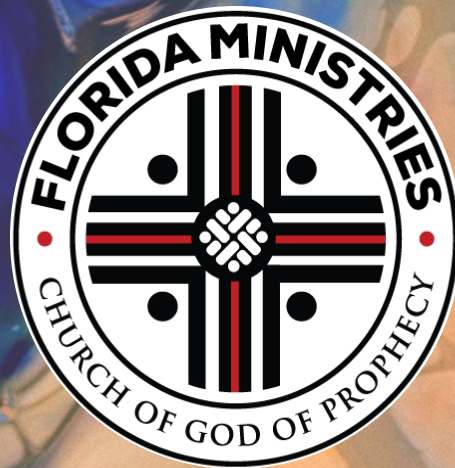


# Florida Forward

Connecting Conversations – November 2023

An equipping initiative of Florida Ministries.  
6001 Monarch Blvd.  
Leesburg, Florida 34748  
352.323.1321



Equipping pastors to equip leaders for life.  
Encounter & Encourage, Equip & Empower



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PASTOR

NOTE THE FOLLOWING



#### YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT OPPORTUNITIES

I hope you will make an effort over the next several weeks to encourage young adults and youth from your congregation to connect with others here in Florida at the upcoming Prime of Your Life (November 25<sup>th</sup>) event coordinated by Gia Roberts, Regional Student Ministry Leader, and the Winter Retreat (January 5-7) directed by Aaron & Angela Taylor with the Regional Student Ministries Leaders. Both these events will be great. Get your kids and young adults plugged in. [CLICK HERE](#) for info and application for the Prime of Your Life gathering, and [CLICK HERE](#) for the Winter Retreat.





# The Idolatry of Worship Service Flow

Insights | Church Life & Ministry | Aug 18, 2023



Rachel Coyne photo | [Unsplash](#)

**It appears the flow in worship is becoming the end goal, the measuring tool to gauge how successful a worship service was.**

*By Chris Smith*

I was recently discussing worship planning with a fellow worship pastor. I told him I was interested in viewing one of his church's services. He was flattered and then proceeded to tell me how he and a worship leader friend in another state exchange videos of their services for critique and improvement. As he continued to share, he told me various things they had pointed out to each other, mainly revolving around transitions and the flow of the service.



This conversation bothered my spirit. Although it was encouraging to see fellow worship leaders pushing each other to further excellence, it was discouraging to hear they did not base the criteria on which they judged each other on biblical principles of worship.

## **Creating idols in our worship gatherings**

A quick Google search on flow during worship will provide a number of articles on the topic. Each article is designed to help your church have better “flow” in its services. I’m not opposed to this in any way. We have all seen a service derailed by poor planning. But it appears flow in worship is becoming the end goal, the measuring tool to gauge how successful a worship service was.

The first two of the Ten Commandments God gave were to have no other gods and not make any idols. When we prioritize the flow of a worship service, we are on the path of violating these two commandments.

But Colossians 3:16 clearly states the purpose of the gathered body in worship: “Let the message of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (CSB). Our priority when planning worship services is on allowing the message of Christ to be first and foremost, not on making smooth transitions and avoiding awkward silences. When the main goal of our worship is anything but this, we are creating an idol that takes the place of God’s purpose for our gathering.

## **Explaining the subtle shift**

It appears this shift happened subtly over time. Worship leaders didn’t purposefully set out to make the flow of our services the object of our worship. Some of the reasons are simple. Evaluating the flow of the service is a tangible way to evaluate the gathering. It’s easy to point to





what went well or needs work, and there's usually a prescribed fix for improvement. A second reason is the growing reliance on technology in worship. As worship bands frequently play with support tracks and there are many automated elements of the service, flow is essential to making this work.

But perhaps the main reason we're more aware of flow is that song transitions have changed in modern worship music. The music minister used to lead three hymns in a row. As the minister directed congregants to stand, the pianist and possibly an organist played the intro. At the conclusion of each hymn, the transition was simple: The music minister said, "Now turn to hymn number X. We'll sing verses 1, 2, and 4." While this was happening, the pianist (who already had the next hymn bookmarked) began the intro to the next hymn, and the congregational entrance was obvious.

