

An aerial, golden-tinted photograph of a dense city skyline, likely New York City, featuring numerous skyscrapers. A semi-transparent heart shape is overlaid on the right side of the image, partially covering the text.

A heart for **America**

‘That has been one of the most gratifying things that I have witnessed — the growing concern across our Fellowship for the large cities.’

— Charles E. Hackett

“Over 30 years ago the plague of drugs invaded the inner cities and the church did nothing. The results: Drugs are now everywhere. Either we take the gospel to the inner cities now or the inner cities will come to us with their violence, crime, immorality, broken families and hopelessness. We will lose the battle in the suburbs like we lost the battle in the cities. The Assemblies of God began among the poor and downtrodden. Let us return to our roots. We must keep the middle class God has given us, but we can no longer ignore the sea of humanity in America who need the gospel. If we are not going to reach the cities in America, whom are we going to reach? If we are not going to reach them now, when are we going to reach them?”

— Charles E. Hackett
General Council, Portland, Ore. 1991

Charles E. Hackett made the above statement as incoming director of Assemblies of God U.S. Missions. As he prepares to retire following 14 years of ministry with U.S. Missions, he spoke with *Evangel* Editor in Chief Hal Donaldson about the efforts of the AG to reach America.

PE: *In 1991 at the General Council in Portland, Ore., you called on the Assemblies of God to respond to the spiritual crisis in our cities. What led up to that message?*

HACKETT: During my first weeks in Springfield with U.S. Missions, I started praying. I felt the Lord leading me to ask General Superintendent G. Raymond Carlson to give me 10 minutes to share my burden for America with the General Presbyters. Brother Carlson agreed to do that. I spent about three months praying and editing and writing and rewriting. I made the presentation to the General Presbyters, and as soon as I had finished somebody went to the microphone and said, “I make a motion that Charles read this to the entire General Council.”

It was a God thing! I never thought of it having that kind of impact. It never occurred to me that I would read it to the General Council and that the General Council would respond as they did. It was subsequently sent out in the Ministers Letter. It was published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*. I was shocked at the response.

PE: *What put the need of America’s inner cities on your heart?*

HACKETT: It was a combination



PE: *Talk about your continuing concerns for America.*

HACKETT: One of my major concerns is the conduct and public behavior of the so-called born-again, evangelical Christian. George Barna’s research has shown that it hardly varies from the lifestyle of the sinner on the street.

Territorialism is another concern. We’ve all heard of the pastor who feels like the 100,000 people in the communities surrounding his church are all his, even if he’s reaching a small percentage of them. But I’m seeing wonderful change in that area. Our churches are linking together more and more to touch people for Christ.

I’m also concerned about the need to connect. We need to make everyone in our churches feel like he or she truly belongs. That’s true in the ministry as well. My generation must connect with the 30-and-under ministers. We need them and they need us.

PE: *What are you seeing in our churches that gives you optimism?*

HACKETT: A spiritual desperation. Pastors are realizing we’ve got to have a move of God. We’ve got to have divine intervention. Just doing church is not working; it’s not enough. There’s more to the church’s mission, and our pastors are determined to see God bring that about in their churches.

PE: *Is there a challenge you would like to give to churches?*

HACKETT: I would encourage every pastor to make sure he or she is mentoring a younger preacher to carry

of things. Pastoring in Lafayette, Ind., I thought our Midwest family church represented the Assemblies of God. I thought that was the way it was everywhere. I hardly ever preached outside my church other than at a district function. So I was shocked to discover how little we were doing in our major cities. I visited a couple of our large cities, and it was mile after mile of spiritual desert. It gripped my heart. So many congregations had moved out to the suburbs and practically given away their inner-city properties, as if the inner cities didn’t count. God gripped my heart with compassion for the needs of the families left behind.

PE: *After 14 years, do you see a continuing spiritual crisis in our cities? What progress have you seen in our work in the cities?*

HACKETT: The spiritual crisis is still there. But I’m happy to say that any of our districts where there is a large city within the boundaries of that district is making an effort to reach that metropolis. That has been one of the most gratifying things that I have witnessed — the growing concern across our Fellowship for the large cities.

Assemblies of God Faculty Positions Available



The Assemblies of God Commission on Christian Higher Education continues to develop a national database of all interested persons who would like to be considered for faculty positions at endorsed A/G colleges and universities.

The greatest area of need is in the non-Bible and theology disciplines, particularly math, science, behavioral science, business, music, and social science areas. However, all interested persons are encouraged to apply regardless of discipline. Previous college teaching experience preferred but may not be required in all situations.

Requirements for database eligibility:

- Member of Assemblies of God with faithful attendance at an A/G church
- A/G pastor's recommendation
- Master's degree minimum, Doctorate preferred

Online application available at
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For further information,
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the torch after they are gone. None of us is here permanently. We're all just passing through. What are we leaving behind in the way of leadership? You know, what we leave behind in the way of a building is not nearly as important as what we leave behind in the way of leadership.

PE: As you look back over your years with U.S. Missions, what message, what themes do you want people to remember?

HACKETT: I would like to be remembered as someone who faced reality, without being critical or judgmental. I spoke about areas that we need to take a look at, and many of those areas have been given some serious attention.

PE: Talk about the next 10 years. Where would you like to see this Fellowship?

HACKETT: I would like to see more of our churches radically com-

mitted to soul-winning. A soul-winning church is a growing church; it's also a happy church. It's exciting.

When a church is not reaching the lost it becomes self-centered, divisive and self-destructive; but a church that is reaching the lost is a church that is a credit to the community. People want to go there. You don't have to worry about growth and you don't have to worry about finances if you're reaching the lost.

PE: Do you want to say anything in closing about what these 14 years have meant to you?

HACKETT: I never dreamed that God would call me to our headquarters in Springfield. It has been a wonderful journey. I cannot think of anything that would have been more enriching, more enjoyable or more productive than these 14 years in U.S. Missions. I thank the Lord and I thank the Fellowship for allowing me to serve in this capacity. ■

E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.