain under a leader who is not only incompetent but has a reputation as a known adulterer and thief. We must preserve the freedom to gracefully leave in the form of a genuine spiritual Fellowship. This is not a one size fits all church. It is time to take the gloves off and contend for what is right. Going forward I plan to speak for the powerless and those who have no voice in the midst of change. We hate the word, but God is dynamic in Himself and occasionally eternity spills over into time in order to correct our waywardness.

1. When leaders remain in office too long they start believing their own hype.
2. When leaders remain in office too long they become drunk with power.
3. When leaders remain too long their vision diminishes.
4. When leaders remain too long they generate unnecessary conflict within the body.
5. When leaders remain too long their mental and physical health put us all at risk.
6. When leaders remain too long they abuse money through disguised greed.
7. When leaders remain too long they get confused on their role in the church.

A profound point is made by the Greek philosopher Euripides –“*Those whom God wish to destroy he first deprives of their senses.*” We have a tradition in our church rooted in hero worship designed to protect incompetent leaders. Bishop CH Mason refused such non-sense and continually gave glory to God. When a leader is in the first stages of dementia and you prop him up before the people as an act of honor it is really a disservice to God and His church. Brothers and sisters please allow our frail unhealthy leaders to retire in dignity. We keep people in office for personal gain and selfish reasons. That is wrong and lacks the dignity that should be accorded true servants of God. Servants of God please do not hold the church hostage by “*another pity party*” and allowing your church and greedy relatives to give you a send off and another anniversary. Our people deserve better. Leave before people have to carry you around. It is a disgrace to attempt to pastor a church from a wheel chair. This leads up to my final point. We need term limits for ministry servant-hood in all areas of ministry. It would keep leadership vibrant and fresh. The truth is irritating but God knows it is liberating.

A term limit is a legal restriction that limits the member of terms an office holder may serve in an elected office. When term limits are present in presidential and semi-presidential systems they act as a method to curb the potential for monopoly where a leader effectively becomes president for life. – (Wikipedia Source) Here is our dilemma in the Church of God in Christ. We adopted the episcopal system that inherently contains term limits. We utilize term limits every quadrennial election such as the 2016 election. We modified the end terms to be indefinitely. Currently the Presiding Bishop and General Board Member can run every (four years) and according to the Constitution “*succeed themselves in office indefinitely.*” It is up to the General Assembly to make a final ruling on term limits. Most denominations who adopt this model allows the Presiding Bishop and other Board members to serve eight (8) years based on tenure and age. It is based on the rationale that if you cannot pull it off in eight (8) years, another term will not really help. (This will be analyzed and fully discussed in my forthcoming book cited above.) May the God who monitors the cosmos keep you in every way.

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