In current worship music, the song intros are much longer, and frequently have no melodic material. Instruments and pads create beautiful soundscapes, but these often do not tell the congregation when to sing or what song they will be singing. This creates a time of congregational silence (and often uncertainty) that the worship leader must now properly navigate. When we do this well, it can lead to powerful moments of expression. But when it fails, we hear about it during the upcoming staff meeting (or worse, see it on YouTube).

## Understanding the negative consequences

There are some negative consequences that have come with this subtle shift. First, it puts undue pressure on those leading worship. Churches may have one or two paid staff in music and worship, but they are working mostly with volunteers. Yet we try to pull off professional-level tasks. Touring worship groups are led by industry experts and have spent months in practice and preparation for these events. Expecting the same quality from the local church is unfair. And when judged to this standard, many worship leaders will become discouraged or depressed. Most worship leaders I know have



the correct heart posture but feel a constant pressure for everything to “go right” during services. This slowly shifts the focus of worship to the measurable and practical, instead of the biblical.

An overemphasis on flow also teaches the church the wrong things about worship. Worship is about believers speaking the message of Christ to one another. But when the focus of the service becomes about everyone on the platform doing the right thing at the right time, worship begins to look more like a performance than a gathering of believers. We lose the “one another” aspect when many are looking to one or a few. There should certainly still be order, but we must ensure we proclaim the message clearly (1 Corinthians 14:26-40). While I believe order for the sake of clearly communicating the gospel was the original intent behind our collective emphasis on the flow of a service, I fear order has now become a goal unto itself.

## Combating the idolatry of flow

Rather than evaluating worship as if it were a production, we need more biblical criteria. In any church gathering, the content of the service should be more important than the methods in which it was delivered. An over-focus on flow shifts this around.

Way before we judge a particular transition or light cue, we need to first ask if the message of Christ was present in all we did. We should certainly strive for musical excellence. But this should not come at the expense of singing to one another in worship as Paul commands in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-19. Before worship leaders are concerned with how they and their team sounded, we should first ask questions like “How well did the people sing?” or “What could we have done to improve the congregation’s participation?”

The Bible is clear on certain features of worship. And we need to ensure man-made aspects of a service do not replace or overshadow





the mandated elements such as Scripture reading, prayer, baptism, and communion. If our service is flawless in flow but missing these elements, we may have succeeded in pleasing our fellow man, but not our Savior.

Another suggestion is to monitor our reliance on technology. The recent **revivals at Asbury and other college campuses** have shown us that the latest and greatest innovations are not a prerequisite for the movement of the Holy Spirit. I am pro-technology, and it's amazing what you can do using multimedia in a worship service. But these same production elements can often bind us to a rigorous schedule in our worship, or worse, derail a service completely when they malfunction. Technology is a wonderful tool used to assist in delivering the gospel message. But an overreliance on it may create more hindrances in worship than it solves.

## Refocusing on worship

A worship service should be well-organized, for Scripture states “God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (CSB). However, much like the Pharisees before us, we often take a principle farther than God intended. In our pursuit for flawless services, are we in danger of losing sight of the God these services are meant to glorify? Let's refocus our emphasis on flow, making sure it is our servant, not our master.





## My Discussion Points

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NOVEMBER 2023

## Heart 2 Heart Ministries

We are admonished countless times in Scripture to remember what the Lord has done for us. When I intentionally pause to reflect upon God's goodness, I find His blessings to be without number. Indeed, "*The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy (Psalm 126:3).*"

Psalm 103:2 reads, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*" Now that's a charge; a full time job! The International Standard Bible encyclopedia translates 'benefits' as "*Blessed be the Lord. Day by day he sustains us*". When I consider God's presence and provision in my life, my heart erupts in praise.

I'm reminded of specific answered prayers as I write. Well over a year ago while battling another bout of vertigo, I spoke deliverance over myself from this reoccurring health challenge and claimed my healing. To-day, I remain free from the spinning sensation. Praise the Lord!

It's not uncommon for Mom to call asking for prayer for Dad as he continues to decline as a result of Parkinson's. Recently, God turned a really crummy situation around within minutes. I do not take that answered prayer for granted. Thank God!

Last month, our daughter was told by three different physicians that they suspected she had basal cell carcinoma. We called our family to prayer and the facial growth that was said to require extensive surgery vanished. Thank you, Lord!

Last week, our daughter and her husband were in St. Kitts as Hurricane Tammy was approaching. The Lord answered our prayers and the kids were able to get off the island before inclement weather set in. As a matter of fact, the pilot told the passengers on the plane once airborne that they were the last plane granted permission to leave. I'm so grateful God answered our prayers.

In 17 years, we have not been with our daughter on her birthday. This week, we gathered to celebrate her 40th birthday. Yesterday, the Lord answered our granddaughter's prayer and kept us safe from potentially two car accidents. On and on I could recount God's blessings.....and yes my heart is *'filled with joy!'*" - Brenda



### *Holiday Spice Tea* *Frankie Dotson*

1 Pkg. (small) Cherry Jell-O  
2 Sticks Cinnamon  
1 Heaping tsp. whole cloves  
5 Teabags  
1 ½ Cups water  
1 Can (large) unsweetened pineapple juice  
Juice of 6 lemons (or 12 Tbs.)  
1 ½ Cups Sugar  
12 Cups water

*If through a broken heart God can bring  
His purposes to pass in the world, then thank  
Him for breaking your heart.*

*- Oswald Chambers*

Steep teabags in 1 ½ cups water for 20 minutes. Add (do not dilute) Jell-O to tea water after steeping. Add cinnamon and cloves to water with teabags. Add pineapple juice. Strain juice of 6 lemons (or 12 Tbs.) Add 1 ½ Cups sugar and add 12 Cups water.

*Fall Favorites from the team!*

### *Chicken Sausage Et Lentil Soup* *Argentinian Lentil Soup* *Silvia House*

1/2 Lb. Lentils  
3 Chicken Sausages (sliced)  
1 Large Yellow onion (finely chopped)  
3 Garlic Cloves (finely chopped)  
2 Medium Carrots (sliced or diced)  
2 Medium Potatoes (diced)  
1/2 bundle of kale leaves (Cut into 1 inch size)  
6 Cups Water or Chicken Broth  
3 Linden Leaves  
Salt/Pepper to taste

Bring lentils to a boil for five minutes. Add onions, garlic, carrots, linden leaves, salt and pepper. After five minutes, add potatoes and sausage. Simmer 10 minutes or until lentils are tender. Add kale and simmer approximately 5 minutes.



### *Pumpkin Shake* *Amiel Miller* *(A family favorite from Linda Cassells)*

1 C. Unsweetened Almond Milk  
1/2 C. Pumpkin Puree (Not pumpkin pie filling)  
1 Tsp. Honey or Sweetener of Choice  
1 Scoop Vanilla Protein Powder;  
1/2 Tsp. Pumpkin Pie Spice  
1/4 Tsp. Vanilla  
1/4 Tsp. Grated Nutmeg  
1 Medium Ripe Banana  
6 Ice Cubes

Add all ingredients to a blender and process until well combined. Adjust sweetener to desired taste. Double or triple ingredients to required amount of servings.



## *In the news....*



- **GWENDOLYN SINGLETON RELEASE SINGLE DEBUT**

Lady Gwendolyn's single, *Lean On Jesus*, was released on October 27, and is available on all platforms. This is one anointed singer. We're so very proud of you, Gwendolyn.

- **CHARITY MARTINEZ IS A GRANDMOTHER!**

Last month, Pastor Charity and Pancho welcomed their first grandchild, Lilly Grace, weighing in at 6 lb. 12 oz. There's no shortage of photos on Charity's Facebook page. Congratulations guys! Welcome to the Grandparent's Club!

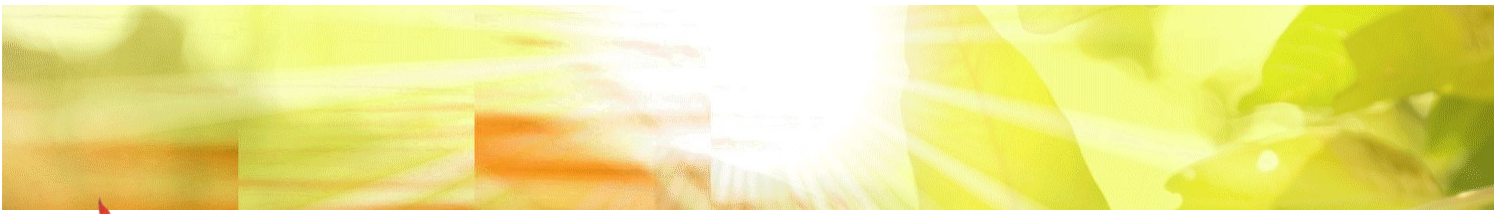
- **PAULA WILSON WELCOMES A NEW FAMILY MEMBER**

Bishop Art and Lady Paula continue to enjoy grandparenting as they add a new family member, Hazel Annabelle Forbes. She's a beauty! I've got the photo to prove it. Enjoy this new little one!

- **COFFEE & CONVERSATION**

Monday, October 30, the Heart 2 Heart leadership team hosted a Coffee & Conversation with our newly appointed pastor's wives. Our fall fellowship was rich; the conversation edifying. We're all cheering you on, ladies!





### *Pumpkin of Thankfulness*

Need a new fall tradition?  
Place a pumpkin and a permanent  
marker in a prominent location. Have  
the family write on the pumpkin  
blessings God has given them.  
Celebrate a pumpkin full of reasons  
to be grateful.

*We should certainly count our  
blessings, but we should also  
make our blessings count.*

Paul said that Christ followers are the  
fragrance of Christ both to the saved and to  
the perishing (2 Corinthians 2:15).  
Just as a fresh pot of chili permeates our  
home on a brisk day, our lives should  
permeate Jesus' life and love.

*May our hearts be full of  
both thanks and giving.*

### *Pumpkin Bread* *Romeika Adderley*

- 1 Betty Crocker Spice Cake Mix - I prefer the "moist"
- 1 can of pureed pumpkin
- 2 teaspoon of pumpkin spice - flat not rounded
- 1 teaspoon of nutmeg
- 1 cup of raisins
- 1 cup of cranberries
- 1.5 cup of chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup of oil (instead of butter if requested by your mix - OR  
added ... just depends on how moist you want it)
- 1 container of cream cheese icing

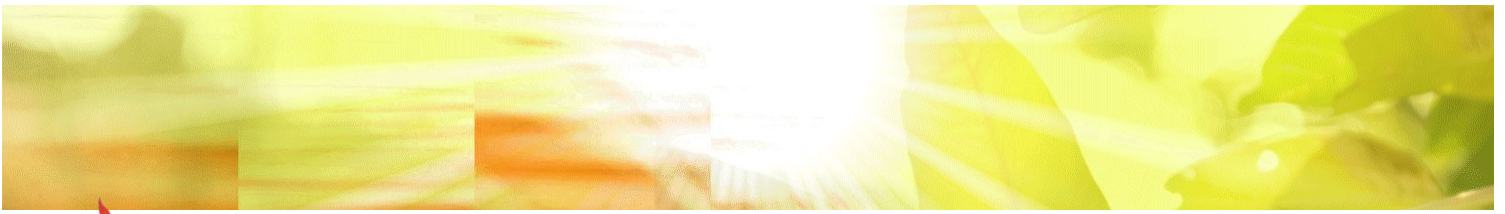
#### **Instructions**

Follow directions on the box to mix spice cake. Add all other  
ingredients listed (hold 1/2 cup of walnuts). Bake at temp on  
the box until the center is baked and gives you a clean knife.  
While warm, add the cream cheese icing as a light glaze to the  
top and sprinkle with 1/2 cup of walnuts.

### *Chili* *Brenda Gillum*

- 2 lb. Ground Beef
- 2 T. dried onion flakes or 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 Package Mild Chili Seasoning
- 1 Package Hot Chili Seasoning
- 2 Large Cans Kidney Beans
- 3 Large Cans Diced Tomatoes
- 2 Large Cans Bush Chili Beans
- 1/2 C. Brown Sugar
- 1 Bottle Spicy V8
- 1 Red, Yellow, Green, Orange bell pepper, diced into small  
pieces

Sauté ground beef and onion. Drain off grease. Add all ingredi-  
ents into soup pot and simmer for at least one hour. Top indi-  
vidual servings with a dollop of sour cream and grated sharp  
cheddar cheese. Side dish: Chili Fritos



Many years ago, a friend gave me a beautiful fall cornucopia. Out of that cornucopia spills artificial fruits and vegetables.

According to the dictionary, a cornucopia is an abundant supply of good things.

## *Cornucopia*

That's just what God provides for us daily, an abundant supply of good things. And because there are so many, they just spill out. Likewise, whatever is within us will spill out onto others as we interact.

During the holidays, let's spill out some love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. You'll be glad you did.  
Others will as well.

## *Holiday Hospitality*

As believers, we should be known for our warmth and hospitality. Peter reminds us, *"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling"* (1 Peter 4:9). It would be good for all of us to remember that our hospitality should be "without grumbling." And that, my sister, can be a s-t-r-e-t-c-h for us during the holidays. A little bit of "Martha" can easily be detected in all of us when our routines are disrupted and crowded.

I've always been a fan of tablescapes. There's nothing more inviting than walking into a fragrant room to view the beauty of elegant chargers, freshly pressed linen napkins, gold napkin rings, your best china, and the most scrumptious recipes one has to offer.

Why? Because it conveys the message, "I've been expecting you." It tells those who are coming for dinner that they're worthy of preparation. It communicates that one's arrival is anticipated.

The next two months will allow us numerous opportunities to come together and fellowship with friends and family, unlike any other season. There's just something special that happens around sweet potato souffle, Thanksgiving dressing, and pumpkin pie.

As we open our hearts and homes this year, may the Lord help us to do the right thing with the right attitude. Enjoy your fall fellowship!

Choose to be grateful.  
Choose to be hospitable.  
Choose to have the right attitude.  
Choose to have a happy fall, ya'll.

*"...let the peace of God rule in your hearts...  
And be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).*



## Jacque Davis writes...



I love to take a leaf, put a piece of paper over it, and trace the veins that appear from rubbing a crayon over it. Under the paper can be a fresh leaf, a leaf in the midst of change or one withering and cracking.

Leaves teach us that change is inevitable. A leaf changes with the seasons. It begins as the bud in early spring, unfolds, and expands in the summer, and finally changes color and falls to the ground in autumn.

The natural process of life includes change. Change is the only constant in nature. We are conceived and born. We grow up and then, as God wills, we grow old. As we change, the world around us changes too. Change can cause us discomfort as it brings pain or loss into our lives, however, it can also help keep life fresh and beautiful.

To truly live, we must face and even embrace change as a natural part of life. We must also look to our unchanging God to sustain, strengthen, guide, and comfort us in the midst of change.

Whatever this fall brings you, embrace it. It is your season. Walk into it with thanksgiving.

*Autumn teaches us the beauty of letting go.  
Growth requires release; it's what the trees do.*

### *Curried Pumpkin Soup*

*Shellie Creasy*

1/2 lb. Mushrooms, Sliced  
1/2 C. Chopped Onion  
2 T. Butter or Oil  
2 T. Flour  
1 Tsp. Curry Powder  
3 C. Chicken Broth  
1 Can (1 lb.) Pumpkin  
1 T. Honey  
Dash Nutmeg  
Salt/Pepper to Taste  
1 C. Evaporated Milk  
Sour Cream or Yogurt for Topping

Sauté mushrooms and onion together in butter or oil. Add flour and curry, gradually. Add chicken broth and all other ingredients except the milk. Cook, stirring consistently for about 10-15 minutes. Add milk and heat thoroughly without bringing to a boil.

May top with sour cream or yogurt.





STATE BISHOP

# Christmas

LOVE OFFERING

It seems time is passing by so very quickly and Christmas will soon be here. The holidays are very special, especially among God's people. It is a time to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior knowing that He is alive today and that He is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive.

This is also a very opportune time to show our State Bishop and Sister Brenda how much we love and appreciate them for the untiring work they do in the state of Florida. As you receive this offering for them in your local church, express the spirit of giving because you love them, not because you have been asked. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and He will bless those who give cheerfully from their heart.

Thank you,

Frankie S. Dotson,  
State Pastoral Care Director





# *Pastor* CHRISTMAS

❄️ LOVE ❄️  
OFFERING

**Pastors and their families are  
God's gifts to us.**

**Let's bless them this Christmas and let  
them know how much we appreciate  
them and all that they do for us.**

***Thank you for caring for these precious  
men and women of God.***

***Frankis S. Dotson  
State Pastoral Care Director***



Pastoral Care Letter  
November 2023

# Happy Thanksgiving



Dear Pastoral Care Leader,

This month's letter will be a little different because I want to remind you of several important dates coming up!

First of all, I want to give you a great big shout out for being such a blessing to your pastor during "Pastor Appreciation Month." I know how much they appreciated being blessed by your efforts.

We will soon be entering the Thanksgiving season so let us be mindful of the One who has blessed us beyond measure. We truly are a blessed people and this month is time to give Him thanks for all He has provided.

The Scripture tells us in 1Thessalonians 5:18 "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Once again the Christmas season is quickly approaching and I want to remind you that it is time to begin making plans to recognize your pastor by receiving a nice "Christmas Love Offering" for them. Do your best to promote this in your congregation and make this the very best offering they have ever received.

Lastly, it is also time for our church families to show our love and appreciation to our State Bishop, Scott & Brenda Gillum, by receiving a special Christmas Offering. This is your opportunity to express your love to them for all they do in making Florida Forward!! Please send that in to the State Office by December 15th.

Blessings & Happy Thanksgiving,  
Frankie S. Dotson  
State Pastoral Care Director





# Florida Children's Ministry

Matthew 9:35-38

This is the season of harvest. As we lead children it is imperative to **PLANT** the seeds of the gospel within their hearts. We meet this need through Bible study and teaching children to know Jesus and His story. We must make Him known to them personally. Once the seeds have been planted, they must be **WATERED** by Bible stories, worship, fellowship, and even fun. Then we must help them **GROW** by walking with them through example and consistency. Our goal should be to show children that they can have a personal relationship with Jesus and give them every opportunity to accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

Children's Ministry Team  
Natasha "Von" Davis 407-247-5063  
Chris Bevis 863-838-8458  
[floridacm@flcogop.com](mailto:floridacm@flcogop.com)

We have some exciting and new events coming for our children. Scan the QR Code and complete the form so you stay in the loop. Remember, Florida Forward includes Children's Ministry.

Stay Tuned.





# Florida C.O.G.O.P. Youth Choir Invites You To Join



## Recruiting ALL Children & Youth

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Choir Director: Adrienne White 813-495-2707

or

Co Children's Ministry Director: Natasha 'Von' Davis 407-247-5063

Make a  
*Joyful noise*  
Unto the Lord  
Psalm 100:1





\$50

# YOUTH WINTER RETREAT

**JANUARY 5-7, 2024**

scan to register  
now

AGES 14-24



@ CAMP SONSHINE

**CHECK IN  
STARTS AT 5PM  
ON FRIDAY**



# **MAKE PLANS NOW**

to attend the  
2024 Prayer Conference.

Dear Pastor,

It's not too early to begin boosting the Prayer Conference. It will be January 27, 2024 at the Campground. I am extra excited to announce our guest speakers. Dr. Tom Renfro and his wife, Sid will bless you with the Word of God. They are both highly anointed ministers.

They live in Virginia. Tom is a graduate of UVA Med School, and an internist, geriatric specialist. He is a Minister and a Doctor. God healed him of terminal cancer 26 years ago!

You and your church will be blessed by their ministry. PLEASE keep these dates before your congregation. They are coming a long way and I'd like to see the house packed out.

I will be sending out a flyer soon with all the information included. Again, thanks for promoting this.

A servant for Christ,

Kay Osban  
State Prayer Coordinator

Greetings Pastors in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

We, the members of New Life Worship Center, COGOP, would like to extend an invitation to you and your congregation pertaining to your college bound members. Located in the beautiful city of Daytona Beach, FL, our church is home to various colleges and universities, such as Bethune Cookman University, Daytona State College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and others.

With our outward focus being college ministry, we would like to invite you to encourage any of your members that are attending or will be attending any college or university in the area that they can get plugged in at New Life Worship Center, COGOP. We will embrace them, love them, feed them physically and spiritually and enable our COGOP college students to have a home away from home. Let's partner together to pour into our college members as they navigate on this new and sometimes lonely journey.

Blessings upon blessings,

Pastor Richard & Lady C



(386) 227-6576

nlwccogop@gmail.com

965 Vine St. Daytona Beach, FL 32117

Richard A. Roberts, Pastor